Mike Clements

Newswriting

Profile

*“Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard”*

How a young man’s drive to succeed helped to alter this reporter’s cynical outlook on the youth of this country.

Recently I sat down for an interview with Julio Becerril, an eighteen-year-old freshman at Colorado State University, in order to get some insight into the mind of a college freshman. My recent return to college life after a brief hiatus had my cynicism regarding the younger generation fresh at the forefront of my mind.

I went in to this interview expecting a routine student discussion involving cliché college small talk and drinking stories. What I actually found was a young man with his head rested squarely on his shoulders, a young man full of ambition who seems ready to confront the world head on and dictate his own future.

Julio is in his second semester at CSU and after living in the dorms for the last six months, he seems to have a good feel for the college lifestyle. Once I had picked his brain a bit over sodas in the student center, I came away from our discussion feeling that he has a solid grasp on what it means to be a successful, mature college student. At a young age, Julio already has his sights set high and his motivation fully embraced.

 After witnessing this surprising level of drive, I wanted to dig deeper and find its origin. When I prompted him to discuss the people he looks up to, Julio told me about his older brother, Abraham, and his inspiring story of success. Apparently, Julio’s brother was born in Mexico. He came to the U.S. when he was in middle school and, like both his parents, spoke very little English. He eventually earned a full ride scholarship to the University of Colorado and now works at the Children’s Hospital in Denver. It quickly became quite clear to me that seeing his brother’s level of drive and then witnessing it paying off the way it did solidified Julio’s own sense of motivation and sparked a desire to succeed.

 In a moment of honest reflection, Julio told me, “I look at (my brother’s) life and see the things he’s accomplished and I think to myself, ‘I’d like that too.’” He continued, “He is the perfect role model, especially for me.”

Once Julio graduates, he will join his brother in being the only two members of his family to have earned a college degree, an honor that he values immensely.

“It helps you overall in life. It gives you something to be proud of .” Julio told me. “To say you’re a college graduate really means something.”

I found that what motivates Julio is a drive to excel and lead a successful life similar to that of his brother. Despite not yet deciding on a major area of study, Julio has many interests and is open to several career possibilities. He is interested in Journalism and could see himself working at a major news station some day. Art is also a major passion of his. He told me it would be a dream come true to be a cartoonist and suggested the possibility of combining the two and becoming a cartoon artist at a major newspaper.

Whatever he does finally settle on, Julio left me convinced that he will always work as hard as he can and will do his best to remember his core values and motivations throughout his career. He assured me that no matter what happens in his life, no matter what path he eventually ends up on, that he will never forget where he came from. He mentioned the various mentors he has had in his life and made it very clear that he will always strive to pay it forward. He will not forget the people who have helped him out along the way and assisted him in getting to this point.

Before I left Julio, I offered up one last prompt: “Define success”. Without a hint of hesitation he responded, “To end up being someone’s role model. To help someone else the way people have helped me.” If we all lived with this definition of success, what a fantastic world this world could be.