Michael Eure Show Transcript

African American Cultural Celebration Interview Special
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Michael Eure
Hello this is Michael Eure, and I'd like to invite you to The Michael Eure Show featuring student hosts and very special guests talking about a variety of interesting topics. You can find us on the Eagle Stream YouTube Channel.

Justice Silver
Hello, everyone, I'm Justice Silver a student at Wake Tech and today I'll be interviewing Dr. O'Riordan-Adjah. Okay, thanks for having us. And he's the department head of engineering at Wake Tech Community College. And today he'll be speaking about himself and all that he does and his endeavors and everything that he's looking forward to doing and pursuing. First off, I'd like to ask you, why are you here today?

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Today's African American celebration. This is probably my first one probably ever since I moved here to the United States. Spent some time in Florida, never really had opportunity to go to one. I got clubs on on campus where I used to teach where we had an NSBE, National Society for Black Engineers group, and we will host stuff like this, but never really been to a celebration like this. So yeah.

Justice Silver
This is like your first big opportunity as far as celebrating African American History and Culture overall.

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Absolutely.

Justice Silver
And how does it feel to be here to be a part of an event like this

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Feels great. I'm very fortunate to be invited as a lot that is going on. I'm hoping to spend some time walking around looking at everything that is on there, but I see a lot of Africa here. I see all the clothing everybody's wearing. It brings me right back at home. So it's great.

Justice Silver
It makes you feel back at home?

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Absolutely.

Justice Silver
So then that's your from their original, you know, you're from the Mecca, the Motherland, so to speak, being in America, right? Are there some struggles or like some things that you feel as though you wish people respected or just kind of was how would I say, do you wish there's some things that people knew more about Africa, so to speak?

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
I think actually people are getting to know more about Africa. Now there's been an opportunity for people to go back to Africa. And I'm actually happy now that when people say Africa, they know that it's got 52.

Justice Silver
Yes. It's not just one country.

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
So, you know, that's good. That's good. I remember when I first came here, so probably about 25 years ago, there was a lot that people didn't know about Africa. But I think now, maybe due to technology-

Justice Silver
People are becoming aware.

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Absolutely. So yeah, there isn't too much. Probably naiveness around this. So yeah.

Justice Silver
Now, what's your nationality? Where in Africa are you from?

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
So I'm from Ghana, West Africa. Yeah.

Justice Silver
Ghana, West Africa. And if I'm not mistaken, you were born in Germany, correct?

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Correct.

Justice Silver
So could you tell me about the journey from Ghana? I mean, from Germany to Ghana to Florida to here. Give us a quick-

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Absolutely, absolutely. So I was born in Germany, Berlin when it was still then. Western East.

Justice Silver
Oh, after World War Two.

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Absolutely. So I was only five years old. So I couldn't tell you a lot about my transportation to Ghana. But I know we got a plane we got to got to Ghana. I grew up in Ghana, went to high school in Ghana. Right after high school, I had opportunity to come to the United States to pursue my college degree. So I actually came here started back at Principia college. Back in St. Louis. The closest place to is actually in Elsa, but it places closest place to St. Louis, back in Missouri. So yeah, so there's, spent some time there got my degree and then moved to University of Central Florida. Spent some time there too, met my wife there. Which is always a plus, yes.

Justice Silver
So two for one.

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Yeah, absolutely. I got my master's degree there and then eventually went for my doctorate degree as well. from University of Central Florida. Did some industry work there steady structural engineering. So did some bridges back in Florida. And then decided to test the waters of academia. And here I am today.

Justice Silver
North Carolina?

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Absolutely. So actually from Florida, and then go back to Missouri, where I was the department head there for the engineering program that just started. So I did that for five years graduated some students. Program was good and move here to North Carolina for my next challenge.

Justice Silver
What made you want to relocate here? If you were the department head there, why do you want to become a department head here if I may ask?

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
It's a very good question. I've always kind of wanted to spread opportunity to others. So it's always been my intention that once I get the Missouri School going to a very good point to look for the next opportunity. Three years ago, we visited North Carolina and my wife talks to, my wife was always kind of very supportive to new ideas and new challenges, per se. You know, we decided where it will be our next move and she said North Carolina seems to be a great place. I've always, by the way, wanted a community college experience because I feel like that is part of what is missing in my whole academia journey. I did again wrestle Central Florida four

years graduate school program went to a very small liberal school back in Missouri Principia to get it started. So can experience kind of all and-

Justice Silver
Broaden your horizons?

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Oh, absolutely. The only part that was missing was the community college component, which my wife, by the way, was fortunate to go to a community college so she praises community college and wanted me to get the community college experience. So

Justice Silver
Here you are.

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Yes.

Justice Silver
Several decades later. For you, in your journey into education, what does it mean to you to not remain stagnant because you could have easily stayed in Florida, stayed in Missouri. What is it that keeps that drive going and you know, makes you want to evolve and just keep developing and growing as a person and as an educator, not remaining stagnant and just staying comfortable? Because for so many educators, they just not to dumb this or say speak bad on the basis say some educators oftentimes will stay at a certain place and retire there. For you, you've went from place to place. What is it that motivates and gives you that ambition to keep trying new things.

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
My drive really is to reach out as best that I can. You know, one of the pieces that I kind of didn't add to this whole story here about my journey was when I originally came to the US the college that I went to, they had an engineering program, but it was very new, nobody's really tried it out. So needless to say, I wasn't very successful when I started a program there, which is why I went to Florida to pursue my engineering degree. So it's always kind of been something that I felt was needed back in college. Well, fast forward 15 years later, after I got my engineering degree, the opportunity came to go back to where I started off, to just make it possible for students that didn't have that opportunity. And I think I did that. And for me, that's part of my journey. Okay, now that we've got this here is good, what's the next one? I know that a lot, a lot of people a lot of areas that need help and support. So what's going to be my next opportunity? Now let's let's-

Justice Silver
Did you all that my last question I may ask, 20 years later, you have your doctorate degree, how do you challenge yourself?

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
Right? So I've always said, I've got a doctorate degree, it's put me in a position where I can actually be exposed to new people, right, and it's great. Students look up to me and ask the same question, you know, what does it take to get that? How is it made a difference in your life and I go is a title if you don't use it, right? You actually put it to work when you actually help others or you help people pave the way for success through that. And I think it's give me an opportunity to help, so yeah.

Justice Silver
Well, thank you so much for having us.

Chris O'Riordan-Adjah
It is my pleasure.

Justice Silver
Thank you all for watching.

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Michael Eure
Hello, this is Michael Eure with Eagle Stream and I'm happy to be here today at the African American Cultural Celebration at the North Carolina Museum of History. Our special guest is Heron and he is Heron Day. And he is from New Bern area with the junkanoo dancers and singers. Tell us a little bit about what you did here today and what, what you do every year and what did you do in New Bern with junkanoo?

Heron Day
Well junkanoo is part of trial palaces outreach program into the African American community.

Michael Eure
Okay.

Heron Day
I greatly commend, Tryon Palace for its efforts to reach out into the black community of the African American community. So junkanoo is a reflection of what a group of people had, could do, when they had one day off, to celebrate from their home culture. And that was junkanoo and that's why we do this in eastern North Carolina. It is said to be the first place that they have records showing where these people to part, in the continental USA, for junkanoo, which was not the USA, it was still just the 13 colonies.

Michael Eure

All right. And Edenton where Tryon Palace is at- No, no, Edenton is Tryon Palace before the government moved to New Bern. So Edenton, New Bern, Fayetteville, the state capitol all have the streets leading up to it. So Newbern is a significant place.

Heron Day
No. Tell us what was your first official capital.

Michael Eure
Exactly. I'm only going back to Edenton because the governor resided there. Like you said they weren't really states, man. They were colonies.

Heron Day
Yeah.

Michael Eure
But tell us about because you're here at the museum that you go to other places. And if people want to invite you, how did they go about that?

Heron Day
Oh, yeah. Junkanoo we're functional all year round, but we're very, very busy during Black History Month. Okay. But we're all year round. We have some workshops, that's six weeks long, and we delve into the African American experience and junkanoo's role in it.

Michael Eure
Okay.

Heron Day
So we're all over this state. Greensboro, Durham, Fayetteville, Elizabeth City, Edenton, Newbern, Greenville, Jacksonville, Wilmington, Goldsboro we've been to all we've even performed in Washington DC and Virginia in Suffolk.

Michael Eure
Okay. And I know that Suffolk cuz I grew up near there. Yeah, in North Carolina, but on the line, but tell me you earlier talked about junkanoo was the one day African Americans were able to celebrate from their native.

Heron Day
Yes, their own culture.

Michael Eure
And is this very similar to the junkanoo they have in the Caribbean?

Heron Day
It is that.

Michael Eure
Okay.

Heron Day
It is what they brought from their people from that area.

Michael Eure
Okay. So, tell us how do you go about selecting the dancers and singers or do they just kind of word of mouth come and audition.

Heron Day
It's mainly word of mouth. It's very difficult to get people to fully participate because when you're doing roles of being a slave, it has a certain stigma in the mind when people. So it's difficult to retain people so the people you see in junkanoo are people really committed to it and really get the necessity of what we provide and the service that is needed.

Michael Eure
Okay. Well I'm gonna ask you about the possibility even though I'm not personally gonna make it happen but I'm gonna ask about you coming to Wake Tech, Wake Technical Community College in Raleigh, and maybe performing not necessarily for Black History Month but just one of those off months. And but we were in the school days does that impact you?

Heron Day
We do that.

Michael Eure
Okay.

Heron Day
We go to the school systems, okay. Colleges, okay, we, we put that message out there.

Michael Eure
Well, I'm really happy that you took time to be with us today for a little while and share your experiences. Is there anything you would like the audience to know that I have missed?

Heron Day
Just joining with junkanoo, know our history, know the value of what we do, and appreciate it as part of the American experience. That's one of the things I like to say, when we speak on junkanoo, I don't like to various on a simple little thing of black history of African American History. I really particularly like to make it known we are very, very important part of the American experience. Our experience really,

really give the United States history some powerful depth from where we were, to where we come. Evidence, that's evidence of a powerful thing.

Michael Eure
Well, I thank you and I look forward to you coming and helping us wade in the water up in Raleigh, outside of this.

Heron Day
Make sure you get in with chairman Brian.

Michael Eure
I will do that. And I'll make sure we get the information. And we'll see you again, hopefully before next year, this time.

Heron Day
Oh, I live here all the time, anyway.

Michael Eure
Are you? Okay. Thanks.

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Justice Silver
Hello, everyone. I'm Justice Silver a student here at Wake Tech Community College and today, we're at the National History Museum, and we're celebrating African American culture. And today I'll be interviewing Jose Reyes, correct?

Jose Reyes
That is correct. Yeah. Not many people can get that the rolling r correct.

Justice Silver
It took many attempts to get him right before this. Yeah. So my first question is I'm going to ask, what brings you here today?

Jose Reyes
Well, I met Mr. Michael. And then through him, I've gotten to know more and more about these events. Also, I did not know this, but my university was here, the band came today and they play very well. And the choir also was here. So that's very interesting to hear. Cuz I missed the band just a little bit.

Justice Silver
That's unfortunate. What school do you go to?

Jose Reyes
I go to St. Augustine's University it's a small HBCU here in Raleigh.

Justice Silver
Okay, and what are you majoring in?

Jose Reyes
I'm majoring in engineering mathematics.

Justice Silver
And how is that going? As far as your schooling we know engineering is such a dominant and rigorous field. How is that going for you being that you're a student? Speaking from experience?

Jose Reyes
Speaking from my experience, it is a very rigorous program. And as long as you got a good study schedule, and if you're working, working schedule, you can balance your, your study life, your school life, and some personal life. So if you can do that you should be set.

Justice Silver
But school is always the main priority?

Jose Reyes
Yes, school is always the main priority for me. So, there has been some hiccups down the road. But everything's working out now so far.

Justice Silver
And what do you have to balance your time between as far as school like what are some other extracurricular or outside school activities that you're involved in?

Jose Reyes
Well, between school to balance out right now I have an internship with the North Carolina Department of Transportation. So at the balance the internship with school, I also am president of NSBE there, which is the National Society of Black Engineers. So I'm the president there and we're trying to bring it back up and running. And then I'm also the treasurer for the STEM department.

Justice Silver
So you're heavily involved in many things.

Jose Reyes
Yeah, I'm heavily involved in a lot of stuff. So all that can get time consuming. There's a lot of scheduling conflicts, sometimes where I had to say, "Hey, can you just send me the notes from the meeting because I'm not able to go." But at the end of the day, as long as you got a group of people, a group of friends, a group of mentors and advisors there that can help you out throughout the way, it helps a lot.

Justice Silver

You have a good support system around you.

Jose Reyes
I believe so I'd say.

Justice Silver
So what year are you in right now?

Jose Reyes
This is my second semester senior year.

Justice Silver
Oh, so you'll be done.

Jose Reyes
I'll be done in May. Hopefully, right?

Heron Day
Congratulations.

Jose Reyes
Thank you.

Justice Silver
So after you graduate, what are your plans to do? Like what do you want to pursue as far as engineering?

Jose Reyes
As far as engineering, I want to pursue mechanical engineering. So I know that's what I want to do for graduate school, and I know I have to catch up on a few classes, just because of the way my degree is set up. But on the other side, It is kind of late for me to apply for graduate schools right now. So I am looking at training programs like the one they have at the North Carolina Department, it's called TEA. So in this program if you apply and if you get accepted, you rotate through their units for 18 months. And then in the end of it, you can start working there.

Justice Silver
What is it that makes you want to pursue mechanical engineering? Has that always been a dream of yours or there's something that happened later in life where you thought, "Oh, this is my calling, this is what I want to do."?

Jose Reyes
It's a little bit of both. I've always thought of my dream was, you know, I want to work with vehicles, whenever I want to work with vehicles. And in high school, I did a lot of classes dealing with automotive technology. And that was really fun for me. And from there, you know, I was like, what was the next step up?

Justice Silver
How can you better yourself than this?

Jose Reyes
How can I better myself? It's like, "Yes, here I'll just, I'll get to see the finished product per se, but how can I be the person helping make better products?" So I believe in mechanical engineering, I could do that in the research area, like the material sciences part of it, or because, or I've also like electronics. So like the mechatronics part of it, from what I understand is part of the electrical engineering department, mechanical engineering. So all of this is really interesting to me. It's just, there's a lot of fields I would like to go into. It's just mechanical engineering just- It's your call. It calls a little more to me. Yeah.

Justice Silver
Now, before we wrap this up, my last question will be, let's say, you graduate in May, in five years, where do you see yourself? What do you want to be involved in as far as mechanical engineering?

Jose Reyes
Five years? That's a long time.

Justice Silver
What are your goals that you have set for yourself? You seen an example set?

Jose Reyes
Well, the goals I have set for myself as in five years from now, I am starting up my own company. I have some professional experiences from the workplace, either from the public or the private sector. So five years from now I hope to begin my PE. In this time I'm already accomplishing it. So then I'll be a professional engineer, which would be great for helping out the degree I've already got. And I plan on starting my own company too. So there's there's always something I've been looking into since I was young. I've, I've had the fortunate opportunity to work with people that have had their own businesses. So I've seen how that works out. Yes.

Justice Silver
Well, best of luck with all your future endeavors. And thank you for having me.

Jose Reyes
Thank you for having me here.

Justice Silver
Oh yes.