

Blaze the Mic S2E2 – Francisco Moreno Transcript

Douglas:

You are listening to Blaze the Mic, a podcast from the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work that explores the real stories of our students and social work professionals. Together, we visit stories about how our students have built bridges, end stigma, and create positive impact affecting entire communities. I'm your host, Douglas Gutierrez, and this is Blaze the Mic.

Douglas:

Hey, everybody. Welcome to Blaze the Mic. I am here with the Francisco Moreno IV. How are you doing today?

Francisco:

Good. Thank you for having me today.

Douglas:

And thank you for coming. Thanks for coming. How's your day been so far?

Francisco:

So far, so good. I woke up early and was working on my truck a little bit. It's a little job of mine that I got now that I have a little bit more free time on my hands.

Douglas:

Nice. Nice. What type of truck is it?

Francisco:

It's a it's an older truck. It's a 2001 F-150. Um, holds a special place in my heart because it was my grandfather's. So, I'm taking care of it.

Douglas:

I understand that. Yeah. For the longest, I was driving an old hoopty myself. I had a 2002 Buick Rendezvous. Big body, big back. Man, a lot of miles on that car. Metaphorically and literally, but yeah. That car put me through college. Saved me from a car note, which now that I'm learning, is one less thing to have, and it's a grateful one less thing to have. But now that's good. That's good. So, Francisco, we're here to talk about you and your story, your unique story today. I know at a glance, you're an MSW graduate student of our MSW program at the School of Social Work here at UTA. Tell me a little bit about yourself and then if we can lead into now to your thoughts about after graduating from the MSW program.

Francisco:

So yeah, I just recently graduate this year in August so I went to the commencement ceremony is a nice ceremony - I know is really great.

The dean talked and everything and I actually got to meet him. He's a very nice guy and he spoke to me for a little bit and I also spoke to some of my professors that I had seen. And it was just all around. Great experience. I enjoyed it. I guess, because our graduation is in until December, which is so weird.

I'm still confused about that. Yeah, you have to wait till this time, but I'm just going with I'll just flow with it. So. But yeah, during my whole program here, it's been great. I've learned so much going through the MSW and BSW because I got my biggest BSW here too. I've just learned so much great things about social work and what it means and what it means to me because I've also applied it to myself.

Francisco:

When I grew up, I was going into a place where a lot of myself that I was doing, I was shielded from. I was in a two-person household. My mother and dad were there, my sister and a lot of things were taken care of, didn't have to worry about a single thing. Later on down the line. In high school, my parents started going through a divorce. It was very hard during that time because there was a lot of emotions and new words that I wasn't familiar with, but I was dealing with. It was very challenging, and I didn't know what to do with those emotions. So a lot of times I had anger issues. I had just all of a sudden just and just I would get so mad, I would just start crying.

I don't know what to do with it. And then eventually my mom suggested that, why don't we start going to see a therapist? So I was like, okay, well, you know, let's start going to therapy. We'll see what's that's like. And over time, when I started going to therapy, I realized, wow, I didn't know that these feelings I had what they were meaning a lot of these feelings that I thought were weird and that like, why am I feeling this, were valid.

A lot of the things I was going through were normal, and at the time I thought it was a normal to be feeling those things, but then going to therapy and everything made me realize what I'm feeling is a good thing and it's a normal thing. It doesn't take away from who I am. Yes, there's a situation going on, but I'm still me.

Francisco:

And after that, that's the spark that I always knew. I wanted to help people. I wanted to do EMT or be a fireman but wasn't too good at biology. I was good in chemistry, but not biology. So I decided, well, let's use that and then instead go this route. So I went through social work and the therapist and actually funny enough, the therapist that I was seeing, he went to you to UTA.

Doughlas:

Look at that.

Francisco:

Yeah. So he went to UTA. So then I started asking him questions. You know, later on, as our time was coming to a close with him, I started asking him about the program and everything

that he went through at UTA. So that's what really drove me to come to UTA as well, because for one also it's really close to my house.

Douglas:

That's a plus. Yeah, that's a plus.

Francisco:

But mainly because he went to UTA and I was like, You know what? I think that's the kind of thing I want to do too. And that's what really drove me to do that as well, just to help because I ended up choosing my specialty, ended up being children and families, and I wanted to work with that same population and doing that same thing out here at UTA.

Douglas:

Interesting. So, is it safe to say that, that time in your life kind of sparked your drive towards social work in your in your desire to want to help people?

Francisco:

It really did, because before then I was really in between of what I wanted to do, trying to pick out. I was graduating high school and I was like, I don't really, I know I want to help people, but I don't know where to help people.

And I didn't know what to do with like, there's so many things to help people, but not like a specific thing. I work in pharmacy and that's a great place with people, but I wanted the humanistic route because pharmacy is a great place to work in. However, they treat, you know, pharmacy, they treat people with medications and it's a good thing, you know, people need their medicine.

Also, it's like here is your medicine for anxiety. But I want it to be instead of just handing people medicines for anxiety, I wanted to be giving to the root of the anxiety. Like what's causing your anxiety? How did you get here? You know, what caused you to get here and working with the people on that so that because everyone takes medicine, they don't want to be on medicine forever.

And, you know, some people don't have a choice, of course, but if they have that choice, they would rather go through that, I believe. And that's why I wanted to work with those kind of children and families through that.

Douglas:

A lot of people think or hear about children and families. They just think specifically Child Protective Services, like CPS when it comes to like social work.

And I know that social work literally touches a lot of different fields. We have things in law. We have things in education, advocacy, health, gerontology, just so many fields. Specifically, within children and families, what part did you want to take or what role did you want to take to help that population?

Francisco:

So the thing that I was wanting to do is two things.

I wanted to start working in that field. So since I graduated, now I'm going to start working towards my licensure and eventually getting my clinical because I want to start my own practice one day. I want to start my own practice and start working with children and families and my own practice. And then the other thing I want to do is advocate, advocate for those children and families, because when I was growing up, a lot of that stuff until my therapy, that mental health stuff I didn't know about, I didn't know like what I was feeling, you know, of course I was going through it and just didn't know exactly what to do with it. It's kind of just kind of putting it to putting it to the side and just kind of, okay, we'll deal with that later. But then eventually it came to a point where you can't put it off anymore. You have to address this now.

Douglas:

Correct.

Francisco:

And that's what a lot of those I come from a Hispanic family, very religious, religious, Hispanic family.

That is great, that I love them. And they've done so much for me about that. But then there's a point where you're like, okay, I need to take a step back. I can pray about this, but then also I need to address this. And that's what I started doing because I, I lean on that a lot. You know, my family has been really great about praying for me.

But then also, whenever I got to the other perspective, I was like, okay, I need to start addressing it too.

Douglas:

And, and that's a good point. I think there can be multiple truths. I think more than one thing can be true at the same time. I think it's also important to hold those values and morals from a cultural upbringing.

Francisco:

Yeah.

Douglas:

But also with newly added information, with the advancement we have of technology and modern medicine, things like therapy should be, I believe more should be more accepted and talked about. You spoke a lot about coming from a very, you know, religious Hispanic family and you speak about therapy a lot with a lot of passion. And I really enjoy that.

What advice do you have for - speaking specifically to the men going through mental health issues - what advice would you give to men in that place of discomfort, in that place of anger who may not feel very comfortable or confident seeking therapy?

Francisco:

Yeah, I know a lot of myself. I was included in that because my dad, whenever we would go to therapy, even I was like it too, because, you know, both of us were kind of like, I don't know if I need therapy, really.

Douglas:

It's a man-thing, let me brush it to the side.

Francisco:

You're like, Oh no. Because a lot of a lot of men, Hispanic culture included, but then a lot of men just in general have that thing of, you know, just shrug it off or boys will be boys or, you know, you know, you don't have time to cry about something, You know, you just kind of shrug it off, you know, put it off, you know, you're not supposed to have any emotions to the men that have those mental issues or are dealing with those kind of things.

You know, it is important to seek help. I put it off as much as I could and I tried to. And eventually it got me into a place where I couldn't deal with it anymore. I have the scars to prove for it [both] physically and mentally from it, and it's so important to get the help you need. You know, UTA has such a great program they offer like these counseling services that are free here. And that's one of the things I didn't utilize that as much during my master's, but during my bachelors, I would every now and then just peek my head in and just see, oh, what's going on, you know, and just kind of talk with them just for a little bit to see what's going on and just, just to have that person from a third party perspective really talk to you and just say, hey, you know, this is going on.

And it was really nice to have that because my family, as as much as I love them, they do so much for me as also just having that third person outside of that, you know, just basically also like where am I to was really helpful. And that's one of the things that I just suggest so much just go to that first appointment.

You know, you don't have to commit to it. You know, no one's no one's going to twist your arm. No one is going to twist your arm to do it. But just go to the one appointment, see how it is just, you know, not saying to lay everything out that first time. If you do, you do. But just just talk normally.

You know, it's a normal conversation in there and they're there to help you. That's at the end of the day, they're there for you and that's why they're there. And that and a lot of people, you know, need that person. And that's why I that's what drove me to social work because of that, because I wanted to be that person for someone else to understand that, like, what you're going through is okay, your feelings are valid and there is someone that is willing to listen to you.

Douglas:

I love that. We had a project the other day actually with the dean of the School of Social Work, Dr. Kirk A. Foster, and one of the points that he really emphasized was his pillars of service. And within service, I look at service not as something that we can do by ourselves, though there are things we can do on the individual scale, but from the group perspective as a community, to have that type of support, to have, whether it's a licensed professional like a therapist or a really close friend that says, Hey, I've noticed this about you, I've noticed some changes.

Is there anything you want to talk about? How important is having, for men speaking on the mental health issue - How important is it to have other men but just support in general, having others kind of have that investment in your mental health to say, Hey, how are you doing? Are you okay? Talk to me.

Francisco:

It means a lot.

There's so much there's so many young boys and so many younger men to see someone go on stage in front of a crowd of people to just talk about their emotions so freely, to say, I was in that same spot as you. I can you know, I can relate with you and those kind of things. It means the world, because you see someone like that going on stage, talking about those kind of things and you're like, Maybe I can do that.

Like, I watched the videos about Ted talks. I always thought about doing one of those.

Douglas:

Those Ted Talks are pretty cool. They're pretty cool.

Francisco:

They are. I've always thought about I know they had some program here about that too, but I just think it's so interesting because taking away so much of that, you know, when you go on that stage, being the person that's talking on stage versus being the person that's in the crowd, you want to connect those two, like bridge that gap so that those people can understand, okay, it's okay to talk about this.

It's normal. What you're feeling is, okay, There's someone else that was just like you and then they, you know, a lot of those people presenters talk about like their back story and go through it. And then, you know, some people can start relating, Oh, I had that kind of thing going on or maybe I was in that same similar situation.

And then from there they work from there and realize, well, maybe, you know, maybe what he's saying maybe is true. Maybe it's time that maybe I start looking for help or maybe getting that help. And that's the biggest thing. And that's what I took away from a lot of things like that that a lot of people don't realize how important those words are to those generations going forward into the years realizing how important those words mean.

And because a lot of people are like, I don't know how, you know, if it really got to them, but then all of a sudden on one day there was somebody like reach out by email or, you know, meet the presenter afterwards and be like, you know, what you really said meant a lot to me. You know, I just had a father or someone passed away.

And what you said really meant a lot to me, and that was it was like myself I had during my bachelor's program, I had my grandmother pass away. It was a hard time for me, but my grandmother was my biggest supporter as far as social work. She always told me she always said the words, "Corazón de pollo", she said that because she knew how much I would feel for people.

But she also told me that you need to be careful because you know where your heart is. You know, you feel a lot more people need to do that. And that's where I was like, okay. And she

was one of my biggest supporters with that. And she made me start realizing the importance of speaking out.

Douglas:

It's interesting phrase, Corazón de pollo?

Heart of the chicken?

Francisco:

Yes.

Douglas:

Heart of a chicken. That's a very interesting phrase.

Francisco:

She would say it to me because she would say, I know you care a lot about people, but you also need to be. And that was when I was first starting in my bachelor's program. She would tell me that because she knew how much I would feel for people like I get secondhand embarrassment while watching a movie.

Somebody, I guess, second hand embarrassment. I like skip a scene or something because I'm like, Oh man, I feel for the character kind of thing. But at the beginning it was difficult for me. You know, I would say it was difficult during my bachelors to separate, but, you know, because then I like feeling so much. You know, at the end of the day, we want to help people to the most that we can.

Of course, it's not perfect. And, you know, the outcomes might be different than we want, but the baseline is to making sure that person understands that you're there for them and that always leaving the door open. And that was one of the things while I was at my internship checking up on them, I had a person that one of my clients I was working with and meant the world to her, just reaching out to her once a week, understanding that there was a person reaching out to her, just her just one one time during the week.

You know, that's a lot of people right now that, you know, that's why just checking on your friends, your family just saying, hey, how's it going? What are you up to? Kind of thing means so much just because you don't know what kind of week they're going through. You know, they might not be, you know, might be a fine week, but then also might be a hectic week and a lot of things going on.

And that's that's what social work is, just reaching out that one hand. And, you know, it's also up to them to take it. But, you know, always making sure that hand is out for them and having them understand that is important.

Douglas:

Well said, well said. I know you mentioned something I wanted to kind of pick at. I think with social work, it's a very hard field emotionally because the passion that a lot of social workers have, they want to help the world.

And for it to be almost you almost have to kind of change your course of action. Like if you want to change the world, you have to start very small. Start with just first of all for yourself, but start

with a small group. Start with this targeted funnel, if you will, of an audience, and then hopefully it can matriculate in other areas.

But yeah, I know this has got to be hard when you're full of passion and you want to help the world, you want to save the world, you want to help everybody, but you can't...Or at least not all at the same time.

Francisco:

Exactly.

You know, and that's what I wanted to do because I realized a lot of like during my bachelor's, I was like doing these big things.

But then a lot of my professors were like, You need to like, tone it down to maybe, you know, you have a big perspective, but also you need to tone it down to maybe just a community expected because, you know, you want to help as many people. Yes. Which is a great thing. But then also you have to start small and work your way up to it.

Douglas:

Because we need results?

Francisco:

Exactly.

Douglas:

We need results. Francisco. Yeah, I can tell you have a lot of passion even speaking with you before recording. Just feeling that, feeling how your personality and your perspective on a lot of things, a lot of wisdom. You know, first and foremost, my condolences for your - it was your grandmother, correct?

Francisco:

Yes.

Douglas:

For your grandmother. Speaking about mental health and going through not only a bachelor's program, but a master's program, while also grieving, I know has been a challenge and a process for you.

My question to you, what advice would you give to a student who is maybe currently going through something emotional but is having a hard time either committing or finishing a program? Either at the undergraduate level or at the graduate level with a master's degree?

Francisco:

Whenever I was going through that, because that's why - I should have graduated maybe a year ago, but because of that, my grandmother passing and other little things going on.

That was a setback for me. But there were times during the during the bachelor's program where I did think about stopping, and I did think about quitting because I was like, what's the point? You know, I'm I've you know, I've done this and here I am right now. And whenever you

go through something like that, you get a realistic thing going on, like a realism, like, okay, you realize what's going on and you start taking a different perspective and that's where I was that I was starting to realize, okay, maybe I just need to take a step back, just focus on family.

I'll come back to this eventually. But the drive was, is how much I have a picture saved in my phone. It's a picture of my grandmother and she hugs me in it and it's like a live photo. The iPhones, they have the live photos and it shows like I'm just watching a Cowboys game with her and she's smiling and then she, like, hugs me.

And then I start smiling too. And those kind of things, you know, her seeing that smile and realizing how much of a drive she wanted and how much she would be so proud of me knowing where I am today and what I've done. That's what drove me to continue. That's when I was like, I'm doing this for her.

I'm doing this for me and I'm doing it for all the people before me. Because my dad, he had a tradesman degree. My mother, you know, she has her bachelor's. But before that a lot of people in my family didn't have any, you know, graduated high school. But that was it. And to be there, be that person for your family, not only just to represent your family, but also just have your family supporting you.

And being that village behind you meant so much and having that. And I would tell those people that it might be hard right now, but whenever you finally get there, it is so worth it. Like now that I'm there, now that I'm here and now that I'm graduating, it doesn't feel like it.

Douglas:

You still got to walk the stage.

I get it. I can respect that. You still got to walk the stage. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Francisco:

It doesn't feel like it because I've. I still go to check outlook, I still go to check. I still go check teams. I still go check all those things. Every now and then I catch myself. I'm like, Oh man, I won't even be doing that.

I guess not. But I mean, I'm like, It's still the change is now, you know, it's been different realizing that that changed. But I would tell those people the reward is so gratifying in the end to have it not only, you know, for your family, but for you, how far you've come, how many sleepless nights you went through, how many essays you had to write, how many essays you've had to write to get to the point of where you are right now.

It is so worth it. Finally, being there, being with the people you love and celebrating it all together means the world.

Douglas:

Speaking of sleepless nights and endless essays, my last question you, Francisco, what's next for you? Are you are you thinking about coming back to us for the Ph.D. program, pursuing a doctoral degree? Would you like more sleepless nights?

Would you like an additional few years of outlook emails at two/three in the morning and all that other good stuff that comes with it?

Francisco:

I actually I don't I don't mind that stuff, but I do right now. Now that I graduated, I plan on I'm studying. I have my licensing test scheduled for September.

Douglas:

Awesome.

Francisco:

So I'm going to plan on taking that and then I'm going to take a little off time, take at least a year break to kind of recollect some of the money that I spent for this program.

But next fall, I do plan on coming back to the PhD program. There is a specific professor that really drove me and Dr. YangJin Park. He's very knowledgeable, very great guy. During my master's program, He, you know, our classes together. He really did speak a lot and just how fluent he was with just knowledge and understanding of social work.

And his Ph.D. level was just I was I was surprised. I was like every day, every class, he would bring so much information, so much knowledge. And it was just so fluent to him that was so great. And he would talk about the, you know, him and I would have like conversations about the side conversations every now and then about those kind of things.

And then that was, you know, I had already that kind of idea before, you know, coming into the master's program, I was like, maybe I might do that. But I we'll see. We'll see how things go before that. But now that I am here, now I'm like, you know what? I think that is something I want to do, and that is something I want to come back to UTA.

A little bit more sleepless nights are okay.

Douglas:

Just a few.

Francisco:

Just a few of not too many yet. I've actually gotten into finally, so many years later, finally got into doing my work two weeks ahead of time. But yes, I wasn't that I wasn't ever like the years ago. I wish I had that kind of work ethic back then when I was younger.

But now that I have that, it's so much it is so much worth it. Yeah. And I believe that's where I want to go too.

Douglas:

It has its benefits huh, doing work early?

Francisco:

Yeah, it really does. Because then you have time. Like I said at the beginning, you know, now I'm working on my truck, working on my truck to try to get it back up and running. Hopefully it won't be down to much longer. Got a couple of days left, but yeah.

Douglas:

It'll come out fine. I'm sure it will be fine. Yeah. Well, Francisco, I appreciate your time very impactful story. Thank you for sharing with us. And as always, please come back to us and I look forward to the success of your academic and your professional career. And I hope that I could take your picture walking across that stage.

Francisco:

All right. I appreciate you having me. And thank you so much.

Douglas:

Thank you for supporting this episode of Blaze The Mic. This production was brought to you by the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work's Communications and Marketing Office. If you like this episode and would like to learn more about the University of Texas at Arlington and its top ranked School of Social Work program, please visit us at uta.edu/ssw or you can follow us on social media at [UTASocialWork](https://www.facebook.com/UTASocialWork). Thanks again. Until next time, this is Douglas Gutierrez signing off.