

A Bit of Me

This series of profiles on SUNY Broome community members is a part of the Student Village diversity calendar initiative. We will be highlighting members in our community who identify with or can speak on the diversity theme or topic for each month. The theme for September is Hispanic Heritage month and the topic is the Black Lives Matter movement. To be featured in this series please reach out to Pamela Alvarez or Alexandria Donkor.

Gabriella Santana

SUNY Broome Alum



Background: I'm a SUNY Broome alum and I graduated the Fall of 2018 with my Associates in Human Services. I grew up in Newburgh, NY, but I currently now live and work in Albany, NY. This past spring of 2020 I graduated from the University of Albany with my Bachelor's degree in Human Development and Public Health.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE ON CAMPUS? HOW DID YOU COME TO CHOOSE IT?

Through the greater half of my time at SUNY Broome I came into the role as Resident Assistant (RA) in the Student Village. I did not know much about residential life and the benefits of this role until my third semester at SUNY Broome. My roommate and close friend first entered the role as Resident Assistant, which sparked my interest and led me into finding out more about it. I saw the opportunity to become more engaged on campus and in the Student Village, and to this day I am glad I took a chance to step out of my comfort zone and become an RA.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE ROLE?

Although it was not always easy, finding the balance between being a college student, my personal life, and an RA has proved to have benefited me in the long run. I really appreciate the purpose it gave me to focus and get what I have to do done, but to also be ready to take on whatever the day will throw at me. I love the friendships and memories I created throughout having this role on campus. Creating and

hosting programs where residents were able to be engaged in the activity, talk, and have a great time was one of the best feelings while being an RA.

WHAT ARE THREE TRAITS THAT DEFINE YOU?

To narrow down three traits that define me, I would say I am enthusiastic, persistent (some might say stubborn), and optimistic. These three traits have come to define me through the way my life and what I have experienced has shaped me. Both the opportunities and setbacks have molded me into becoming an individual who tries and tries again until I reach my goal. I am both enthusiastic and optimistic because I choose to focus my attitude on uplifting myself and others.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS?

I think it's very hard to find the "perfect" definition of success. To me success is reaching the goal you set out for yourself, and I believe we have the power to determine our success. I have felt success in many ways, from graduating and landing a job in the field I am interested in, to even the simple success of waking up early on my days off. My moments of success are what help push and fuel my drive to keep wanting as well as doing more for myself.

WHAT IS THE COOLEST (OR MOST IMPORTANT) TREND YOU SEE TODAY?

An important trend I see today is the normalization of different body types. Changing the standard of beauty is so important and crucial to our society, as it is a valuable key in spreading acceptance to all individuals no matter their shape, size, identity, and background etc.

WHAT DOES HISPANIC HERITAGE MEAN TO YOU?

Hispanic heritage means celebrating my roots, my culture, and my family history. The recent passing of my grandmother has left me feeling disconnected from my roots more than ever. She was the bridge to my Puerto Rican roots- because of her I am able to embrace my identity as a Hispanic American. I plan to embrace Hispanic Heritage month and throughout this month I plan to reconnect, remember, and celebrate what it means to be Puerto Rican.

WHO INSPIRES YOU?

My mom's strength, kind-heart, and perseverance inspires me every day. Now as an adult, (for the most part), I look back and realize all the selfless things she did for her family and kids. I admire that she was able to push through hard times and be not only a great mom, but a therapist, a taxi driver, and a cook for me and my siblings. She has also been a big part in keeping me close to my roots and who I am by showing me how to cook traditional Puerto Rican meals, (even now I still call her to help me make rice and beans!).

WHAT WOULD YOU NAME THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF YOUR LIFE?

The title of my autobiography would be "I Go to Seek the Great Perhaps." That resonates with my constant chase in finding my purpose in life. Entering adulthood there is a lot of pressure to know what you are going to do with your life or what path you are going to take in life. Instead of being weighed down by that pressure I choose to focus on taking life day by day, trying out different career paths, and continuing my search for my great perhaps on my own terms.

WHAT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO TELL YOURSELF AT AGE 18?

I would tell myself that happiness is not a single destination, but it's within the moments I allow them to be in. That there is beauty in the struggle, and that it is okay to not have your life planned out. Oh and to relax with the midnight McDonald's runs.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OUR STUDENTS?

Here are three valuable pieces of Gaby advice:

1. Do what makes you happy, if you don't think you can do it odds are you probably can! It's your choice to make it happen!
2. If you think the pan needs more oil, trust me it doesn't!
3. Appreciate every moment of being in college! Try new things, go to class, and make amazing memories that no one can take from you!

IF GIVEN A CHANCE, WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE FOR A DAY?

If given the chance I would be the richest person in the world because although money can't buy happiness it can pay my bills and buy me a lot of nice things!