

Academically Speaking with Representative Anna Eskamani - S3E2

Opening:

This is Academically Speaking, a podcast hosted by Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry, Vice Provost and Dean of UCF's College of Undergraduate Studies. It features inspirational stories from the college's faculty, students, and alumni about the transformational power of education.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Hello and welcome to Academically Speaking. This is Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry, Vice Provost and Dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies here at the University of Central Florida; and with me today for our podcast is Representative Anna Eskamani. Anna is a bold fighter for Florida families and everyday people. Born and raised in Orlando, which we don't normally see from a lot of people – a lot of us are transplants. She's the daughter of working-class Iranian immigrants, who came to this country in search of the American dream; and I want to talk a little bit about that.

Anna went to public schools, the University of Central Florida, and is a nonprofit professional currently seeking her Ph.D. in Public Administration. She ran for office as a first-time candidate in 2018 and flipped a legislative seat and is proud to serve as a State House Representative for District 42, winning both her reelection campaigns in a landslide. That's impressive.

She currently serves as a chair of both the Orange County Legislative Delegation and the Florida Legislative Energy and Climate Caucus. A track record of kind sacrifice, endless hard work, and ironclad values, Anna is known across the state and nation as a leader who is unbothered, unbossed, and committed to the people of Florida. And I have to say that unbothered and unbossed is speaking to me and thinking about the late Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and her leadership and her service to this country in that role and what it means to stick by your guns and to hold your values, that is absolutely impressive.

But I'm going to take a couple of steps back just so that we can get to know you a little bit; and talk to us about why you chose interdisciplinary studies as a major with an emphasis or a concentration in women's studies? Talk to me about that.

Anna Eskamani:

I would love to. And first of all, Dr. Berry, thank you for your incredible leadership here at UCF, and it's such a pleasure to share space with you and

to highlight, you know, how the College of Undergraduate Studies was a big part of my life and my professional journey as the leader I am today.

And so, when I got to UCF back in 2008, I wasn't sure what I wanted to study, to be honest. So, I started first as an Environmental Science major. I really care about the environment, as you can see in my work today, you know, climate policy and energy policy are an emphasis for me. But I realized as I was studying some of these really focused STEM classes that I enjoyed the content, but it wasn't something that I wanted to continue, as, you know, being tested on.

I wanted to know it, but I didn't feel like the focus for me was that path and at the time I was minoring in Political Science. I had an amazing AP Government teacher in my local high school that inspired me to care about government; and so I thought about it and I researched the undergraduate catalog and I said, "Okay, I'm going to change my minor to a major. And then that opens up the room for another minor,"; and women studies really was appealing to me. My mom passed away when I was a young girl and I was 13 years old and she was one of the most selfless, kind, and just passionate women you would meet. And yet, we didn't have a lot of money in my family, and yet she was still so selfless in giving. And I'm a firm believer that death may end a life, but not a relationship. So, I want to get to know my mom's life better and her story better, so I started reading a lot of literature written by women of color, about women of color, specifically also the immigrant experience and it helped inspire me to want to learn more about the women's movement and so that's why I picked Women Studies as that initial minor, and I just fell in love with the coursework. And because I had some AP credits from high school, I was able, within four years, to actually consider having a dual major program. So, when I realized that there was an interdisciplinary studies track on women's studies, it was the perfect fit because I was already minoring in this coursework and I figure, well, "Let's turn that minor into a major", and so began my journey in what they called undergraduate studies as well.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. Thank you for sharing your story. So, tell us a little bit more about your UCF experience in general and some memorable times as a student here at the university.

Anna Eskamani:

Oh my gosh. I mean, UCF is without a doubt my home. It will always be my home. My dad actually went to UCF and graduated in 1994 and my brother graduated around '09, and then my twin sister and I came here in '08. And I did my masters following my undergrad here, and now, as you know, I'm

getting my PhD also at UCF. So, I bleed black and gold. But I think what's really special for me is, as a child, I would come to this campus with my parents and there's actually photos of me and my family having picnics in front of Reflection Pond, and I would run through the library looking for kids books, which were never to be found, but I have a deep sense of just nostalgia, I think, about the campus environment, but just my growth here as a student was monumental.

I really focused on academic performance without a doubt. And in fact, I was the top undergraduate of the College of Undergraduate Studies upon graduation on the platform party; but my academic experience was commenting on my activism. And I do think about the students I registered to vote. We registered 12,000 students to vote by my senior year, just that one year when I was a leader with the College Democrats here. We also would host different events and activities to uplift the political efficacy of students so that when we were experiencing, for example, challenges with Bright Futures, students knew where to turn to for their energy. It was constructive to say, "Hey, if you're upset about Bright Futures getting cut, here's the folks you need to talk to," right? And so, we really took a lot of pride in educating students on their political voice, on how to vote, and why it is important to vote. And then I would see the connection between what I read in my classroom to what I would see in the community. So, for example, one of my highlights of my undergraduate work was volunteering at Dress For Success and Dress For Success is a nonprofit organization that helps specifically women make a tailored transition back to the workforce. And the whole point of this nonprofit is it's hard to get a job if you don't have the interview clothes, but it's hard to pay for the interview clothes if you don't have a job so they provide you with that wardrobe, right? So, I started volunteering there when I was studying women's studies and a majority of the classes in the program are service learning classes, so you're required to have that extra mental learning, but it also kind of puts you in a good networking opportunity, but also, it opens up your eyes. So, I would read about the challenges that women face when they are exiting the correctional institutions as returning citizens and the barriers you would face to employment, and then I would go to Dress For Success and volunteer there and meet women who had those same exact experiences, who had just come out of serving time for a certain criminal penalty and now they're trying to get back in a pace of everyday life, but still facing these systematic challenges. And that really impacted my commitment to community and gave me a deeper perspective I never would have had if it wasn't for UCF and it wasn't for these programs. So, I'm forever in debt - those experiences - and

I have to say, Dr. Berry, I just took a tour of Dress For Success a few weeks ago at their location in the West Oaks Mall, and it was full circle for me, you know, to walk into this boutique as now a lawmaker when I once walked in as an Undergraduate student at UCF. So, it's pretty --it's not only just a cool moment, but it speaks to how, you know, the emphasis that UCF had, the emphasis that this college has on student experiences being more than just a textbook, and really trying to ensure that there's a foundation of learning that goes beyond the classroom.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. So, why don't you talk a little bit about your mother and your twin sister and your dad and all this family of individuals who had the experience of being UCF students, but your family has faced some adversity, too. How did that shape who you are today?

Anna Eskamani:

Well, even when my dad was at UCF it was very challenging. I mean, you know, my dad was getting a degree in electrical engineering while raising three children, working full time as a waiter. My mom was working at fast-food restaurants, eventually at KMarts. So, we always faced a lot of challenges financially. I would say the only times I ever saw my parents argue was over money, "Are we going to be able to pay things on time?" and that was a stress that I saw my parents carry their entire, you know, lives together. And I say together because as I mentioned already, my mom unfortunately was diagnosed with cancer when I was about nine years old, and after a long fight, she passed away and that is a pain and a trauma that you will never actually overcome. You know, my sister has a really beautiful metaphor. She says that "there's always a hole in your heart, but your heart just gets bigger", so the hole feels smaller, but it's still there. And, you know, moments where you least expect it, you know, it pours out, right? And so, I have to navigate that every single day, but to your question of, you know, how does it impact you? I'm a firm believer in finding power in pain and in honoring those no longer with you through your actions. So, my mom was this incredible, selfless being so I want to be that selfless person, too. I want to reflect the values she shared with me in the 13 years that I knew her through everyone that I get to meet. And so, I take that responsibility very seriously and she is my guardian angel, I believe that firmly. And I'm lucky in that way, you know, to have someone that's always watching over me. But it definitely is challenging, I grew up really fast and so I didn't have the typical childhood that a lot of parents have with their children. I mean, when I decided to go to UCF, I didn't have a college tour. You know, I didn't have the kind of, you know, "let's go visit campuses", you know, my dad was not able to come to my graduation. I mean, it's just all these differences that I think a lot of families take for granted, you know, and I didn't have that; so I also had to

build a chosen family because my actual family was not always able to be there for me. So, my twin sister and I are incredibly close with our brother as well. But we have this really strong network of people that care for us and we care for them that maybe I wasn't born next to them, but I feel like we are each other's keepers, and I'm lucky to have that too, truly.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Absolutely. So what advice, given your experiences as a UCF student, given your current experiences as a lawmaker, what advice would you provide to our current students?

Anna Eskamani:

Oh man, I have --there's so many things I wish I knew right? As a student, my first thought is...it's really important to ask for guidance, but also trust your gut and you're going to know what the right answer is. Of course, you know, seek information, seek mentorship. At the end of the day, the decision is yours. And that was part of my journey, deciding what to major/minor in, right? I ask for guidance, but I also really trusted myself to make the right decision--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

--Because you have to make a decision that's good for you.

Anna Eskamani:

Yeah, exactly. To that point, you know, my brother, being Iranian-Americans we're kind of told, you know, you got to go into either being a doctor, engineer or maybe a lawyer. A lawyer is like, you know, tier three. [Laughter] So the pressure is heavy. The pressure is heavy. You know, my brother started as engineering major, not because he really wanted to, but he felt this pressure and he really struggled until he switched over to study economics and then he flourished. So, I agree, I think it's really important to figure out what you want to do, what your passions are, and obviously seek mentorship, but you got to make that ultimate decision. And with that said, don't lose touch with your professors. You know, some of my first donors on the campaign trail were folks that knew me as a student, whether they were my professors or, you know, nonprofits that I worked with and just individuals that I was able to interact with. It's incredible how much that network is there for you. If I need a letter recommendation today for something, I could reach out to my freshman speech teacher, my speech professor, and she would write me a letter today like, that's the relationships you want to maintain over time. So, relationships do matter; don't lose contact with your professors. Use those office hours. I remember when I was, when I was in high school learning about college, we were always told, "you're just going to be a

number in an auditorium, get ready for that". I never had that experience at UCF, but I think a part of it too, is what you make of the experience. So, in these large auditoriums, you know, I don't, I'm not gonna say I sat in the front row, but I was probably like five rows in. You know, I tried to stay close enough where I wasn't going to get distracted, and where I could also participate as a student. And I would go to my office hours, I go to see my professor about a question. So, like, these are really precious and just, important times in your professional career. So, don't waste it, right? Find those opportunities to really leverage it. And then finally, I would say that, you know, whatever you do in life, like nothing is going to be forever. So, when I was making a decision to take my first job out of college, you know, it was, it wasn't an easy decision. But I also figured, like, I'm 22 years old, like this is my first job, there'll be other things that come along right? I don't have to put all that pressure on me to make the right decision right this moment and then, but at the same time, you know, maintain those relationships. My very first boss to this day is one of my biggest cheerleaders. And so, I think, again, relationships, relationships are just so important and don't lose sight of that. You know, as you become big and famous, don't forget about the people who helped you get there, right? And the last thing I'll say to that point is don't have ego. Oh my God, ego is such a mess. Ego will lead you to be so incredibly unhappy. Trust me, Dr. Berry, in politics, I am surrounded by ego and there's always this little voice in your head that's like, well, I should have gotten credit for that, or I should have been the one in that press release, or I should have been the one in the front. And it's like that voice is not really you, right? That's like society pressuring you to feel a certain way. And it will drive you mad, you know, if you keep tapping into that. So, I take a lot of pride and kind of just mastering the art of letting go. I'm not perfect, I know not by any means, but the art of letting go and helping others shine versus, you have to be the one that always shines. It is, it's so impactful long term because that, again, you're building trust with people when you're willing to say, you know what, I want you to take the lead on this. I got your back, but you take the lead on this and good leaders build new leaders and I do need time to learn that; but I do think that is such an important lesson to teach to others.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So, I have one other question, and then we're going to do something really fun.

Anna Eskamani:

Okay.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

If you could say that there was a particular moment where you could freeze time, that you wanted to sort of savor, what moment would you say would be on your list?

Anna Eskamani:

Wow, that is a very deep question. You know, honestly, I would have to think about the very like, simple Saturday mornings in my house where my mom would be, you know, in the kitchen. She wouldn't go into work usually till 2:00 on the weekends and so, it was an opportunity to kind of just spend time with her. She would often be writing letters to her sisters in Iran. And I remember it took about 23 days for one letter from the United States to get to Iran. So, you're writing a letter that, you know, it's kind of in the future, if you will. And those are just really gentle moments that, again, if I could feel that again, that love again, I would totally go back and do it.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

That's wonderful. I like that. All right so, we are about to get into what I like to call the Lightning Round.

Anna Eskamani:

Okay.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

This is an opportunity for our listeners and our viewers to get to know a little bit about you as a person.

Anna Eskamani:

Okay.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And I'm just going to ask some very simple questions and have you answer with the first thing that comes to your mind. All right let's go. [Laughter] All right. What is your favorite color?

Anna Eskamani:

Blue. [Laughter] Actually, when I was in [unknown] school, I used to call myself Princess Blue.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oh, that's cute.

Anna Eskamani:
I know.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
All right. Favorite song?

Anna Eskamani:
Ooh, I would say the Beatles, Blackbird.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
Okay.

Anna Eskamani:
Yeah, which is a song that's reflecting the civil rights movement as well. But I'm a huge Beatles fan, and I got that from my mom as well.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
All right. Favorite movie?

Anna Eskamani:
"Star Wars: A New Hope." [Laughter] I'm a big nerd. You can tell.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
Yes. Yeah. Favorite TV show?

Anna Eskamani:
I would say recently, okay, I have a guilty pleasure. Is that okay?

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
That's okay!

Anna Eskamani:
She'll make fun of me for this one. I am a huge "Sex and the City" fan.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
Oh my goodness! Yes, I still watch that and the movie.

Anna Eskamani:
Even though some of them are so bad!

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
Although, I did watch the new, sort of spin-off of that "And Just Like That..." and it's actually really good.

Anna Eskamani:

So, funny you say that. I feel like season two was substantially improved but some parts are kind of cringy to watch and I just can't not watch. I like kind of want to see the trainwreck.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

These are grown people, why can't they make a better decision? [Laughter]

Anna Eskamani:

I know. I'm so with you. But I mean, I love fashion. I love New York. Like, I just love all the vibes and sometimes I watch the-

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I will tell you, but the fashion person that I'm really, like, envious of every time I see her come on the screen is Nicole Ari Parker.

Anna Eskamani:

Oh, oh she's so good.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

She- and that red outfit she was wearing.

Anna Eskamani:

Oh my god, I know! I follow her on Instagram.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

No way!

Anna Eskamani:

And it's just like, oh my gosh! I just, I love her style, I love it!

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Just phenomenal.

Anna Eskamani:

It is. Yes. So I am like, you know, it's one of those comfort shows. When I'm working late at night and I need something to kind of just keep me awake. I will literally put it on, and I'm not even really paying attention because I know every line, but I just, you know, have it on as comfort.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. Favorite musician?

Anna Eskamani:

Ooh, okay. I mean, I already said, you know the Beatles are huge for me. I mean, and I've seen Paul McCartney. I don't know how he still does it. My God, he's an incredible artist. Huge, huge Beatles fan. I would say modern day, I mean, I have to give it to the Queen B, like Beyonce always, always. I mean it's funny, I don't have time to go to concerts these days but that was--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I can't remember the last time I went to a concert.

Anna Eskamani:

I know, it's just so hard to find the time but I live through my friends who go and I'm just like, wow! Like, what a Queen. Which is truly amazing, without a doubt one of the best musicians and artists in American history, without a doubt.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Yeah, I was in New Jersey on business, and Bruce Springsteen had just reinvigorated his tour because he had to stop because apparently he wasn't doing so well. And I'm like, "aw, I get to miss it."

Anna Eskamani:

I know, I know. It's so hard. You know, my twin sister, she's a big, big music guru, and she actually freelances for the Orlando Weekly and she covers musicians and, so she helps me also kind of keep tabs of local bands in town and stuff and she invites a lot of musicians that are in town touring to stay in her house. To be clear, we do not have a big house; and I'll come downstairs and there's just this random band from Amsterdam, like on my porch and I'm like, "Good to see you guys!" Like, you know the international house of Eskamanis'. It's so funny. But she's more of the music expert in my house, for sure.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay. Favorite actor?

Anna Eskamani:

Harrison Ford. Without a doubt. I mean, I was—Han Solo was one of my first crushes. I mean I will literally watch things that have Harrison Ford in it even if it's not like, that good. But, like I saw the latest Indiana Jones which I actually thought was fine.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I haven't seen it yet.

Anna Eskamani:

I thought it had all the recipes of what a good Indiana Jones should have, but I really just saw it because of Harrison Ford. I'm like, "I got to get this guy." He's such a legend.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I remember cutting school to see Star Wars.

Anna Eskamani:

That's adorable!

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I was in so much trouble. [Laughter]

Anna Eskamani:

Yeah, but in hindsight, it was worth it. That was totally worth it. That's great.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Yeah, but, you know, when you're like, in like, sixth grade, you're supposed to be, you know, sitting in the math class and you're all the way downtown to stand in line to watch a movie. It's like...

Anna Eskamani:

That's amazing. Yeah, but like look at you today! Look at you today. You're doing great.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Although I'm a bigger Star Trek fan than I am Star Wars.

Anna Eskamani:

Are you? Okay, respect. I grew up with Star Trek as well. I did. Respect.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And I will tell you, the new shows now...

Anna Eskamani:

Yeah?

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Everything. Everything.

Anna Eskamani:

That's good to know.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And I got so excited about, so initially I was a little leery about, there was a “Star Trek: Strange New Worlds” episode where they sang through the entire episode. And initially when I heard about it I was like, “somebody has really messed this up now.” What were they thinking? Taking Star Trek and making it a musical? I mean, really, that’s sacreligious, right?

Anna Eskamani:

Right, right, right.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

But it was so good. The minute they got started, I was like, “woah, wait!”

Anna Eskamani:

That’s wild.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And it stuck true to the storyline and the characters and everything, and I was just like--.

Anna Eskamani:

That’s amazing. I mean, how talented is the cast where they can do all of the above? That’s incredible. I’m also a big theater nerd, too. I was a high school thespian. I was a techie. I did props and costumes. But I--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I was a stage queen.

Anna Eskamani:

That’s amazing to me. It was my job to make sure you all looked good and I took a lot of pride in that, so.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

My very first musical in high school was “The King and I.”

Anna Eskamani:

Wow, that’s a big one. Yeah. For high school, that’s great.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Yeah, and my parents were like, “please let her get a real job.”

Anna Eskamani:

Come on!

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
Because they were just worried that I would be like, this starving artist--

Anna Eskamani:
Right, right.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
--sleeping on the couch everywhere, that sort of thing.

Anna Eskamani:
Totally, totally. Hey, we all, I have so many friends—one of my good friends, who was in our theater program was on *The Voice* recently, and his single just dropped. I mean, Omar Cardona, look him up like. So like, we got some great talent for the local theater scene, for sure.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
Yeah, but it takes a lot of preparation and the right opportunity.

Anna Eskamani:
Oh yeah, for sure.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
You know...and then, of course, when I get real excited about becoming, you know, a scholar and start reading stuff, you know, my siblings like, “when are you ever going to be finished with school?”

Anna Eskamani:
I can relate to that.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
I’m thinking, yeah, “Well, I’m not a starving artist!” So, come on now.

Anna Eskamani:
Right, I thought you’d be happy now. Totally. That’s great.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
All right. What’s your favorite book?

Anna Eskamani:
Hmm, my favorite book? Okay, one of my favorite books, this is going to sound really, really random, is “*The Fault in Our Stars*” by John Green.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
Love that!

Anna Eskamani:

So “The Fault in Our Stars” helped me decide to, like, end a relationship that was very unhealthy. Like, it literally inspired me to break up with someone. You know, it’s a good book when you feel motivated to take action from it; and John Green is, he grew up in Orlando.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oh wow!

Anna Eskamani:

He has roots in Orlando. Yeah, and actually one of his books takes place in Orlando. So, it’s really incredible. I’ve actually built a relationship with his mom and with him over the years. He retweeted me recently.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oh, how cute.

Anna Eskamani:

Yes, I was very excited. And so, that is such a beautiful book. I just think it’s definitions and expressions of love are so gratifying. And of course, you know, the book has a deeper purpose and inspiration that I learned about through NPR and knowing just the symbolism of the book itself and how it was really written for a young girl that unfortunately passed away after fighting cancer, it was something I also related to losing my mom to cancer. So beautiful book, beautiful soundtrack. I highly recommend, ten out of ten.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent, excellent. I might need to reread that. I just signed a new book contract, so get this title: Love and Power, Black Joy and Curriculum.

Anna Eskamani:

That’s going to be amazing!

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I’m so excited about this.

Anna Eskamani:

Oh my gosh, I love it.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And it’s going to be a combination text and audiobook because we’ll actually have people performing--

Anna Eskamani:
Wow!

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
--and recording in the book.

Anna Eskamani:
That's incredible! Oh my gosh, tell me where to sign up. That's amazing, I can't wait.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
And one of our very own UCF musicians has agreed to contribute to the book.

Anna Eskamani:
Incredible, that's going to be really beautiful. I can't wait to see it. I can't wait to read and listen.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
Okay. Favorite actress?

Anna Eskamani:
That's a great question. I am so bad with celebrities. Favorite actress...I mean, Carrie Fisher, without a doubt. Top, for me, for sure. And just her journey in navigating substance abuse disorder and mental illness and of course just her, like tragic early passing.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
And being a second generation actress, right?

Anna Eskamani:
Which is a lot of baggage to carry. I mean she was casted in Star Wars at such a young age, yeah--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
--and trying to live up to her mother.

Anna Eskamani:
Exactly. And I actually have her autobiography as well as it's so beautifully written and funny and so. I mean, you know, rest in peace Carrie Fisher but just what an incredible human being, for sure.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Favorite sport?

Anna Eskamani:

I would probably say American football because I grew up watching American football...

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay.

Anna Eskamani:

But I've grown to love soccer. A lot, over the past few years. I actually used to play on a soccer team at UCF, intramural, nothing professional. We were called The Angry Donkeys because we were the college Democrats. We lost every game and only scored once. I was the score, which I take a lot of pride in. So, I definitely am a huge, and the Orlando team, I'm a huge fan of; but I grew up watching Tampa Bay Buccaneers with my dad, is like a huge Buccaneers fan.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay, okay.

Anna Eskamani:

My uncle is too.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I'm an Eagles fan, but it's okay.

Anna Eskamani:

I mean honestly, Dr. Berry, I don't watch any of it today. I mean I don't have time and of course UCF football, you know, huge, and the UCF team I'm cheering for but I'm definitely more of an arts person than a sports person candidly. But if I watch a football game, I can describe to you what's happening, which that I feel like is an important gift when I'm in spaces where we're just talking about sports like. You know, in legislature most of my colleagues, like sports is their love language. So you got to have to be able to like, you know, adapt to these different spaces. And luckily, because of my dad, I can adapt to those environments pretty quickly.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

All right. One last question. Favorite thing to do on a rainy day?

Anna Eskamani:

On a rainy day. I mean, my first reaction is like, get work done. But I'm going to try to think of more self-care if I allow myself. I mean, I really do love just

reading a good book, like reading a, you know, book that, I have stacks of books that I buy and I'm like, "I'm going to read this," and I never do. And so, just trying to catch up with some of these simple pleasures that you can find inspiration in. And so, I think just like, relaxing and you know, find the time to do that. I'm also an avid cleaner, like I hate clutter. Just kind of like, spend time going through my closet.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
Oh, I do that every six months. Go through my closet.

Anna Eskamani:
Yes! It's very—Oh my God, it's so rejuvenating--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
---figure out what's missing. What do I need? What do I get rid of? What haven't I worn in a year like that?

Anna Eskamani:
Yes, yeah. You can like, bring back. You kind of forget how much clothes you have that you just, could reinvent. And so I love doing that, too and that's several hours of a project. I don't have a big closet. I have a lot of clothes. So taking the time to do that is also really good. And, you know finding things to reuse, like, you know, I have some dresses where buttons are missing and I don't wear them, but if I have time I'll fix them and you know, put those theater skills to good use so, yeah totally.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
I am going to thank you so much for joining us today and engaging in this delightful conversation. You are a joy to talk to.

Anna Eskamani:
Thank you, Dr. Berry.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:
And to our audience, thank you so much for listening, for paying attention, for watching, for engaging with us. I'm Dr. Theodora Regina Berry, and this is Academically Speaking. Have a great day.