

Academically Speaking: Season Three, Episode Four

Opening:

This is Academically Speaking, a podcast hosted by Dr. Theodorea Regina Barry, 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. I am 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, I have the pleasure of having a wonderful conversation with Dr. Darryl Gordon. Darryl joined the College of Undergraduate Studies in October of 2023, and prior to joining the college, he served as the coordinator for Student Academic Services and Chair of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee for UCF's College of Health Professions and Sciences. Dr. Gordon also was Career Program Advisor for Seminole State College and their Emerge program and coordinator of Special Populations at Daytona State College. He serves as President of UCF's Black Faculty and Staff Association. Dr. Gordon earned his Ph.D. in Education from UCF, a Masters of Education in Higher Education from Georgia Southern University, and a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from Florida A&M University.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Go Rattlers.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oh my...Welcome, Dr. Gordon.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Thank you for having me. I'm happy to be here. I'm a little bit excited and a little bit terrified, but nonetheless happy to be here.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Well, don't be terrified. We're just going to have a wonderful conversation, learn a little bit about you, your interests, your profession, and have some fun. Okay. Excellent. So, you've recently earned your Doctorate in Education. Congratulations.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Thank you, I appreciate it. It is probably the hardest thing I've ever worked on in my entire life, but it was so fulfilling. So, I'm super excited to have completed it.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So, why education?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

To be honest, I fell into education. I got my Bachelor's Degree in Political Science with concentration in pre-law because I was totally convinced, and I had my entire family convinced that I wanted to be a lawyer. So, ever since I was little, it was like, "I'm going to be a lawyer, I'm going to be a lawyer." I think it stemmed from, I grew up a lot with my grandparents and we used to watch Matlock all the time. So, like I was one of those kids, I was the Matlock in the heat of the night type of, you know, kid. And so, for me, I just was like, "I'm going to Mat, like one day, like I'm going to be a lawyer." And I just remember being so terrified when I graduated from undergrad because I didn't want to be a lawyer anymore and I really didn't know what I wanted to do. And so, ended up doing Teach for America and so got into K-through-12 education first, and I respect and love all of the teachers out there, but it was not for me. I was like, "this is not a thing." And I remember being on the phone with one of my mentors who happens to be the Vice President of Student Affairs at FAMU, and he was like, "Darryl, you were a super active student at FAMU. Like, you know, you were super involved." He was like, "Have you ever thought about like a career in higher ed?" And funny enough, I didn't really know that was a thing, which is weird. I don't think most students know about a career in higher ed. I think we're so consumed with being students that we don't really realize people actually do this as a job and there are jobs here. And so, I was like, "No, I haven't." And so, was transitioning out and started my career at Daytona State and I've been here ever since and I just love higher ed. Got my Master's in higher ed because I loved it so much. And I think for me, my Ph.D., the program really helped me to learn more about what most people don't talk about in higher ed. My dissertation focused on organizational culture in higher ed, which is very different from what most people focus on. Most people focus on the student or the academics. They don't really focus on the organizational piece of higher ed and that's the thing that kind of geeks me out, which is kind of geeky, I know, but I love the inner workings of how do we keep institutional running? How does culture impact overall all the things that we do all the way down from the way our faculty and our staff are, all the way down to our students, how it influences how our students matriculate.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay, excellent. And it's interesting because I have a similar story. My mother taught school and I remember thinking to myself throughout my childhood, "That is not the job for me." And largely, not because I didn't think that what she did was important, because it was clear to me it was important. And I spent a lot of time in my mother's classrooms at multiple schools in the school district of Philadelphia and would help her out, cleaning the desk. My mother cleaned everything, by the way.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

You know, in grade school is really a cesspool sometimes when it comes to--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

--elementary and middle school. It was, you know, my mother would walk into the classroom. She'd have, and I don't even know that they sell this stuff anymore, but she would have these bottles of ammonia.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Oh yeah. Again, I grew up with my grandparents, so yeah, I definitely know about ammonia.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Bottles of ammonia and would scrub down every single desk, you know, put some hot water in the bucket with some ammonia, scrubbed down every single desk before school got started. Clean the boards and all of that sort of thing. And when those kids left, she'd scrub down everything, spray Lysol, everything. And of course, because especially by the time I got to high school, I would go to my mother's school and she'd have me clean the classroom with her. And I'm thinking, "This is not for me." Right. But more importantly, the thing that a lot of people don't realize about most K-12 teachers is that they spend a lot of time working outside of the classroom.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yes, they do.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And my mother was the kind of teacher that everywhere she went, she either ran into parents of current students, parents of former students, or former students. So, normally it took you 5 minutes to walk from one end of the block to the other. Not my mother. You're talking about 20 minutes because somebody is going to stop her along the way and talk to her about either being a student in her class or "Oh Ms. Berry. My son has a problem with such and such. Can I come and see?" And I'm thinking, "Can we just go?"

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

It really truly is like that. And I, my first year with Teach for America, I taught in a very rural town that you probably never heard of called Belzoni, Mississippi.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Uh no.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, it's like No Man's Land, Mississippi. It was so similar to that because it was so small that literally everywhere you went there was like, a student. And then my second year, I taught in Birmingham which was a little bit bigger but Birmingham is one of those cities that like, it's big but it's small if that makes sense.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Everybody knows everybody.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Right, and so, it was also that same feeling but I loved the feeling of community. I didn't really mind it. I used to see students, I used to just hate as soon as you see me, like

when I was very comfortable, like when you know how you just wake up, you like, let me run to Walmart real quick.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

--Put on some sweats.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Like, yeah. And that used to be like, the most embarrassing because I feel like that's when students saw me was like, when I was like, "Let me just run a Walmart real quick" or "let me just go to the store", and all I would hear is, "Mr. Gordon, is that you?" And I'm like, "Yes, yes, it is me. It is me. A version of me that you've probably never seen." But yeah, I don't know. I really love the community and I still keep in contact with a lot of my students, surprisingly enough, and I'm probably going to age myself a little bit here. My class of students, my first year class of students actually are in college.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oh my.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Which is crazy to me because I taught seventh grade. So, it's crazy, and a lot of, some of them have already graduated, some of them have like started families. And I'm like, "Oh my God, I am old." And it's crazy but I enjoy it. I enjoy the community, though. And like I said, I'm connected to a number of my students, via social media and stuff like that. So, I can understand where your mom came from. I don't know if she enjoyed it as much as I did.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

She loved it.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

She absolutely loved it. Which was why my father did all the grocery shopping, because otherwise it just wasn't going to get done.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, I get it.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And you know, my father was also methodical, because he was in the military, about how things got done and--

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

--Okay, we have so many similarities. My dad was in the Marines.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

My dad was in the Air Force.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Okay. Awesome.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So yeah, I get my type-A personality from my dad.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, me too unfortunately. My wife doesn't like it very much. She's like, "Darryl, you so cut and dry." I'm like, "my dad."

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

It's simple. Cut to the chase.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

And my dad was Marines, got out of the Marines, and then he just retired with 30 years from the Seminole County Sheriff's Office. So, he was like very much so military, law enforcement, like black and white, no means no. Like, if this is what it is, this is what it is. And so, yeah, I get it.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Yeah, it's interesting. And so, being involved in education like that and being connected to communities is really important and sometimes, you know, there are some advantages to that. There are some challenges with that. What would you say are the advantages of being a community-oriented educator?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I think it's the self-fulfillment for me, like it's really a passion of mine. Like even how we're having this conversation, like I'm really geeked up about it.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

We can tell.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, I know. I know. It's just--I don't know. I don't know where the connection came from. I don't know why it excites me, but I just love building community. That's again, part of the reason why I chose my dissertation around culture, because so much of culture is built in community as well. And so, for me, just to be able to look at data and read articles about the importance of community and culture and pretty much every aspect of what we do was like, "Okay, I know I'm not crazy. This is why I'm excited about it, because this stuff does matter." And so, I think the advantage for me, I would say for me as a self-fulfillment overall, I would say the advantage of community is really just the connectedness and the benefits that come from connectedness to a group of

people, whether that's to the university community, whether it's to like your home community, your church community, your religious community, wherever it may be. There are so many benefits from just the connectedness of that and so, I think that that's one of the biggest advantages is really those benefits.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay. So, I want to know more about your involvement in the community, and why should people get involved?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I think it's important that we get involved not only where we work, but where we live, where we worship, all those things, because those are the things that make us who we are and oftentimes, and not get too religious, but oftentimes believe that God has placed each of us on this earth to be of some type of help to someone else. And so, we never know what gives, what tools, what information, what knowledge we can share to others unless we're involved in our community, unless we're giving back. And I do feel like we're called, those of us who are blessed in abundance or those of us who are blessed to have, to give back as well. And so, for me, that's a huge part of who I am and I think that, you know, it's a very fulfilling thing when you can give back. Not only like I said, it may not be, you know, your workplace, it may be your home community or maybe where you worship, but just the feeling of being able to give back and to pour something out into the world, something positive out into the world and give back, I think is just an amazing energy.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Well, you know what they say, "To whom much is given, much is required." Right. So, you know, we got to do what we got to do.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Right. And I think I think we, I think that's a good way of saying it. We do have to do it because a lot of these things, if we think about the way some of these things get done, is through communities, through connectedness and that's a necessary part of, you know, helping our world go forward and mature and grow. So.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

All right. So, I want to talk a little bit about the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and this notion of giving and community and service. It's the only federal holiday designated as a National Day of Service. The only one. Okay. How do you think this honors Dr. King?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I think that it honors him in a way, I would say, because I feel like his life was service. I mean, if you think about during that time period in our country, the amount of sacrifice and service that it required for him to do what he did. I think a lot of people oftentimes see, the glory of all these things. They have so many statues of him, you know, he has a holiday and all these other things, but they don't see, you know, he had to sometimes hide because, you know, people are trying to bomb the car he was driving in or they

tried to have all these death threats against him or, you know, they don't talk about the discrimination he faced and him being jailed and all these other things and the amount of service and sacrifice that that took. I don't think a lot of people recognize that but I think through this holiday and it being designated for that, I think it really causes people to really stop and pause and really reflect on that service and really, you know, honor him through that service or the giving of service on that day.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And a lot of people also don't recall that he was a reluctant servant.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Because when the Montgomery Bus Boycott started, and they were looking for someone to sort of engage with the people, to lead that sort of thing and some folks decided that this very young minister should be in this role, he told folks 100 times, "No."

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And said he wasn't interested. "I'm just a pastor. I'm trying to pastor my church. I got a young family." He said, "no" 100 times over and on number 101, someone convinced him to do it and he moved forward. We probably have a lot of people who are reluctant servants. You know, how might we be able to encourage them?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

For me, I would just encourage them to look for a purpose that is beyond you. And I think, as you said, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had so many reasons to be like, "Hey, like I'm young, like I got a young family, I got other stuff going on." A pastor in his church, "I'm good. Like I don't want to do this." But he saw a purpose beyond himself and I think that that was the real driving force. I can't speak for him because, again, he's not here, but I believe that was the driving force. And I feel like that's what I would encourage anybody who's like, "I kind of have this yearning to do more, but I really don't know what it is; and I don't really want to do it because I have this to do, and I have class, and I have this, and I have that." Find something that drives you, a purpose that is beyond you and really lean into that. Because again, our legacy is really what about we, what we leave in the world once we're gone. And I think that whatever our purpose is and whatever service and whatever things that we're able to leave behind is really, really the legacy that we leave behind. And so, I would just think about, you know, something that's greater than you that, you know, you really feel a pulling towards to service.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay. So, I'm going to swing back around to your education for just a hot minute.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Okay.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And so, you've been involved in higher ed for a little while now and earned degrees along the way and have really grown as a professional. So, we're going to now look forward.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Okay.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And I'm asking this question thinking about my own journey as a higher ed professional and starting grad school way back when and really thinking to myself, when I was in graduate school, "I just want a tenure track job. That's it. I want to teach my classes, do my research. I'm good. I don't need to do anything other than that."

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

And then you woke up and you was the Vice Provost and Dean.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And I remember someone asking me when I took my first tenure track job, and I was one of the few people on the planet that actually got hired for a tenure track job before I finished my degree.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Wow. That rarely happens.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

It doesn't happen.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Folks, that rarely happens.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So, and someone was like, "Do you think you want to be in administration?" I'm like, "Nope, I just want to do my research, teach my classes. Leave me alone. Don't ask me anything else. I'm good." Crosses. Done. Right? And I look back at all the things that I had the opportunity to do over the course of my career, which is now getting ready to walk into year 25 and I, you know, I really feel blessed and fortunate to be in an opportunity where I can make a difference. So now, here you are, fairly newly minted Ph.D. Ten years, where do you see your career?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Oh man. I'm going to reluctantly say that I do not want to go into the professorship. I love teaching. I know, I know. And everybody's like, "Why get a Ph.D. if you don't want to teach?" And it's just like--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I mean, you don't have to teach and earn a Ph.D. And quite frankly, I must say this for the people in the cheap seats, way in the back who might be washing dishes and listening to this, some people don't need to teach simply because they have a Ph.D. Might not be your calling. Don't do it.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Don't hurt the babies. Okay?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Don't do it because you got a degree.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Don't do it.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Save us all.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

But if you have a calling for that--

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, I know.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

You should answer it.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

And that's the crazy...that's what I'm reluctant about. I feel like when you said a "reluctant servant," I feel like that's what I am to my life because teaching is something that I was good at. Even when I was teaching, when I was in Birmingham, I was Teacher of the Month, like it just was something that came natural to me was teaching. But it's not something, you know how you good at something, but it's not really your passion? I think that's kind of where I am with teaching, and I'll just be honest folks like, it's something that naturally came to me, like it's something I can do, but I don't really have a passion for it. I would see myself more so on the administrative side of the house. Definitely still in higher ed. I know for a fact that higher ed is my passion. I am definitely going to be doing something either at the institution or institution adjacent,

something with higher ed, because I know for a fact that that's what my motive, my passion is higher ed.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Now, you know, you can do both.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I know, I know. We're going to see. We're going to see about the teaching part. But I do know there's going to be in higher ed.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And I say that because I lived through that. Right?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I walked into my very first tenure track job thinking, "Great, I could finish my research for my dissertation. I got a job. I could be in this job in this office for the rest of my life and be perfectly content." And when I came in to sign my contract, the Dean for the School of Ed at the time says to me, "I'm going to give you an administrative job with this too." And I was like, "Wait, what? You want me to do what?"

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

"I thought I was just going to be teaching."

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

"I just thought I was going to be teaching a couple classes. Right? And finishing my dissertation, that's what we talked about. Right?" She goes, "Well, I think you can do this. We need somebody to run our Alternative Teacher Certification Program for us here and we'll help you." And I'm thinking, "Man..."

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

"This isn't what I signed up for. This was not on my bingo card."

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I was just like, "No, I don't know." I'm just like, "Umm," and I was super reluctant and she's sitting there looking at me like, "The answer is yes."

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

"It's already here in the document."

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And she already had it in the contract! Right? She already had it in the contract.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

"It's already here, just sign please. Thank you."

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So I was just like, "Okay, I'm going to give it a shot and see how it goes." So, I sign my name on the contract and got involved with, and mind you, I am the newest and the youngest, most junior faculty member in the entire School of Ed at the time. And part of my job required wrangling these very senior faculty members and getting them on the schedule to teach these graduate courses for these people who wanted to become teachers out of other careers and making sure that they knew what courses they were teaching, making sure they had ordered their text, making sure they had turned in their course syllabi. You know, I'm telling these folks what to do; and had to do it with some level of confidence to get them to do it. And after my first year, I was like, "Hm, okay, that wasn't so bad." But I really wanted to get, like, deeply ingrained in my research and by the time I was getting ready to finish my dissertation in my second year in this job, APD, right, I had an opportunity to do a postdoc which would have only focused on my research, and I was like, "Woohoo, exit door."

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I say, "Exit door number one."

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Right, right, right. So, when you think about your own career, ten years from now, you just never know where you're going to end up.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

And I'm open. I'm definitely open. I've always considered myself a lifelong learner and a lifelong explorer. So, like for me, I'm not going to take anything off the table. I mean, at this juncture of of my life and career, I don't necessarily have a past - The passion is not there; I'm not going to say the past is there because I have a passion for higher ed in general. I just think the preference isn't there for teaching right now. And so, for me, I love the administrative side of things. And even everybody when I when I was talking to my dissertation chair about my dissertation, everybody was like, "you're doing something that's completely different," because my dissertation focused completely on staff which is a huge gap in the literature because sure, most higher education, dissertations, articles, those type of things is about faculty and students, it's about faculty and students. 95% - I'll not say 95 - probably about 90% of it is faculty and students, because they're so little about the importance of staff and how their impact impacts really every other aspect of your institution. And so for me, that's really where my... I guess the gas in my car is for now. And so, like you said, I don't know at what juncture when I have to fill up again, you know, what that's going to look like.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And it's interesting because, you know, when you look at the history of higher education, it was primarily just faculty and students on many college campuses with maybe your stray secretarial person who took minutes in meetings and sent correspondence to somebody or whatever and maybe wrote a check for somebody, and that's about it. But

at some point, faculty members at a lot of institutions were starting to get assigned roles where they were advising students and planning research projects and all of those kinds of things. And trying to manage all those things and still teach your classes and conduct your own research was getting to be a bit much at a lot of the larger, more sort-of prominent institutions. And at some point, these institutions started developing classifications of staff members who would take on many of the things that help the institution run. You know, even when we think about where institutions are and the fact that, you know, even in my hometown in Philadelphia, you know, it snows! Right? But students are still showing up for school.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Listen, especially the terrible students, they always come. I used to be like Lord, and they know they don't come whether it's cold, snowing, rainy, whatever they're going to come.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

They're going to come. Yeah, right. And so that meant that you weren't just dealing with faculty and students. Somebody had to maintain the ground. Somebody had to make sure the buildings were warm, somebody meant to make sure the windows weren't broken. And then, you know, all of a sudden you have you go from having people who were just maintaining the facility to people who were maintaining student life. Right. So, you know, residence halls start going up what they used to call dormitories. Right. And somebody had to make sure, you know, the young people came in at a certain time, like is I would I started my college life as an undergrad at an institution that had a curfew.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, well, at the time I went to FAMU – I'm aging myself - we had we had a curfew and there were no coed dormitories for me, when I went to FAMU. So, it was very much - So at a certain time, girls got to go to the girl's dormitories. Boys, there were a lot of fire alarms pulled and people trying to speak people out. So, I did it. I did it.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Look, I could raise my hand and say that I did not pull the fire alarm, but because the first year I lived in a residence hall, in a room that was on the first floor, there were plenty of people who were sneaking out of windows.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I can only imagine. Right.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Alright, so advice you would give to our current college students?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I would say follow your passion. And what I mean by that is, having been and advising for a number of years as a part of my career, I've experienced what we call, in advising, helicopter parents. Who would say -

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

-“I want my son to be a doctor!”

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, “my child is going to be a doctor!” but like their child is interested in or my child is going to be this. And you see, like the life almost drained out of the child because they're in a place - or they end up failing out; they're not successful because they're in - there doing something, they're learning about something that they really have no interest in. So, I would say, despite what your parents may be doing, whatever your best friend or your friends are doing or telling you to do, go with what you have a passion for, even if that changes. Like even for me, I'm a clear example of that. I got a master's degree in political science with a concentration of pre-law, and the rest of my degrees were in higher ed because it's okay but go with whatever you have a passion with at that time. I mean, I still very much so love politics, I just don't want to be a lawyer anymore. But, you know, I think it's one of those things where if you go with your passion, you'll be successful because you're not doing it for everybody else, you'll be doing it for you and you'll be as excited and as geeky as I am about higher ed because that's what you like. And so you'll be successful in that.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay, that's good advice. And it's also - we also have to make sure that students know that sometimes following that advice takes courage.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, it does.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And it is a sign of adulthood.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

It really is.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

While some of our young people are reluctant to engage in adulting, that might be the perfect opportunity to do so.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I know - I mean, it goes back to what we just said: reluctant service. Even if it's service to yourself, you have to just agree to it. Tell yourself like, “I'm going to do this for me. Mom is going to be upset.” I mean, even for me, I'm going to offend you- I probably shouldn't put this on camera by myself anyways - So, I'm the baby of my family and my mom-

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

That explains a lot.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

My mom was convinced that I was not leaving. None of my siblings left this area, central Florida, at all. And so I lied to my mom. Lord, forgive me. I've asked for forgiveness already so we good. But I lied to my mom and told her I actually applied to UCF. And when I was getting my lett- because I'm from here so UCF was the school -

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So, she was excited about that.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Right! So, I lied to her and told her I applied to UCF. But when I was getting my letters, like my letters of acceptance, like UCF never came. And she was like, "Well, you haven't got anything from UCF or nothing." I was like, "No, I don't know what happened. I don't know what happened with that." And so ended up going to FAMU and I'll never forget, like when I got to FAMU, my parents took me grocery shopping, helped me set up my room, and my mom did not say anything to me. She really just went and got in the car and she said nothing to me. I was just like, I don't know what to do. And my dad was like, "Son, you shouldn't have lied to your mom. Like, you should just let her know that this is what-"

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So, she figured out that that you had lied to her?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, because, I mean, UCF was not an option. No disrespect. I am an alum-knight now, but at the time it was not an option because for me, again, going back to what we're saying about having the courage to be of service to yourself, I didn't want to stay here like I had been here. I watch my siblings be here. I was like, "I'm going to have to go somewhere else." I have to do it for me. And so, it was the best decision I made. Was it tough? Yeah, because I'm living in Tallahassee like three and a half hours away from all of my family. I had a few friends that went with me to Tallahassee, but I didn't have any family members. I didn't have anybody there. So, you know, but it was really, really something that I think was one of the best decisions I made in my entire life. And so that's why I would encourage someone, just I mean, I know it's hard, but you have to do what is best for you, and it'll definitely pay off in the longrun.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And, you know, we have a lot in common because a lot of my family members went to school in Philadelphia. My mother has a degree from Temple. I've cousins who have degrees from Temple. And when I started to apply to schools, I applied to every place I could to get to as far away as I could get.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I was with you. I was like, "It's not happening."

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

At one point, my parents started asking me about where I was applying to school, and when I started listing the schools, my mother said, "We can't get there by car in a day. So, you need to start applying to schools that we can get to in a day." And I thought, man, let me do the math on that.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

"If I had a day."

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Right. So, I figured, you know, knowing my parents, I automatically assume that meant day light, like, get up in the morning, drive, get there before dawn.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

That bought you at least 12 hours.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Well, yeah, but, you know, if you got to stop for gas and food and whatnot, that's down to eight, you know? And while my dad served in the military, my mother did not. So, my dad would have gotten up at four in order to be in the car by five but my mother wasn't going to get up until six, so-

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Balance. It's about balance.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Right, right. So okay, so now we're going to get into what I call the lightning round.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Okay, the lightning round.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

This is where our audience gets to learn a little bit about you as a person.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Okay.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I'm going to ask a few questions. Just tell me the first thing that comes to the top of your mind.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Okay.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay. Favorite color?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Black.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oo, okay.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I know. I know. The expectation is red, but if I don't know--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

That's your expectation.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

The expected color, I think for those of you who know me, you would probably say red, but it's black. I don't know where I get black from all of a sudden, like in my late, middle to late twenties, I just really started liking black. So black is like, my favorite color. Secondary favorite color, if I just had to choose an actual color, because some people don't consider black a color, would be red.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay, that will work. Favorite song?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Ooh. I am a huge music person, so I don't necessarily have a favorite like, song of all time, but I have a favorite song for the moment. And I've been, a YouTuber that I watch, Terrell Rice. He has a show called The Terrell Show and he most recently did a series of interviews with the original members of Destiny's Child. And so--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Ooh.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I know, right? So crazy. I know most people don't even know that Beyonce was in a group but whatever. They're like, "Beyonce was in a group?" I'm like--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Beyonce was in a group and there were four of them.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, it was four of them, and then it was three, but yeah, anyways. So one of the members, Latoya Lucky, she has a song called "She Don't" It's an old song but it's like my favorite song at the moment because she sung a piece of it on there and it like, brought back all this nostalgia because the song was like, from 20--I want to say it's like 2003 or something like that. But it's been like stuck in my head. So, I've been playing it.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Her career has taken off.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yes, she's doing like acting, all type of stuff. So yeah, it's great to see her doing well, but that's my favorite song for the moment.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

All right. Excellent. Favorite artist?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Oh, The Whitney Elizabeth Houston.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oo, okay.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Also known as my Auntie Nippy. Forever my favorite artist. I love her.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Jersey girl!

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yes, very much so. She's from Orange?

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Yeah. No, she's from East Orange. Let's get it straight. East Orange.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I'm not from there so I don't know, but I do know if I had to choose a living favorite artist, it would be Jasmine Marie Sullivan.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oh yeah. Philly girl.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

She is a Philly girl. I love Jasmine.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

She's on the ground.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, I love her.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Yes, I love her. She's awesome.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, I do love her so much.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Although my latest obsession is Coco Jones.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I love--you know, she was nominated for five Grammys?

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

What?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yes. I'm super excited for her. I love Coco. Yeah. If you're listening, Coco, I love you and I wish you all the best. But yeah, she was nominated for five Grammys.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I really like her in Bel Air, though.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, she's really good.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

She's really good.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Well, you know, she started her career as an actress because she used to be on a Disney Channel as well. And then she really, again, when we talk about her, she stepped out and was like, I really want to do music. And, you know, a lot of people talk about how hard it is to transition from like acting to music, but she's done a phenomenal job of transitioning and look, now she's nominated for five Grammys.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

She's awesome.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah. Love her.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Yes, okay. Favorite movie?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Y'all are going to hate me. I am not like a TV person. I would have to say favorite--and this is going to sound very childish, but it is okay, is Hercules, the Disney Channel

movie. Like, I literally know every song from the soundtrack, like, I literally am—and I'm ashamed to say—I'm not ashamed to say this. I'm going to be honest. I have the soundtrack on my phone so like, I listen to, like the original soundtrack, like it is regular music, everyday music. So, I would say it is one of my favorite movies of all time. Other than that, I'm kind of into whatever. I don't really watch a lot a ton of TV.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Well, I don't watch a ton of TV. I do love a good movie.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, I like a good movie, but I don't think I have any that I could just watch all the time.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I'm a Trekkie.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Oh, are you?

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

All day and all night and twice on Sunday.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

You would hate me. I've never seen one. I, like, never could get into it. I don't know what--and I'm like, I'm interested in all those things, but I just. I don't know, like it just never clicked for me.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I've been watching Star Trek since I was a kid. I was watching the reruns of the original series.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I know it's been around and there's been so many spin offs and all this stuff and I've never--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And my most favorite Trek series right now is Discovery.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Okay, see I don't--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

With Sonequa Martin-Green. She's awesome.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I'm at a loss. I honestly never-- I know what it is, but I've never, ever seen it.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Yeah, you're missing out.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I know, I'm going to see, maybe I'll get into it. I don't know, for whatever reason it just never-- that and Star Wars. I just never--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I like Star Wars movies, but the series, I'm having trouble getting into it.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, I don't know. I don't know. It just never really hit me. Like I never got the book. I don't know what it is.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Sorry.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

That's all right. It's okay. Favorite actor?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Favorite actor. Male actor, I would say Denzel Washington, like he's done some really, really great stuff. Favorite movie by him was The Great Debaters.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oh, I love that one.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

And I think it's because I really thought, I really thought I was ..., y'all.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

But that was an ensemble cast.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

It was really good. It was really good. But yeah, I would say Denzel Washington.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay, favorite actress?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I would go with Viola Davis.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oh, yeah.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

When I tell you she played, her last name was Keaton and I forgot what her first name was in the show.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oh, How to Get Away with Murder.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

How to Get Away with Murder. When I tell you she played that role. And then I also got a chance to see the Woman King, like three times because she was amazing--

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oh, she was awesome.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

--in the Woman King. So, yes, that I would say Viola Davis. Love her.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Favorite book?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Oh, I mean, I going to say I'm real churchy, but I would say the Bible is number one. But outside of that nonreligious text, I've really been into Tabitha Brown and her books. Her book, Feeding the Soul was good, and I just love her. Like her book, when I read it, it sounded like her you know, you read people books and it normally sound like who they are in person because, you know, she's like a like a social media personality, so like seeing her and watching her reading her book sounded like her. Which is, I don't know if anybody else kind of resonates with it, like where you're reading a book and you like, I can hear this person like saying these things to me. And so, yeah, I just love her.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Well, excellent. One last question, and this is a question that I started asking after watching the HBO Max, which is now Max, series with Laverne Cox, If We're Being Honest. It's a conversational sort of talk show piece, but she is always only talking to one person. It's an up-and-coming artist typically. And she ends her interviews by asking, "Was there something that I didn't ask that I should have asked?" So, I'm going to ask you, is there something that I didn't ask that I should have asked?

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Nothing at all. I have no secrets to reveal, but yeah, nothing. I would say nothing at all. I am happy to have had a conversation and expressed so many different facets of my life. I am grateful for the opportunity, but I don't think there's anything I want to share that I didn't share.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Oh, I have one.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Okay. Well, I guess there is nothing that we did not discuss.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

No, we did not discuss your membership in the illustrious fraternity.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

V Kappa Alpha Order Fraternity, Inc.. Yes, so I am a member, a proud member of Kappa Alpha PSI. Yeah, I mean, going back to what we said about community, for those who don't know, Kappa Alpha PSI is one of the historically black founded fraternities that were founded during the time where we as a people didn't have community. More so than that, I think I value it so much more now as a black male professional, because it is a male only fraternity. So being around other educated African-American males and having that community and that camaraderie has had such a huge impact on my life. So, you know, for me, it's been an amazing journey and I'm appreciative for my local chapter here that I'm associated with. The Winter Park alumni chapter. Shout out to y'all. Yo to the nupes. I appreciate them because, I mean, they grow me and a lot of the the older brothers, the seasoned brothers that are in the fraternity have been so great for me. Like, you know, just helping to push me to grow, you know, as a man, as a person, as a professional. And I'm just super grateful for that. Like, they are definitely a part of my community and I'm appreciative of that. So thank you for bringing it up, since that is something that I probably have brought up. We talk about community, but I did. So yeah, that was a good one.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay. Now one other thing. A little birdie told me that you sing.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Ha ha ha ha ha. Yes, I do. I do. But I don't, I don't sing publicly. No, I'm just joking. I do sing publicly, but yes I do. I actually sang with the family gospel choir during my tenure at FAMU, which was super amazing. We sang with some big name gospel artists, which I'm super grateful for. We got a chance to sing with the Clark Sisters, Kirk Franklin. We've sung with Donna McClurkin, Angela Spivey, Beverly Crawford. So, it has been a journey and I'm grateful for, you know, the little piece of gift God gave me that he allowed me to use. Yeah, I'm grateful for it. But a little birdie also told me that you also are classically trained.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I am.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

See, look the birdies are humming

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

The birdies need to fly.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Yeah, fly away. No, I'm just joking. But yeah, I mean, and it's, you know, it is a love of mine. So, yeah, I do sing.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Okay, well, on that note, we will end this conversation.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

You're welcome. And thank you for joining us. I so appreciate your presence and getting your words of wisdom not only for higher education professionals, but also for our college students who are aspiring to reach their goals and their dreams. We are thrilled to have you as a member of our family in the College of Undergraduate Studies.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

I am thrilled to be here and let me tell you something, I'm not just saying this because I'm getting paid, but I am saying this because I am happy, truly happy to be a part of this team like it has been a breath of fresh air for me and I think it is truly in alignment with where I see myself eventually going. So, the team has been spectacular and I'm excited to be here. I really, really am.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. And on that note, we will thank our audience, our viewers and our listeners for joining us on Academically Speaking. I'm Dr. Theodora Regina Berry and have a great day.

Dr. Darryl Gordon:

Have a good one.