

LaToya A. Getz Interview

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graduated, some law school, conflict and divorce mediator.

SPEAKERS

Interviewer: Bedell Terry

Interviewee: LaToya Getz

Bedell Terry

This is Bedell Terry. It's April 15, 2024, at 4pm. I'm with LaToya Getz via the online zoom platform. And we're going to begin our oral history interview for the University of Baltimore stories, the 100th Anniversary Oral History Project. The purpose of this project is to celebrate the university's centennial, by preserving the memory of those influenced by the University of Baltimore over the years, we will be creating a digital archive, and exhibit making these recordings available online. So, we'll get started LaToya, how are you?

LaToya A. Getz

Hi Mr. Terry, I'm good. Thank you very much.

Bedell Terry

Please call me Bedell.

LaToya A. Getz

Okay.

Bedell Terry

It's a strange name, but it's the one they gave me.

LaToya A. Getz

I like it. Bedell.

Bedell Terry

Well, let's start with where were you born?

LaToya A. Getz

I was born in Baltimore City. Born and raised in Baltimore City.

Bedell Terry

What part of the city?

LaToya A. Getz

So, in the first part, I would guess when I was born, we lived on North Dallas Street and later lived on York Road. And then we moved a little further up the road, still in northeast Baltimore, where I lived from age seven, the Govan's area. I went to Govan's Elementary School.

Bedell Terry

Baltimore is a city of small communities.

LaToya A. Getz

It is. It's a wonderful city, and I'm still very proud of my city.

Bedell Terry

I live in Loch Raven Village in the county.

LaToya A. Getz

Oh, yes. Yeah, very familiar.

Bedell Terry

We looked in the city when we moved here, but the property taxes got the best for me.

LaToya A. Getz

Yes, unfortunately. That's how that is. I'm sorry.

Bedell Terry

So, what was your family like? Growing up? Are you an only child or?

LaToya A. Getz

I am an only child of my single mom. But, on my dad's side he had four daughters. I'm the baby. By 1998, my mom married my stepdad who helped to raise me.

Bedell Terry

So, you're the baby of four, four girls

LaToya A. Getz

four girls, and then because of my stepdad, I have steps brothers and sisters. So even though I was an only child from my mom I had a big family. a blended one

Bedell Terry

A blended family.

LaToya A. Getz

Yes.

Bedell Terry

So how many in total?

LaToya A. Getz

Okay, a total of seven. Yes, seven in total

Bedell Terry

I'm from a family of eight myself. But I'm the eldest not the baby.

LaToya A. Getz

Okay. And it's hard because everybody was so much older than me so well.

Bedell Terry

I'm 73. My brother is 15 years younger.

LaToya A. Getz

So, you understand that's exactly how it was?

Bedell Terry

Yes, I do understand when you go to school.

LaToya A. Getz

So, I went to Govan's Elementary. And then I went to Chinquapin Middle School, which I loved both schools. And then I went to Mercy [Mercy High School]. I was a Mercy girl.

Bedell Terry

Oh, ah, the very prestigious school.

LaToya A. Getz

Yes. So, I was a Mercy [Mercy High School] girl. I love my time at Mercy [Mercy High School] as well.

Bedell Terry

And it was all girls then.

LaToya A. Getz

And so, if you want to see boys, you had to go to Calvert Hall [Calvert Hall College High School].

Bedell Terry

Right around the corner from me. So, I see. I see the Mercy [Mercy High School] girls walk past there.

LaToya A. Getz

Yes. And I was a Calver Hall [Calvert Hall College High School] cheerleader. So, I was at Calvert Hall all the time.

Bedell Terry

Then what would the high school years like for you?

LaToya A. Getz

Oh, my goodness. I love my high school experience. I think the all-girl school environment was wonderful because you didn't have to worry about the day, you didn't have to worry about your makeup, or your hair and what to put on because you all were in uniforms. Get up and go to school. It was just fine. And there were no problems. We had 97 of us that graduated together, and we all got along. It was definitely a bonding experience at Mercy [Mercy High School]. Lots of activities that kept us busy. And we formed friendships that we still have until this day, class of 1995.

Bedell Terry

1995, My high school class was 1969

LaToya A. Getz

But that's still great, because then you still have reunions. I'm sure.

Bedell Terry

We have reunions and I still have friends from kindergarten.

LaToya A. Getz

Oh, my goodness, that's wonderful history.

Bedell Terry

So, I have to watch out and tell the truth because they know the story.

LaToya A. Getz

Wonderful history, you need to start telling that history to us so we can hear it and then we can pass it on to our children. I

Bedell Terry

Pass it on to mine. They listened, sometimes.

LaToya A. Getz

Yes.

Bedell Terry

So, you graduated from Mercy [Mercy High School]. What's your next step?

LaToya A. Getz

My next step was I went to Catonsville Community College, I did a year at Catonsville. I was straight A's, so I felt like it was time to move to a 4-year college. So, I ended up going to UMBC [University of Maryland Baltimore County] where I was a sociology major. I love sociology and anthropology, one of my favorite subjects. I started off in nursing, I ended up being an EMT [Emergency Medical Technician] during my time at college.

And I realized that once I got to microbiology, nursing was not for me. My mom is a nurse and was a nurse for over 35 years. She just retired 36 years, actually at the University of Maryland, downtown. And so back then, here's a little funny story back then University of Maryland did not pay children's tuition. And the year I graduated, that's when they started paying tuition for children. But no, I loved UMBC [University of Maryland Baltimore County]. It was definitely the right size for me, the right fit. I had a friend that attended UMBC, we went to the same high school together. And we still are in touch to this day.

Bedell Terry

Yes, I'm in UMBC [University of Maryland Baltimore County] for a master's in history.

LaToya A. Getz

Oh wow. Great news.

Bedell Terry

I retired and said, I'm bored.

LaToya A. Getz

Okay. It's never too late. My friend is never too late.

Bedell Terry

No, it's not. So, UMBC [University of Maryland Baltimore County]

LaToya A. Getz

I graduated in 2000. So, this is a crazy story. I graduated in 2000. I walked with my class in 2000. But I wasn't finished. I had a search and rescue class. During search and rescue class we went out into the woods for the weekend with UMBC classmates. And I came back very, very sick. So, after the visit to an oncologist and all kinds of things, NIH [National Institute of Health] diagnosed me as case number 97 in the world with a rare cell disease that started with a virus. So, I got to walk with my class, UMBC [University of Maryland Baltimore County] said, you can walk with your class. I just want you to focus on one class during the summer, if you can, it was the last class that I needed to complete. Because when I got sick, I couldn't hold on, I had a full-time load of classes, and I was working full time.

Bedell Terry

Oh, yes. Very ambitious.

LaToya A. Getz

Yes. So um, but I thought it was wonderful. They let me graduate with my class, and I got my diploma. I took my last class and then everything was done.

Bedell Terry

So, you were the 97th case?

LaToya A. Getz

This particular autoimmune. Yes, in the world.

Bedell Terry

That is the most challenging.

LaToya A. Getz

It has been but I stand before you today happy for every step. I used to be in a wheelchair and a walker. And everybody always wonders why smile. I smile because every day is a beautiful day. For me. I have two beautiful daughters that I thought I couldn't have, and the doctor saw me through that. I am on my peloton every day and I still have autoimmune, but it is managed.

So, I'm very blessed. So, here's a little thing I like to tell people, if you give blood, the blood that you give is very important to people like me. If you give blood, they also can get plasma, and I am a plasma recipient every three weeks. So, I appreciate anyone who donates. I know it's not an easy thing to do. But from the bottom of my heart. I appreciate everyone who does donate.

Bedell Terry

They said I couldn't donate any more after my heart attacks.

LaToya A. Getz

Oh no. Yes, you must take it easy my friend. Yes, they said no more. Yeah, thank you for that Bedell.

Bedell Terry

Well, done was my pleasure. So, you graduated UMBC.

LaToya A. Getz

You will see I got through my medical situation. I'm working full time. I'm not satisfied with just being done with school. I said, I want to go back to school at University of Baltimore. So, I'm in graduate school and I think I got sick again in graduate school, but I wasn't going to let it stop me. I remember being in Dr. Wright's (Criminal Justice at UB) class, my favorite, favorite professor, we still keep in touch to this day. I would still sit there with a pillow just to keep you from being in pain.

But I got through every class that I needed to get through. And by the time I was done with my classes, I was doing a master thesis. So, I was done with all the classes, I was pregnant with my first daughter, my miracle daughter, and had her. I was writing my thesis and had another baby. With the first one, I would roll my stroller into Dr. Wright's office. By the time I had the second children, I would roll the

double stroller into Dr. Wright's office. And so, I finished my master thesis, and he would hold my babies while I was sitting there doing my corrections. He would be bouncing my daughters because he had older boys. And so, he loved having the girls in his office. And that's how I finished and got my thesis done.

Bedell Terry

What brought you to the University of Baltimore?

LaToya A. Getz

Baltimore has been a part of my life forever even when I moved to Anne Arundel County. And the reason I say that University of Maryland medical system has been a part of my life since I was seven years old, where my mom works. And going back, my grandmother worked at Mercy Hospital talking about the link between my high school and the hospital. So, under the University of Maryland system, I was very familiar with downtown Baltimore.

So, I researched the University of Baltimore, and I love that they had the criminal justice program. I wish my research was a little stronger back then, because I wish I had done my law school and Criminal Justice at the same time. And I couldn't do it when I finished. I wish I had done it from the beginning. My only regret. But so, I researched it. And I have always loved criminal justice. It was a quaint campus. I thought it was perfect for me. Again, I love my city of Baltimore. So, it was a perfect place for me to be and I loved it. I thrived there more than I thrived at any other college.

Bedell Terry

How did it hit you? You went from a rather than a large university, and UMBC to a small university,

LaToya A. Getz

I found University of Baltimore to be more of an intimate place, that's what I loved about it. So, UMBC was intimate and small for me in a way because the sociology department wasn't that large. If it was, let's just say it might have been but, our professors made sure that we weren't overlooked, they tried to spend as much time with us. I'm a believer in office hours. So, I was always at the office hours. So, I felt like they got to know me, and I got to know them. But again, because I struggled through the nursing program, I then changed my major. I thought my GPA was okay. It wasn't the best. When I got to the University of Baltimore, I just thrived!

I think I was close to a 4.0 when I graduated maybe 3.9, 3.8. But I loved every aspect of University of Baltimore, getting to know the professors and professors getting to know me. The very first professor I met was Dr. Jaime Grant (Head of the Forensic Department). And I have to take a moment because she passed away when I was finishing my thesis, and she didn't get to see me finish. She was one of a kind. That was a hard one.

Bedell Terry

It's an intimate school. I went to college at St. John's in New York. And my professors knew they had somebody named Bedell Terry in the class, but they couldn't pick me out of a lineup.

LaToya A. Getz

And then I came to University of Baltimore, and the professors not only knew who I was, but took the time to make sure I knew what I was doing.

And they care. They cared about you as an individual. So, Dr. Jamie Grant was my first professor and she said to me, "Listen, you need to take a prerequisite class before you come to my class." I said, "okay, whatever you want me to do, whatever I have to do to get here and stay here. That's what I'll do." So, I did that. And she said, "You're ready". So, in my very first class with her she had us look up a case where we had to then call the police department to get more information on the case. And it was my first criminal case and I wonder about the child that was involved in this case til this day; it was a very touching story of the mom being trapped into getting her baby taken away from her and ended up being killed.

So, this young man is in college now raised by his dad, but Dr. Grant believed in hands on, she was the head of the forensics program at University of Baltimore. And she worked closely with the medical examiner's office. And she took us to Baltimore City prison, where we saw death row inmates, we got this opportunity, they had just implemented the moratorium in place with death row. So, we got to see the electrocution chair and we got to see the injection area. We got to talk to the prisoners. We went through the whole jail system for the day, and she believed in hands on and one day I can remember not feeling well. And she said, "Get in here. You lay on my sofa. And she's like, "I want you to go home. I don't want you to be here like this, you go home, everything is going to alright."

So, they just cared, and I can remember going to her funeral. It was heart wrenching still to talk about her today is heart wrenching because everybody loved her so much. So those are my two big top professors. And then there's one more Deborah Stanley, I still love her too. And she was my victimology professor. And there was so much I learned from her about victimology that I still take with me to this day. I try to teach my daughters about it. As much as they listen, you know, they think that nothing can happen to them. Well, my little one, yes. My big one, not so much. But so, it's just, they just left a mark and Oh, Miss Linda, Miss Linda was the secretary in that office. And when you call Ms. Linda, she knows you by name. And you don't get that everywhere.

Bedell Terry

No. Now that the criminal justice program that seems to have a bunch of layers in it. You mentioned forensics and victimology. Anything policing?

LaToya A. Getz

Yes. So, they had a lot of different layers. My specialty was in policing, which is why I had Dr. Wright as my mentor. And he was my chair. I ended up writing my paper on post-traumatic stress disorder and Anne Arundel County Police Department. I did my own surveys, and I had to do all my statistics to see where the police department was as far as stress was concerned and how to make changes.

And so, in the end of the research, they did have a stress component, a lot of stressors, a lot of medical situations, not a lot of therapy. And that still is something that happens in the police department. And I'll tell you, a friend told me this, which would be great for this interview, a friend told me that. "LaToya, you

didn't see that God was preparing you for the moment that you went through." So, my husband is still a police officer in DC, and he worked January 6 at the United States Capitol.

That night, he lost his good friend. Well, the next day he died, my husband had just seen him a few minutes before he had a medical emergency, a stroke. He had been sprayed with bear spray in his eyes. And he had contacts in that kept the bear spray in until the fighting was over, which probably caused the stroke. And a couple days later, another coworker ended up taking his own life. And then in April of that same year, my husband was on duty and his two best friends were involved in an incident that killed one friend and injured the other on duty. The young man who killed the officer; there's an article talking about it as C T E [Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy] with the brain from sports injuries. He took his car and turned it into the United States Capitol and hit the two Federal Officers. They went in two different directions. And my husband got to Billy Evans, who ended up succumbing to his injuries. And our other friend Kenny ended up being injured but survived.

And it was a rough time. But during that time, my paper was on post-traumatic stress disorder and police. So, I knew the good, bad, and the ugly of that. And even with me knowing that and specializing in that topic my husband still couldn't face the fact that he needed to talk to a specialist. He was a Marine, you shove it down, and you keep going, you know, you keep moving. And so, it bothered me to this day that there's no mandatory checks for officers, saying that you must go see a counselor. There's nothing that says they must go. Now there are counselors in the building, but if they don't go, they don't have to go. It's not mandated. It's a man thing.

Bedell Terry

We don't look to expose ourselves.

LaToya A. Getz

Correct. You're absolutely right. And so that was something and I finally got him to go talk to a counselor. But yes, they have so many layers. I wish I had gotten to do some of the forensics department at UB as well. But I didn't start off at the University of Baltimore. And part of me wishes I had in a little bit of a way because they had the forensics department. It may not have been good for me because of the science part of it. Just was some of the science wasn't for me. Chemistry. Yes. Microbiology.

Bedell Terry

You started your master's at UMBC?

LaToya A. Getz

No, I started at the University of Baltimore. But I said, I wish maybe I started my undergraduate at University of Baltimore, because they had the forensics department. I kind of wonder to this day, how I would have done in that. But like you said, it's never too late to go back.

Bedell Terry

No, no, no, it's not. And after a certain age, you only have to pay the fee.

LaToya A. Getz

Oh, that's true, very true.

Bedell Terry

Now, what year did you gain your masters?

LaToya A. Getz

So, it got a little tricky. Again, I finished my master's classes before the two kids, I had them and worked on my thesis so, I finished in 2012. But one of my professors was gravely ill, and at that point, everybody's panic because we already lost one professor. I had to wait, I think nine months, so I miss the 2011 timeframe. And I waited till May of 2012 when I graduated, which was perfect because my little one, she was my oldest one at the time, was graduating from kindergarten. The same year, I graduated from my graduate program, so it was really cute.

Bedell Terry

So, after you gained your masters, did you progress in your job, get a new job?

LaToya A. Getz

I was still home with the kids because I still was managing my illness. And during that time, I think it was after I graduated, they were six and three when I had gotten sick in the winter, gravely sick. But we've moved past that. And so, I'm at a point where I just started going back to work. I am a certified mediator for the State of Maryland.

Right now, I am teaching elementary school for the moment, but I volunteer at Anne Arundel County Courthouse for the ADR, which is the Alternative Dispute Resolution Center. I'm hoping to start working for them full time soon. I have an interview with them this week. But I love it. Because it's an opportunity for people to have a conversation. So many times, in life, what happens and what leads to escalations that our police departments are called for is fighting every day, starting from arguments and people not being able to talk to each other.

So yes, I love the Alternative Dispute Resolution Center. And I've seen it help people. I've seen it where sometimes it doesn't help, and people have to come back another time. Everybody thinks things can be fixed right away and things can't always be fixed the first time. We have to put the time and effort into things to sometimes get it fixed. And I would love to mock the Ohio State ADR [Alternative Dispute Resolution Center] they have a program where they make house calls for the police department. If it's something that can be resolved, where there's nonviolence.

Bedell Terry

Very interesting that they use a different form of policing. So, you're a schoolteacher now.

LaToya A. Getz

I am a schoolteacher for now, hopefully just until the end of this school year. I just started a couple of months ago so I'm a state employee to make things transfer easily. You know, teenagers, no one prepared me for how expensive they are.

Bedell Terry

I don't know if anybody could prepare you for how kids are in school now.

LaToya A. Getz

That's a whole other story too. I was not prepared. But I had to tell you, I love them, and they love me. So, I try to make learning fun. I want them to learn, and my classes know that Mrs. Getz likes to have fun, but I get very serious when it's time to learn. You respect me, I respect you. But we will be learning today. So, I make it fun. I said, I still love to make it fun. Learning can be fun. So, we do, we get into it and we learn and we make it fun. I try to make it as fun as possible.

Bedell Terry

Well, I consider teaching after I get my master's but it's going to have to be community college or private high school because I don't know about the little stuff

LaToya A. Getz

Yes, the littles are something you never know what you're going to get with the littles. But I had considered teaching for college at Anne Arundel Community College. But the problem was I interviewed with them, but there's not a lot of need right now in class sizes. There's not a lot of students signed up. They may not run that class I was looking forward to teaching at and Anne Arundel County Community College, it still might happen. Who knows? You know, I'm in the belief of don't let things pass you by.

Bedell Terry

No, may not come by again.

LaToya A. Getz

That's correct.

Bedell Terry

So, you are a part time mediator.

LaToya A. Getz

I am a part time mediator when I can. So, I mediate for two centers. And actually, I mediate for a couple of centers. So, I'm a mediator for Montgomery County. If they need me, I mediate for Baltimore City if they need me, and I mediate for AAC [Anne Arundel County]. That's my apprenticeship is with Anne Arundel County. But I mediate often with the court system, which is a whole different kind of mediation. The court system is fast, the judges want you to get in there, figure out what's happening quickly. And they'll come knock on your door if you're not moving fast enough. But you must only move at the speed that the clients want to move at. So, they want to talk, they talk.

Bedell Terry

So that's got to be really interesting to have to look at conflict and resolve the conflict. To the satisfaction of two parties.

LaToya A. Getz

Yes, and it's difficult. The other thing that I didn't tell you is that I did go to law school, I was in law school when COVID happened, and everything happened. And of course, I then had two kids learning from home, and a husband who was going through so much trauma, so I had to put law school to the side. I would love for UB [University of Baltimore] to say come back and do law school here. But, um, anyway, I have to get my kid off to college first, but I um, I learned a lot from law school that has helped me through the mediation process. Now I can't use it in everyday life. But it does help me with the terminology of things that are happening around me. Because I do a lot of landlord tenants, a lot of disputes, whatever it may be that the judge feels comfortable enough to give to me.

Bedell Terry

And you were in UB [University of Baltimore] law school.

LaToya A. Getz

No, I wish I did, so I didn't, I didn't want to do the LSAT [Law School Admission Test]. I had too much going on with the kids. So, I ended up just doing online law school, great though I loved it. And you know, law school is changing. They're trying to change a lot of things. They do a lot of online law schools, and it really took off. When COVID happened, my school was already online. So, people were calling them asking them how do you do this?

Bedell Terry

I understand the LSAT [Law School Admission Test] was a bear.

LaToya A. Getz

Yes, I've never taken it. I don't know if I want to but I'm good. I got the law school out of my system. There were things I liked, and there were things I didn't like, but I think it was different for me. I think maybe going to classes at UB [University of Baltimore] I may have felt different about it.

Bedell Terry

Well, I think going into classes add up and dealing with the professors that you'll be. I personally don't think you can translate that into another school.

LaToya A. Getz

Yes, I agree with you, 100%. So maybe, you know, I have a lot of life in me I hope. And maybe one day once I get the kids off, if the one that goes to college goes to a service academy, I might do it.

Bedell Terry

Now, where are you? Where's your girl going to college?

LaToya A. Getz

So, we have one more year, but she did get into summer seminar for the Naval Academy and for the Air Force?

Bedell Terry

Oh, yes. That's impressive.

LaToya A. Getz

Yes, I'm very proud of her.

Bedell Terry

Naval Academy is tough.

LaToya A. Getz

It is. My kids swim there. So, they feel very comfortable on the base. But it is tough. And she's a swimmer. So, she wants to keep swimming. And she wants to sing. So, I reminded her that the Air Force has a band, maybe she might be flying planes one day, we'll see.

Bedell Terry

Ah, that's, that's something else

LaToya A. Getz

She's already flown one plane. So, we'll see how it goes. That gets expensive, too.

Bedell Terry

Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. You have to join a plane club?

LaToya A. Getz

Yes. Maybe Dr. Wright will take up that bill. I'll send it to him.

Bedell Terry

Well, I've got all the questions that we had. Any closing thoughts you have about your time at UB [University of Baltimore]?

LaToya A. Getz

Wow. My closing thoughts... I enjoyed my time at UB as a matter of fact, I don't think I talked about this part. My best friend's husband ended up going to UB. So, he's my best friend too. We met when we were all 21 years old in our first house and our first community. So, there's God again. Todd Minton ended up coming to UB because I was at UB. And he loved it too. We both had a great time at UB. And we still cherish those memories. And I'll tell you he is the Chief of the Bureau of Justice and Statistics. He does a lot of research on the Native American communities, getting a lot of research there.

So, he's done a lot on the jail systems. Which is an amazing feat. I'll tell you; it was always funny, we would take notes together and at the end he'll say, "LaToya, I can't read my own notes." I loved my time at UB even though I was sick. I got through it. And, you know, my professors made sure I got through it. My friend Todd made sure I got through it. And we did it together. And that's why you must believe that when you're talking about the University of Baltimore, you're talking about community.

Bedell Terry

It really is.

LaToya A. Getz

It really is.

Bedell Terry

You know, at first, I selected it because it was smaller than Towson. Okay, you know, I'm near I'm very close to tests in New York City, and it's huge, and I would have gotten lost, and I've been lost in school before. Yeah. And I said, well, it can't hurt to try University of Baltimore and I'm eternally glad I did.

LaToya A. Getz

That's great. Now, what program are you in?

Bedell Terry

History. Dr. Davis was my rock. Dr. Davis, I believe, is leading the history department. There are only three or four professors in the history department. It's a small department but he encouraged me. He stepped on some rocks for me at UMBC to make sure my submission got looked at for admission to the master's program. And that first year, the master's program was tough.

LaToya A. Getz

It is tough because it's a whole different asset.

Bedell Terry

They throw reading at you like you can yes, I'm up for 24 hours a day, seven days a week reading the assignments, and then condensing them and handing them in. Yes, And he taught me the Masters reading the master's reading program. Okay, read the first page, read last page and figure out what was in the middle

LaToya A. Getz

I've heard that before. Oh, well, you tell me when the graduation is I will be there. That's wonderful.

Bedell Terry

Glad to have you. So, thank you for all your time. This has been a pleasure for me.

LaToya A. Getz

Thank you. It's been a pleasure for me as well. Beautiful.

Bedell Terry

So glad you volunteered for the project. We're going to have this online. People can go and see the progress of us. Have you been through the years? We've got some recent graduates and we've got some I don't want to say old time graduates, but less recent graduates. Okay. And hopefully I get to interview the president. That would be wonderful. President Smoke.

LaToya A. Getz

Yes, I remember when he was the mayor. Now I've aged myself.

Bedell Terry

Remember when he was the mayor. I had just moved to Baltimore when he was the mayor.

LaToya A. Getz

Oh, my goodness. So, I don't know how old I was when he was the mayor.

Bedell Terry

I was old enough to know better. Goodness, but that's it for me. I'm so glad you volunteered for this.