Episode 2

[00:00:00]

**A'Milliana:** Hello, welcome back to Be WellMU podcast with your co-host A'Milliana McNeil. Not only am I a wellness ambassador, but I am also true friends with the guest for today. And joining beside me is my co-host Yessenia

**Yessenia:** hello, this is Yessenia Arias I'm one of the counselors at student counseling service.

**A'Milliana:** Today we have the most special guests in this entire world. not only my dear friend, my SGA president.

**Ashly:** Hi everyone. My name is Ashly Trejo Mejia. Thank you so much Milly for that amazing introduction. I'm really happy to be here with you all.

**A'Milliana:** So we wanna just swing by into things. First let's like, like give an introduction. Like if people don't know you, who are you?

**Ashly:** Well, I'm Ashley. I am a senior here at [00:01:00] Marymount. I am from Maryland, but originally from Honduras came me when I was four little bit about me. Milly's my friend.

**A'Milliana:** Hi

**Ashly:** but just for those that don't know me, I am currently SGA president. I'm very involved around campus, so you probably have seen me, but yeah, I'm just happy to be here. Oh, and I'm a biology major premed track and minor in psychology. So.

**A'Milliana:** She's very, she's a very busy woman. I actually wanna highlight one thing that I think is like very important within this conversation. The fact that me and Ashley both work for this organization called United we dream. And she can tell you more about United we dream and what it stands for.

**Ashly:** Yeah. So United we dream it's an organization where I got involved currently. I think my sophomore year, you know, everything was remote, everything online and. It was through during that time it was the dreamers club, which now currently is Saints unafraid. And we are a partner school [00:02:00] with them.

And what they do is they're one of the largest youth led organizations here in the states. And they advocate for immigrant rights. They advocate just anything that involves immigrant, right. Across, you know, the states, but headquarters are here in DC. So definitely there's always actions and things, you know, where, ways to get involved right around here.

**A'Milliana:** Yeah, no, it's definitely a great organization. And I was like very glad to be brought in via Ashley and actually just fall in love with the organization and its mission. So to begin the conversation we're talking about. You know, the mental health, stigma and cultural differences surrounding the Latinx community

so to start right off are people of color more susceptible to having poor mental health?

**Ashly:** I would say yes, definitely. I think that's because just the way that we grow up, the resources, the environments, people migrate from other countries. [00:03:00] It's just a little bit of everything, but just in awe. The straightforward answers is yes.

**Yessenia:** Yeah. I think a big part of it is the stigma that surrounds a lot of the cultures. If we're talking about the Latinx culture, there's. Still, unfortunately, a lot of stigma around mental health and discussing mental health issues, even treating mental health as a thing. But I'm sure in other communities of color as well there, no, of course is still lot stigma.

**A'Milliana:** Definitely being from the black community. Yeah. Yeah. There's definitely a mental health stigma and you both touched on it because of. The inaccessibility of high quality mental health services, you know, the stigma surrounding it, discrimination and overall lack of awareness. This is where you get poor mental health . In minority communities. So I just wanna like touch on what are what were your own experiences dealing with mental health in your community?

**Ashly:** Well, like growing up, well, some background info. [00:04:00] My me and my mother, we are both from Honduras. She came here first back in maybe 2001 or so. And then I came here around 2005.

So she came here and, you know, she was working really hard. And then like, I came along like with mom and whatnot, and the way that she grew up, the way that she describes is very. She started working with, she was just around 11 years old working every day. She was doing school at the same time. And you can imagine during those times our, our grandparents, they just wanted you to work.

, they cared about school, but not so much. And back in our country, you know, it's. It's not, it's not the best. So dealing with your mental issues or dealing with emotions like that was the least of your worries you, they were worried about, okay, how are we going to get food on the table?

You need a work, you know, oh yeah, sure. Go to school, but you need a work, you know? So those were the [00:05:00] main things. So growing up my mother and I, , we definitely had very hard times where we didn't communicate. I grew up, you know, not knowing fully how to communicate or how to like, just deal with my mental health, how to do with my emotions. So you. That's why you see a lot of kids. They have outbursts in schools. Like they don't know how to talk to their classmates, to their teachers. They're always angry because it all like goes back to, you know, to their parents and just how they grew up. So it really affects like your mental health. So overall it was, definitely interesting, you know, it was, it was, it was hard, but you know, with time, you know, things are evolving and, and changing

**Yessenia:** yeah I definitely echo a lot of that. I guess to put a word to it. Generational trauma yeah,

**A'Milliana:** exactly what I was thinking.

**Yessenia:** Yeah. Yeah. And I think especially the Latinx identity is very unique to this country of USA, because you know, in other, [00:06:00] if you go outside of here, you identify more as that whatever country you're from. Yeah. Right. You identify as. I'm Bolivian American, you would identify as Honduran , but when you're here in the us, like it's a very unique experience, which is why I think this idea of being Latino, Latina, Latinx comes from cause you have to unify with the other people. Otherwise you'd be so alone. and. Part of that experience of being immigrant, which is like, you know, my parents immigrated from Bolivia to here is that you kind of like almost have this identity of like work is a priority. You have to like push through, you have to provide and the children of immigrants, which I guess both of you and, oh, you're an immigrant yourself too.

Yeah. They just kind of grow up with that mentality too. And it's very, I think, hard to divorce yourself from that those ideas, because it can be harmful when your core is to just work and make that a priority. Then these idea of like mental health is like, not even, [00:07:00] not a table.

**Ashly:** I think even just to add to that, you just brought up to my mind how just like having immigrant parents, they hold us to the standard, to this very, very high standard. You have to accomplish, like, you have to go to college, you have to do better than me. And it's like everything that you do at the end of the day. Is it? It's not for you at like, it's not just for you. It's it's for your family. So with that, it brings a lot of just the. A lot on your chest. Like you, you carry that each day, so you always have to think 10 steps ahead of whatever decision you have to make in life.

**Yessenia:** Yeah. Yeah. It's definitely more than just you . Yeah, yeah, yeah. Education's huge. And it like echoing a lot of what you're saying. Like it, I, I think I definitely. Only thought of college because that's all it was drilled into me. Mm-hmm and then I got to college and then mental health issues became real.

And it was hard when you kind of find yourself on your own [00:08:00] struggling and not really knowing what you're struggling about.

**A'Milliana:** I think I've shown us some very important points, like generational trauma. That is something that I think affects everybody across all boards. But , I do see the fact that it's entirely different for the Latinx community, because there's so many type of expectations.

, there's so many type of hurdles to jump over. So bringing to my next question, how have you all individually. cope with this type of mental health take up within the community , or are you still growing are you still learning to cope?

**Ashly:** No. No, definitely. I'm still learning how you were saying, going to college is when I, when I started coming here, I was like, okay, so mental health is actually a thing, you know, well recently around these times, like mental health has had a lot of like echo on it. So more people are more aware and like communities are starting to be more aware. So definitely like the people [00:09:00] around me that, you know, are Hispanic. We are very much aware. I mean, I have friends that, you know, go to therapy actually, you know, they're really trying to take those steps to learn how to cope.

But me personally, I try to, you know, try my best to figure out ways like search online. Like how do I, you know, deal with my emotions, because one thing is, you know, trying to. Knowing how to like, not let everything affect you and growing up for me personally, I didn't know how to do that.

I didn't know how to like, distinguish, okay. Like I'm feeling this way, but let me, let's not let that affect everything else. And like, or let me not keep everything inside. How do I communicate? If someone has hurt me, how do I communicate? And so I'm like, You've hurt me. Let me not keep it inside. You know?

So I'm still coping. I'm still trying to learn. No, I . , yeah, it's a process. I, I think it's, it's all process, but just learning how to take time for [00:10:00] yourself is very important learning that yes, like my family family's important and yes, many of the things that I do is for them at the end of the day.

But knowing that I am my own person and. I should be able to, you know, to do things that I love and that I enjoy, even though at the end it might be a little hurtful to her. Like maybe my mom, just because, you know, she has these expectations and you gotta think of it like this, like specifically, like in the Hispanic community, there are, you know, not everyone is obviously immigrants, but.

Most of the population here in the US specifically, they are. So the fact that, you know, they have these standards and there is a life that they were never able to live. And that, you know, coming here to the US, me coming here to the US I'm living that life, that my mother was , never able to live. So she's looking like she's [00:11:00] living through me and she has these expectations.

What I'm trying to say is that knowing that , you are your own person and that it's okay to do things a different way. So that's a big one. It's a big one, just because it's something that I have struggled with. And like, I'm still coping with that because there's a lot of things that, you know, our parents are not gonna agree with, but at the end of the day, like just knowing. You know, I'm going to do this for myself. I need this for myself and trying to explain that to them. So, yeah, it's a big one.

**A'Milliana:** yeah, no, no, no. I definitely agree with that. I relate . So to ask your professional, what is like the most healthiest way

**Yessenia:** I, I think. Most important thing that highlight in all of this is that it is a lifelong journey. Yeah. I, I always wanna like emphasize that. Cause I think when we talk about coping and like You know, mental health, there's always this idea that we're gonna reach a place of like it just being, [00:12:00] not an issue.

Yeah. But mental health is like any help you have to do upkeep. And kind of going to, along with what you're saying, Ashley, like boundaries. That is like a solid thing that constantly, we don't just kind of establish them and then they save it. Like you constantly have to work on them, reset them, communicate them again, especially when it comes to family.

Yeah. Because family is, I think the biggest it's the biggest one is the biggest one. They're always pushing up on your boundaries because they aren't just your family. Right? Yeah. And so it it's. Doing like the constant work around it. That's a big piece of this. Me working on like being mindful of like how you're feeling, what you're struggling with.

Like, what do you need in that moment? And sometimes it's gonna be like, I need to talk to a therapist. And sometimes that's not even necessarily the best thing for you in that moment. You might just need to kind of like take a break or take time to do other things you enjoy. But, you know, therapy can be really helpful at times to work through some of these [00:13:00] things, but I, I don't wanna make it sound like that's the only solution.

It can be a big solution though. A bit, a big help out of solution.

**A'Milliana:** . Yeah, no I definitely agree with you. And that's why Marymount offers so many resources or our mental health. And even if like, you don't feel confident enough to. Seek out a therapist, there are other resources specifically for people of color, specifically for BIPOC students.

So I'm glad that Marymount offers that and you can go online onto the Marymount website and you can see that. But I do have a question because you did Ashley touch on something that I'm. Interested in the current population yeah. Of the Latinx community. Do you think currently people within the community are more receptive to mental health in 20 22 than in like 2001?

**Ashly:** Yeah, I would definitely say so. I think social media has been a big part of it. Mm-hmm I think [00:14:00] overall this generation has, are definitely way more open-minded. You know, we see no struggles that our parents have gone through and we've seen like how men, their mental health has been affected so much and we want to help them.

So yeah, I've talked to mom about therapy they just thrown it in there, be like, Hey, like, you know, I'm, what do you think about that? And she's definitely like more aware, like, no, I know that I have, you know, things that I have to work through. I know Ashley and it's just, you know, I'm still holding back and like, not knowing how to go about it, not knowing what to do, but I would say that.

Yeah, I think a lot of, like I told you a lot of my friends, I they're very open minded and they want to work on their mental health. They want to do better. So I would say that we are going towards like the right path. It it's progress. And I can only imagine like years from now. [00:15:00] If you think about it like this, like your children, how they're gonna grow up, because, you know, you dealt with your mental health right now, you're working on that.

You're working on, you know, those communication skills, et cetera. So thinking of like what you're doing right now as a young person taking care of yourself, how, like the big impact that's gonna have, like later on in your future,

**Yessenia:** mm-hmm. Yeah. I definitely feel like it's mirroring what's happening in society at large, that mental health is more of a topic we actually discuss.

Like, I, I love seeing on social media or just hearing friends say like, oh yeah, my therapist said, blah, blah, blah. I'm like, oh yeah, like let's mobilize this. Yeah. So I think little things like that are huge signals that we're moving forward and it's becoming more something that we can be open to. And beyond that, like, I, I think it's really important.

For us as individuals to, you know, emphasize and. [00:16:00] Rebel against a lot of the stigma. Right? Like recognize the stigma when it's being brought up around us. Like I, I know that I still have a lot of like, I'm a mental health therapist. Right. I still have a lot of conversations with my family about what that really means.

Yeah. About like, oh, you what you just said that. That's the kind of like commentary that leads to eating disorders, you know, like things like that, like calling all those things out, it's constant work, but I think it, it is important to do, especially because it's, you know, generations and generations of like, this has just been going on, but anytime we can kind of like try to educate others and, normalize these things. I, I think that means a.

**A'Milliana:** And that's the whole purpose for this podcast to educate people about mental health in an array of places that mental health can affect. But I really wanna like talk about, okay, we are a Hispanic Serving [00:17:00] institution and we do have resources for. DACA and undocumented people. And I really wanna highlight one scholarship that is offered that Ashley's actually a part of . The dream us scholarship. yeah, you can say more about that one.

**Ashly:** of course. So the dream that us scholarship, it's an outside scholarship apart from Marymount and. It's a scholarship that helps on undocu students, even. So even if they're fully undocumented, half DACA, TPS, asylum, many other things, but this is just a scholarship specifically for these group of students, which they can either apply their senior year of high school or after two years of community college. They help with tuition and they give so many other resources. They help, you know, if you need to renew your DACA, they help with a stipend and a [00:18:00] lot. It's all good things. And their headquarters are in DC too. So yeah, no, everything's

**A'Milliana:** here. Everything is in DC. Yeah. And they have, you need help. You got it.

**Ashly:** Yeah. I think they have over 30 schools that they partner. In Marymount.

When I came in as a freshman, we were the first cohort. So we were okay. Yeah. so it was only five of us during that time. And that scholarship here at Marymount has, has grown a lot. So I think it's up to at least 30 something students with that scholarship here on Marymount. Yeah.

That's, it's an amazing scholarship. And that was very amazing. That's the reason why I wanted to talk about it because it so helps a lot of people but you touched on this earlier you are actually a part of called something called saints afraid and it's a club and it also United we dream chapter.

Yeah.

**A'Milliana:** Okay. So do y'all have any events or any like general body meetings coming up?

**Ashly:** Yeah. So saints and afraid is, is just [00:19:00] to give you guys a little rundown of what the club is. It is a, you know, student that organization, which we, our goal is to create safe spaces for just anyone on campus. We really we really are very inclusive, which if you really think about the name since and afraid they were, when we were changing the name and like reaming the whole club, there were a lot of names like UnDocMU and, you know, things like that.

Certain students brought to our attention where, you know, there is still a lot of students, like are not, you know, so forward with it. Mm-hmm so like, you know, like, oh, I'm going to I'm UnDocMu club event. It's a little much at times. So we try to find the middle ground, which is Saints Unafraid students feel okay with it, but it's really just a club where, you know, we really wanna be inclusive. We, but as well, again, like [00:20:00] we work with United dream, we do a lot of actions. We go to their actions, we do phone banking with them. You know, we try to educate our, our community about, you know, on undocu students, on campus and their rights and how you can be an ally.

So we have undocu trainings, like once. Once every semester. So that, that will be coming up currently. Right now, everything is in the works. So if you came to the expo club, we got your email , we are sending an email. So stay updated.

**A'Milliana:** Yeah. Yep. Well, that actually covers everything. I. Thank you, Ashley for joining.

**Ashly:** Thank you.

**A'Milliana:** Thank you, Yesenia.

Always. Cause you know, she is a busy, busy woman and she takes the time to co-host this with me and guide the conversation and give education and knowledge to us because we don't know we're still students we're learning. so

thank you all so much for tuning in. Please be sure to listen to us on apple [00:21:00] podcast and Spotify and look at the full transcript on Marymount eDU.

**Ashly:** Bye bye.