

Shawn Young: Sounds good. Well, listen, ready to get started? All right. Well, all right. So, uh, Ramiro great to be with you today. My name is Shawn Young for those listening in. I am the Project Lead for Bard Prison Initiative, upstate reentry and capitol region initiatives. I do the work to support alumni in the capitol region returning to the community [with] housing, jobs, professional development, volunteering. All the things I can think of to make sure that our folks are being brought back into the fullness of the community.

I've had the opportunity to meet my brother Ramiro here in Argentina and at the [Summer Residency](#) at the campus. [It was a] wonderful experience and I can't wait to get into what happened and what I thought about it and what we did.

Ramiro Gual: Hi, hi everyone. Hi Shawn, how are you? Well, I'm Ramiro, as Shawn said.

My name is Ramiro Gual. I have been working as a professor in a higher education prison program in my country, the University of Buenos Aires, for the last seven, eight years, and the last year I have been a Global Research Fellow for BPI, trying to produce some kind of connection between our programs in the south and this kind of college-in-prison programs here in the north and trying to identify what are we doing: our similarities, our differences and what can we do to improve our experience here and there. So thanks, Shawn.

Shawn Young: It's awesome. I have a question, if you don't mind, I'll just start off before we get into too much about me. I got to this question a little bit while we were outside, but why this work?

Ramiro Gual: That's interesting.

Shawn Young: Yeah. Why this? What brought you to this work?

Ramiro Gual: I haven't thinking about why different people like us engage in this kind of activity. I think there could be very different options, why people engage. I think in my case, it was something like: I [had] been studying at law school, I got a law degree and I was trying to figure out what things I could do to improve my life, the life of my community.

And as I stud[ied] criminal law, [I realized] there are just a few options where you can make the world better with your job when you are a lawyer. And then I discovered these kinds of programs and I identified that there was something that people [were] doing there that really improve[d] the experience, the experience of their communities and of their country.

So, I identify it as a very productive experience. I think that was the reason. And what about you?

Shawn Young: Yeah, no, I was gonna say we've got kind of different circumstances that brought us to this work. You know, I was incarcerated for a number of years in my life from a very young age and, uh, state facilities.

Um, that's my first time being in a detention center. I think 12 years old – like 12 years old – I was brought to a detention center in New York State. The Division for Youth is the institution that houses young people in what they call like baby prisons, right? Disgusting phrase, but it's actually true.

But before my own personal exposure to that life, I had seen it in my family and in my community. Almost from as early as I can remember from family members being arrested for this or that thing and heavy police patrols in my neighborhood.

I'm from, born in upstate New York in the Capitol Region. But I've lived in Brooklyn, New York and each community that I lived in was filled with African Americans and a lot of poverty. A lot of violence, a lot of crime. So, I... That was my experience. Coming to this work, it took a lot. It took fighting, right?

So for me, fighting looked like when I was incarcerated to a number of years – it's just fighting trying to get home. Trying to get out of prison. I wasn't hopeful that they would do it on their own, they would help me get there, so I had to fight myself. And then in that fight, I began to educate myself [by] reading the law.

I went to prison without a GED, without even an equivalency diploma. In other words, there I studied law, got my GED, was introduced to the Bard Prison Initiative. And so many of my brothers that are like family to me now. And it's that experience, learning about my world. And this is why education is so important for me because it expanded my understanding of the world.

I went from a micro kind of outlook of everything to this more macro-level, and I understood more of my place in it. And also I felt more responsible for it, in the sense that I wanted to change the trajectory of folks' lives and our communities. Because it's this knowledge gap that often plays a huge role in what's possible for people.

And what they think is possible for them. What their expectations are and I've been rocking and rolling in that way ever since. I haven't stopped. This started when I was incarcerated, to coming home, to speaking at our state capitol about the conditions of prison and wanting to see change. Fighting for different kinds of pieces of legislation to change what's possible for people, what resources they have, and more.

And that's everything from economic development, workforce development, housing, home ownership, et cetera. So that's why I'm in this fight and, you know, BPI has given me an opportunity to do this work in a really robust way. That's how I met you. That's how I ended up as Argentina. And enjoying that experience.

And seeing active resistance on a different continent that parallel much of what's happening here. So I guess maybe we could, we could slide into that a little bit about what that experience was like.

Ramiro Gual: But first of all, I was thinking about that first decision of you, I mean, to enroll in BPI, right?

Shawn Young: Mm hmm.

Ramiro Gual: Because I think that when you are doing time in prison, there are different decisions you can take and it seems like you take the more difficult effort. I mean, it's not like an easy path to enroll [in] college. So what was going on in your mind at that moment? Or what do you think about that?

Shawn Young: That's a good question. So, truthfully, I had studied the law and I had got to a place in my case where I was feeling really positive about what may be happening, right? And then being at Eastern New York Correctional Facility, which is kind of the home base of the program, where so much has happened there, I got in thinking that, you know, if I get out, somehow I got a conviction, I need something that's gonna counter that.

I need something that, you know, can help me take care of myself, help me get a job, right? Because it's gonna be difficult, obviously, to find work when you have a conviction. What I gained, however, was something much more than just the education which is something I often talk about. So the decision was, 'Hey, I need a job. I gotta do something. I'll go on this program. I'll do that' because, you know, whatever.

When I got there, it was, oh my God, these people really care about us or what we think. They're setting expectations that are beyond what the kind of dominant narrative is inside a prison. The atmosphere there is one that kind of – let me put it to you this way, there's messaging every day in prison. Direct and indirect messaging about who you are as a person, what control you have and don't have, right?

And messaging from correctional staff to nurses, to, you know, other staff that work at those facilities is almost always in the direction of 'you don't matter,' right? And always, always in the direction of really low expectation standards about what's possible for you. In whatever classrooms they have, whatever trainings they do, mostly always that's the case.

With the college coming in, it was an entirely different story. They set expectations high, right? And they expected us to achieve those things, they worked with us, they valued our opinions, they gave us a rigorous curriculum that allow us to really kind of, I think, expose our own intellect and that kind of confidence that comes from that type of feeling between people that happens in those moments and the cohorts, all the fellas in the library and learning with each other, sharpening each other in a way that I think produces some of the best outcomes possible for just a human person, period.

Just valuing them, giving them real expectations, allowing that confidence to grow, and then seeing some real achievement through the degrees, through the grading, et cetera, and allowing folks to work together is just an amazing experience.

And I feel that that is the difference. You cannot simply – it's not just education, right? It's all these other things that go with that. All the intangible stuff. Especially for a community that has been largely neglected.

Ramiro Gual: Yeah, that seems interesting because you say something like, 'I was in prison. I identified that I was going to be released and I need to get a job and I need to improve my education for this.'

But when you are released, you look for a collective project, for a project that involved you with your communities and not just from an individualistic perspective, right? So what I was wondering: what do you think, that the more collective purpose...was present [in] you before BPI arrive[d] or it was BPI who help[ed] you to think in a more collective purpose?

Shawn Young: No, I think that I had that in me and that the program allowed that to grow more. But just if you just think about my words and like how I just said that, I'm like, 'Hey, I need a job,' right? I'm not thinking about the world and everyone else in it, in that way.

'I need a job.' You know, personal to me leaving the program, going home after having that weird experience, like I'm rallying with the community about the changes that are needed and thinking more about this collective thing. Well, this is a liberal arts degree that I've accomplished with a focus on public health, right? It's about the community.

And it allowed me to take those steps to do that. So it was definitely something that I think that I had, but it wasn't grown in the way that it was after going through the program.

Ramiro Gual: Yeah. You know, histories in Argentina of people who were in prison are now developing different collective projects in their communities when they are released offer histories very, very similar to you.

You have met some of them. I mean, the public labor in San Martin, where you have been or those kinds of community centers and it's interesting because the histories or the experience are very, very similar, right? I mean, in that sense to think that maybe the North and the South are not so different when we think about a university in prison programs, right?

Shawn Young: I think, yes. I think both worlds have communities that have been neglected and left behind. You put a human being in that circumstance, but allow them opportunities to grow, I think, and to be valued. I believe that when opportunity and human potential meet, this is what happens, right?

Opportunity, human potential. Our brother with the public library. Forgive me, I can't remember how to pronounce it –

Ramiro Gual: Waldemar.

Shawn Young: Waldemar. Think about his journey, and he started the library inside first, and he came home, and he looked at his neighborhood, his community, and he saw something there that others didn't.

The field was a refuse field, right? And he, they had, one thing there that he told me, he said that there was a, like a shrine, right? That had been there, and he saw something, he's like, we have to do it here, because this is where people kind of know this place. You know what I mean?

There's something special here. And one person... He comes home, connects with others in his community, and the change happens because of the catalyst, right? The catalyst is the community, the collective, the education, all the stuff that goes with it. It's a beautiful, beautiful thing and that parallel, I think, is not just between North and South America.

I think that's globally, a global thing, right, when, when you think about it. I see you writing down a lot of questions on that.

Ramiro Gual: And that idea is to return to your community, right?

Shawn Young: Yeah. Yeah.

Ramiro Gual: Not to think about a different community, to continue with this.

Shawn Young: Some of the – so we can talk like really high level and thinking about why things are the way they are, right?

I think that that's an interesting discussion. What we do, though, is push back against why things are the way they are and try to change, I think, the disparities between communities. One problem I [saw] in my neighborhoods growing up is that when you made a couple of dollars, you left, right? You didn't stay.

You weren't staying to, like, fix anything. That's one thing. The other thing is people don't talk to each other anymore. It doesn't feel like an actual community in a way that ideally you would want a community to exist and thrive and be healthy. The other thing is, is that the connection between – and some of my communities I grew up in personally – the neighborhoods I grew up in and its local governance is severed.

So people are walking around these neighborhoods more powerless and as if they're visitors in those communities, right? As if they don't have any say so. The roads could fix, they don't get

fixed. The buildings come down, they go up. It's always a surprise to the folks in the neighborhood, right?

There is no engagement with that type of change and what I've been able to do is try to make those connections with people, right? Um, talk to them about what the resources available from local governance is. Talk about folks' right to know what's happening in their community. And then also steer the investment from local government to the neighborhoods that are in need.

Being an advocate in that way is something that I'll probably never, ever let go of. But I've seen even in just the short time I've been home what that means. We have the most Black elected officials in the city of Schenectady than we ever had. We have more investment in some of the neighborhoods that I grew up in up there than we've ever had. And it's not just because of just me, but because of this idea of collective work, bringing people to the table and just trying to make them understand that they have ownership of this and therefore they are responsible for this.

It's not enough to just talk and complain. We must have action and part of all of that stems from, my debates with like many of my guys in my cohort, my study of history, and more. And just this kind of, something inside of me is like, not only is change possible, but I can be the change agent myself.

Ramiro Gual: Yeah, I was thinking about this collective experience right in the communities and, uh, how to make the[m] stronger. And I was thinking how important it is to create some kind of network between those different experience[s]. Because sometimes you think initially you think that you are just the only one [with] experience doing that.

And then you, uh, find out that there are lots of experience[s] close to you doing things, some similar things. So how to create that kind of networking? I was thinking in the activity you organized last weekend and how important it was to realize how different experiences are being connect[ed] and working, uh, together, right?

That kind of experience seems to be interesting to interrupt the idea that we are just alone in the world and we are the only one who is doing these kind[s] of things.

Shawn Young: Exactly. Exactly.

It's special. It's special to gain that understanding. It's motivating as hell.

Going to Argentina and all those conversations, breaking bread with the community at Universidad and like hearing about all the different programs across the world. Was that the first global convening of something like that? Like that you were aware of? Cause I –

Ramiro Gual: Who knows? They love to say that. They love to say that, that this may be possible. Yeah. But if it's not true, at least it was a very, very first stage for a collective work from here to now and for from here –

Shawn Young: Italy, South Africa.

Ramiro Gual: Yeah, it was, it was different places in South America, Chile, Mexico.

Shawn Young: Yeah, it was really impressive to see so many because you don't know that, right? I didn't know that. I didn't know that the work was happening in all these different places and that people and then. When they were presenting kind of what they do and the passion in which they kind of talked about it.

It definitely felt like family. It felt like this community of people doing these things and trying to address some injustices and wrongs in our community. It was just wonderful. Match that with going inside, right, and sitting with those men that I sat with and having deep conversations.

One of the things that was really, really curious to me was that – which is different from here in the States – is that the school buildings, no officers, no officers in the school buildings. And like, that's like unheard of here, that could never, I mean, I will say it could never happen, but it would be a really difficult thing to have happen.

And I asked the brothers like, 'Why? Like, how did this happen?' And I guess there's a lot of history with political prisoners and stuff from earlier times. But one of the brothers said to me, and I can't, it was, uh, I can't remember which – the place that had the ceilings were dripping.

Ramiro Gual: Devoto prison.

Shawn Young: Okay, alright. He said, he said, uh, it was important that they had ownership of this. It was important that, not just for the people on the outside, but for them, like that this belonged to them and wasn't being [run] by someone else and that they were responsible for it.

He said that if the officers are here, it's their program, right? If we're here, it's ours. And I thought that was different than what I was thinking, but it was also deep and kind of profound. You want to speak to what that is?

Ramiro Gual: Yeah, they said very, very... peculiar history in the beginning of that program when the teacher in the university that was going to create the program went to, uh, I mean, there was a place, a fired place in the, in the prison.

It was abandoned because there was a fire there, something like 10 years ago. And so this, uh, woman, this professor went to the meeting with the corrections authorities and ask[ed] for that place to create the first university center, where you have been last April. And the authorities told her that there were no funds to make that horrible place a university.

So she returned with the students, with the first students, and said, 'Well, we have lost. They said there [are] no funds'. And the students said, 'No, we have [won]. They didn't say they are not going to give us the place. They say they don't have funds. We don't need funds. We can do that. We just need a place.' So they created it from the first time, it was just their place because the state said we have no funds to make it possible.

So from the beginning it was from them and they create a lot of minimal strategies every day to keep that idea that it's from us and from the gate to the outside is the prison, so it's your place, but from the gate from here, it's a university and it's ours.

Shawn Young: Nice. Yeah. I think that's, uh, I think that's, that's, well, it's, it's very powerful.

Um, ownership and, and no, go ahead, you were going to say something.

Ramiro Gual: Yeah. No, I think that maybe I have been just two or three times in sites of BPI inside prisons. But what I have identified there is that with its own features in some way BPI students also challenge to create that place as its own place and as a place that is not the prison.

I mean, it is in the prison, but it is not the prison. There are minimal experiences that show you how people deal every day, every time, to create that same freedom atmosphere inside the prison. So, there is some similarity between the two programs. With its difference, of course, but there [are] some similarities in that thing that students seem to be looking for, right?

Shawn Young: Yeah, yeah. I know, I see it, I see it. And having been in there, uh, myself. You know, one of the things that, um, I think Max, the Director of BPI and Megan Callahan, the Dean, had said to me, um, in like one of our initial, kind of, after I was in and we were talking, it was like, 'This is the college. You are students.'

Ramiro Gual: Yeah.

Shawn Young: There's power in naming things, right? Um, and we took this space and we made it a place that was our own, even though we didn't have the same distance between like that building and the officer, because the officer is walking in the hallway out, you know, we see it's the idea that that matters that resonates.

Yes, yes. Um, and I think that, that was very, uh, that was a very smart thing to do because we're naturally gravitating towards that more liberated or free or thing than what we're dealing with on a day-to-day basis. And it feels better when you're thinking about it yourself as, like, you imagine, just think about the work that you have to do both in Argentina, in those prisons, and the work that happens here to kind of put up these, these walls, right? Between what's happening in the prison on a daily basis and what you're trying to do here in this space.



Like, imagine the work that has to happen, the necessary work that has to happen in order for it to be successful, I imagine. But the work that you're doing in that way, it just, uh, I mean, it speaks to, you know, our ability, I think, as human beings to just to take these situations and adapt ourselves in ways that can really benefit us.

There's a lot in this, in this part of the conversation that we're having right now. There's something, there's something really deep about being able to do that, being able to create a place out of a very violent and negative space, right? That's a powerful thing.

Ramiro Gual: Yeah. It's, it's impossible to think that it's not impacting in any way inside the prison. I mean, you can think about intended effects in this type of prison, but also in the non-intended effects. I mean, it's impossible to think that the community that is not going to be changed is the college or the university, whatever is there.

Shawn Young: It's very existence, not only changes the lives of the individuals, a part of the program and staff that come in, the professors that come in and teach the curriculums, but it resonates outside of that, right? Uh, it's very present, it's like, for the people that are not in the program, it becomes a thing they want to achieve, they want to be a part of.

And people gravitate towards the positivity of it. At least that's what I've seen while I was there. And then the guys that are in the program are actually now, like, in little organizations across the prison doing work, similar to me coming home and wanting to work in a community, to, like, kind of address some of the issues in a way that benefits everyone there, not just their small group.

[I] should write a paper on that, because there's something really powerful about – in my head as we're just talking – I'm just thinking about some works I've read about how we create space. Excuse me, how we would create place out of space.

So you can have an empty room and you can make it a studio, right? Now, you know, this is a studio when it could have been something totally different. It turns into this place where these conversations happen. It's just, it's something really interesting. I'm gonna think more on what that means, even outside of, you know, just being incarcerated, but how we are doing that now in our own communities with different places. Yeah, very interesting.

Ramiro Gual: And what about, uh, BPI students level? I am impressed with that. I have been two or three times in the last week in prison and I have some kind of lecture – a prepared lecture – very, very established in the minutes and what was going to say. And I said, 'How am I going to make them feel active with a proposal?' because I mean university-in-prison in Argentina, why would they be interested in that? And so I decided to prepare just two or three questions for them. Just to make them get activated.

Shawn Young: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ramiro Gual: They couldn't stop talking, they couldn't stop criticizing, they couldn't stop discussing my point. They have an angle for everything.

Shawn Young: Yeah. Yeah.

Ramiro Gual: What's, what's there? Why are they like that? It's like a BPI ethos. What's that?

Shawn Young: I think that's very interesting. 'Cause some of my friends that have gone through the program, we sometimes we gotta, like, check ourselves cause we just debate too much. Like, we don't gotta explore all 9,000 angles of this thing, right?

Like, we're just getting ridiculous. It's hard for me to tell you exactly what it is for them. But for me, it's also, I feel like it's an exploration of my own intellect sometimes. Where I, because I now have an ability to see from all of these different ways I wanna be able to explore that as much as possible in conversations.

Sometimes it gets competitive between guys when they're having some conversations wrestling with some really powerful kind of philosophies or theories on something. But it's really, personally, exploring my own intellect and thinking about, you know, coming to this newness of, like, thinking in these ways, right? Having now, putting into play different kinds of different thoughts around, you know, the social sciences and how it may play off of what you're talking about.

And it's just, yeah, for me, that's what it is. A lot of it's like being able to do that. Because think about being someone with all that potential now, just now being revealed to themselves. You understand that?

Ramiro Gual: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Shawn Young: Like, you have what that means? Like, just now coming, like, 'Wait a minute, I've, like, I can do these things. I have this potential. I can think in these ways,' et cetera, et cetera. Uh, it is very, it is very powerful.

Ramiro Gual: It's interesting because in some way[s] people [are] more prepared to think that education in prison should be an education directly related with doing things like with a profession with a possibility to get a job immediately.

And you are thinking in a program that is more like 'Open your minds to criticize, to create,' and that could be a good tool [to use] the day after release, right? Yes. It's not necessarily to think about an education very, very close to a job.

Shawn Young: Mm-hmm, yeah. Mm-hmm, like that's one of the things that –

Ramiro Gual: That's interesting.

Shawn Young: That's very different from, you know, starting from the liberal arts where you're learning about the world and learning how to learn and, and like, yes, you can get a job, but like, how are you thinking about that job in context of your happiness, right? And what do you want to do in life?

And for me anyway, you know, it has allowed me the way I think about my world. It's allowed me to do all the things I have done so far. Like, if I run down a list: start my own organization, lobby work on state and local levels for investment changes in our community, just the list, like the things that I've been a part of is because of how I understand my world, not because I narrowly just focus on one specific discipline or craft.

I think you should be able to do both. You should be able to focus on a craft and also know, understand your world. But too often, we're always putting money...

Ramiro Gual: Yeah.

Shawn Young: And, which is, money's important. Like, when I say it's not, but we're, but money can't always be the lead thing in your life. One of the things I often say to myself and say to others, 'Chase your passion and purpose, right? Not money. Chase passion and purpose. Not money.' Money will come. It will. Find the thing you love to do. Care about that. Find your own happiness in that way. And that'll take you a long way, in my opinion. This is from a kid who's coming from some of the most poor communities in our state who's found his way in thinking like that.

Ramiro Gual: How is that to have a meeting, a conversation with authorities from the government? I don't know how you feel that the first time you have to do that, how was that?

Shawn Young: It was kind of jarring, a little bit. 'Cause like I'm in a room with this senator or state assemblyman and even a local city council person to me is just – in my mind's eye, this person that's, you know, kind of an elevated station, some distance away from, you know, my community, my neighborhoods and my friends.

First time was a little bit, whatever, but I began to realize something – and this is the thing that sits still with me, this is why you hear me say like human potential, humanity – we're all just humans, man. We're not, you know what I mean? I've broken down those unnecessary distinctions. Like, your title is your title, that's good for you, that doesn't make you necessarily better or worse than anybody else. You're a human being in all the ways that I'm a human being, and I have equal value here. So I could sit in a room with anybody and have a conversation and not feel the way that I maybe felt the first time I sat in a room with a legislator.

Shawn Young: I'd like to know from your perspective, what has this first year been like and what you've accomplished? And then like, what does the future look like?

Ramiro Gual: That's good. That's interesting. Well, I think it was a very productive first stage trying to identify better the similarities and the difference between the different programs.

I don't know if you have heard, but that idea that, prison is the prison, but every prison is a prison itself. And I think that the higher education in prison is maybe the same, like higher education in prison is like higher education in prison, but each program is an experience itself. My knowledge about our international meeting – I don't know if it was the first – but our international meeting, at least it was a very, very productive field there to move forward, to continue maintaining [those] kinds of talks. I think that all the programs are not going to be the same after those kinds of encounters. So, I think for the future, there [is] a very, very intensive and productive field to explore.

I think. Yeah, definitely. And what about you? What was your experience after being in Argentina?

Shawn Young: Well, it was incredibly motivating, and inspiring to see what you all were able to accomplish inside those different prisons. I did a radio interview with one of the brothers in there. That was really nice to have those types of conversations about my experiences in America.

Because I was a person that has the experience of incarceration, they saw me doing something that they themselves likely want to do, or something similar in the future, and they just, like, they wanted to talk about what I do. I hope to meet those brothers again when I go back to Argentina. But this year for me – [it's] been a little more than a year working for the college, working for BPI – and the experience has really taught me a lot about what's needed.

It's taught me a lot about what's possible.

Ramiro Gual: That's good.

Shawn Young: It's allowed me to – similar to what I said to you earlier – explore my own intellect and the creative process. Right now, my role for the college is to expand our ability to get resources to our students that come to the capitol region and other parts of upstate New York. Moving in more into reentry, finding jobs, finding housing opportunities, finding just all the things that we need when we're coming back to the community from incarceration.

We have a housing development that we're about to build. I'm the project lead on finding a place that people come directly from prison to and get all those things that I just mentioned and do it from a safe and stable place. We're currently in the development of that and hopefully we'll open doors next year.

We're working with other programs and other partners in the city. That's our local city government, our county government just above, the state is kind of interested in what we're doing as well. We've had private sector businesses that are interested in what we're doing. We

have other non profit groups who are like, 'Hey, yeah, we want to be a part of something like that.'

So it's a really interesting and needed housing opportunity for folks. And it's going to sit in a place that is completely barren of anything like it. Right now, returning home to the community, and when we think of success for someone who does return to the community, the metric is always,

'Well, did they go back to jail?' Right? 'Did they ever go back to jail again?'

And that's the metric that we care about. But we, obviously, we're going to reimagine something quite different. We're going to change that metric, and we're going to redefine what success looks like, when a person comes back to the community. My hope – and this is back to Argentina – is that one of the things the great programs inside, but there was, I feel a need to do something more on the outside so that when a person came home, they were landing in a community that was supportive and conducive to like them getting the things that they need.

Ramiro Gual: Yeah, yeah, definitely. That's a huge experience for us. Uh, there are some university actors still in Argentina that still think that the university process ends once people get their degree or are released in the case of the university in prison programs. And it's [such a] thought provoking experience that we need to improve our activities and duties, our proposals, once the prison ends.

And I was thinking in a word you used two or three times in your last speech, that idea of where it is needed, right? And I was thinking that idea that incarceration rates are growing in upstate more than in New York City and so it's not just Albany as your community, it's also Albany as a place or upstate in general, but Albany too, like as a place where high education in prison is more needed and post-release programs are more needed, not just because that's where we are.

It's also because that's where incarceration is still impacting much more.

Shawn Young: Yeah. And I want to just make a point about one thing as it concerns the universities that this work supports outside of the prison context.

I think that there's already a structure that exists between the universities and their students and opportunities outside of the school, right?

Ramiro Gual: Mm hmm.

Shawn Young: You go to college, you get a degree – and if I'm wrong, tell me if this makes sense in Argentina – you go to university, you get a degree. That experience, the friends and the people that you meet there, the professors, the different fraternities, sororities, whatever organizations that you become a part of are all kind of dictating, pushing, or you're navigating that world to whatever career or whatever your life is like outside of it.

Sometimes like lifelong friends, other kinds of support that are there. It's kind of what's happening – not kind of, is what's happening – in a different context when you're thinking about re entry. It's just, when you think about it in a prison context, it seems different, but it's not, It's about support for people that have been a part of this university, the alums that have graduated and left going on to do other things in life, going on with that support of different aspects of that university experience.

And that's kind of what I would like to see us recreate for students that happen to have the prison experience, right? I want to recreate those kinds of supports. And for me, I see all the parallels in what that means. And I think the art of it will be how do we talk about it with people that are empowered to get them to see that these are students and we should be supporting our students. Not: we should support the guys, you know, this way versus that way.

Ramiro Gual: Yeah, yeah, of course.

Shawn Young: Was that good?

Ramiro Gual: It was great. Thank you.

Um, just before I leave, thank you for that, Kate. This was great talking with you and Mero. Make sure I'm invited to the next trip. Yeah, why not? Like, hey, you guys are folks, huh? Why not? Where are we going? Like, make sure I'm invited. I would love to come back down, um, to, to meet you and, and, uh, and your folks and have these conversations and work together to create the change that's needed.

That's needed. Yeah. Thanks, John. All right. Thank you very much. Thank you, Kate. All right.