

David Barrera Flores interviewed by Karen Reyes
July 29, 2020
Queens, NY

My name is Karen Reyes, and I am interviewing David Barrera, in Ridgewood Queens.
Do you give me permission to record this oral history?

DBF: I give her permission (and also to Guttman)

KR: How old are you?

DBF: 18 yeas old

KR: What is your racial identity?

DBF: Human, Hispanic male.

KR: Where are you from?

DBF: I am from Queens, New York, and Born in Manhattan.

KR: What's it like living in Queens?

DBF: It's hard for me to say because I've lived in Queens pretty much my whole life and it's regular to me, it's a lot, it's hectic but it's not hectic to me. It's just the normal life I live on a day to day basis and it's pretty much always the same.

KR: What kind of people live around there?

DBF: Like what do you mean what kind of people, like ethnicity? Well, it's whites mostly, Hispanics, and African Americans. There are pretty much a lot of people, but the majority is white.

KR: What was your opinion about police before the protests against police brutality?

DBF: F*ck the police, it has always been my model. I have never been a model citizen, always had problems with authority so my opinion about the police is kind of biased but it's my opinion.

KR: why?

DBF: I'm a criminal, I'm mischievous ever since I was a little kid. I don't know, I just, I don't really know why I have a problem with authority. To me, everybody is just another human and without the badge, they're nothing and like I can't be told what to do by another human just cause they have a badge. It just doesn't make sense to me, I'm my own human and no one can tell me what to do

KR: Has your opinion changed now?

DBF: Never has changed, ever since I was a kid, I was taught to hate the police, music people around me but it always stuck and I always understood why.

KR: Let's say hypothetically, police stops you because of your skin color, how would you react or what would you say?

DBF: I don't think what I'm going to say is appropriate. I've been stopped by police and it has obviously been like a little biased towards me. Just abuse of power. I've always been dealing with police in some kind of way. I've just always been in trouble so there's always like a little action going on with the police. I'll just get mad at them and I'll tell them and say go f*ck yourself or something. I got nothing to tell them but f*ck you and you're racist like without that badge or nothing, take off that badge and fight me.

KR: Are there any stories that you're willing to share about those encounters with the police before May 2020?

DBF: I got a lot of encounters with the police. One of my first encounters was with the police that involved assault in downtown Lower Eastside China town. I was skating with a couple of people and they came out with their car and he said "Don't you see me here asshole!?" and I was "what? What are you talking about? I'm just skating?." I continued to try to skate and then he comes up to me and my group of friends 3 other Hispanic males, and he said "keep on doing that and I'm going to arrest you and all your little friends!" I'm not gonna lie I'm not a model citizen, I wasn't just like complying with him. So, I was just trying to get him mad, and I started dancing and saying "who's mad". I've tried to continue skating off because he was just mad that I was skating on the pavement. I can skate, I can walk, I can do whatever. If I wanted to I can just lay on the pavement for 48 hours and do nothing, but they chose to bother me because they were down the block. I tried to just walk away cause I didn't want my friends to get arrested. Then, I ran to get on my board and he kicked me into traffic. He kicked me in my legs once I jumped on the board and I almost fell into a bunch of cars in the freeway, well not a freeway but it was a very busy street. I turned around like "yo what the f*ck, why'd you do that? You're so dumb. You were just explaining to me what if I have to call your mom and tell her that you got hit by a car because you were skating but you just kicked me into traffic while his buddy just stood there and watched him, said nothing. Just abuse of power. They do whatever they want but if I were to kick the police officer, I'd go to jail for 2-3 years but it's just how life is. I have another story.

KR: That police that kicked you, what race was he?

DBR: Uh, it was a white dude and a black dude so they were working together. But that's always what gets them. When they work together, that's when it's the worst. Real people would actually know that if you got a white cop and a black cop working together, it's not gonna end up nice.

KR: Do you mind sharing the other story ?

DBR: Pretty much the same setting, except I was skating in the train station well not on the platform, I was on the top level not where the trains are passing by. I know I wasn't supposed to be skating at the train station but you know it's just a board with wheels. What's the big problem? So I was skating, an undercover cop pulls me off my board while I'm going down and doesn't say anything about NYPD or anything he just grabbed me from my shirt and yanked me right off, ripped my shirt and obviously I got mad. I thought it was some random pedestrian so I started screaming and I was going to fight him but he and his buddies pulled out, all the badges and they got mad " Hey, get the f*ck out my station, this is my station!". He was just screaming at me, calling me all types of words so the same thing, I just left. I can't do anything, it's just the cops, I just deal with it. Life goes on.

KR: Why do you think that after May 2020, protests in New York have erupted?

DBF: There was always going to be revolution honestly. I've been saying that a couple of years now and saying there was going to be a revolution. I've always noticed how they treat other people and treated other races. So, it was just a matter of time. If you shake a soda-like long enough, it's going to explode one day. Racism all of that, I always knew it was going to happen and I was just waiting for it, waiting for the revolution. Waiting for everybody to stand up and say they're tired of it, they need people to protect and serve not to just harass. It just has always been an abuse of power, but once they get that badge they go crazy.

KR: Were you involved in any protests?

DBF: I haven't really gone to the protest but I've passed by and I support any Black lives matter situation. The only reason I can't go to protest is that I got money to make. I just couldn't be out like that, but I've always supported it and donated. I know the protests are there to change, it's for change. And change is happening, but it's not happening like how it should be. They're just doing little things to control the mass. Just to make everyone think that what they say matters and it works a little but everything died out already right? No ones talking about this anymore, it's just the same thing. History is just gonna repeat itself over and over again as it does. The world just recycles itself honestly. The same problems will evolve and everything gonna be the same, it's just how life is going to be. I will never see any change in that, racism, biased against other races. Well, it's just the same thing. But no it will never change and I don't understand that. I always grew up just seeing other people like other people, just humans, never not racist just another human being.

KR: What do you think the government's response to all these protests was like?

DBF: Violence, violence is the only answer in life. How do you think things are disputed? It's always violence. Wars are one, that's the only thing that matters, just war.

You can't control the masses so you just hurt them until they stop honestly. That's pretty much all.

KR: Actually, what do you think was President Trump's response to it?

DBF: I don't think he even had a response to it. He just called everyone like looters, thugs, or something right? I mean was he only talking about the looting? Or was he talking about the actual protests? Because I remember when they used to be protesting about, not protests but like riots about sports and he was like "just kid's lollygagging or something like that" he says what he wants to say, I can't stop that. I never really liked him but he's just kind of a puppet in the government, people tell him what to do. He's not really the one who decides everything, he's just like a puppet. That's how I think the government is, but that's a different story.

KR: Let's just so hypothetically, you're driving a car and the police stops you because he thinks you're being suspicious. How would you react to that?

DBF: Like how I always react, just try to get him as mad as possible, because at the end of the day I'm not doing anything wrong. If they won't arrest me, it doesn't matter to me because I'm gonna come out the next day, next night, next week. It doesn't matter, I'm gonna go home and everything's gonna be the same.

KR: Does it ever scare you? Do you fear if something like that was to happen to you?

DBF: Never, it already has. I'm used to it. I've been assaulted by cops so many times. I laugh about it. It's funny to me. I tell them to record it like "you guys record this, look he's about to hit me or something". It's funny to me. It's everyday life and I always thought it was funny. I remember one day I was having a conversation with my friend Andy and we were talking about it and he's like, "isn't it kind of sad that this happens too much on a daily basis like routinely that we just joke about it. That's just such a sad thing to say that these people that are here to protect and serve just come over here to harass us all the time and it just happens so often that it's fun to me now.

KR: Has coronavirus changed your life?

DBF: No. Same thing. My life is pretty much, how can it change my life? It changed my life in ways that I can adapt to it super fast. Nothing really a problem. I was never really social for people. I've never really hung out with a lot of people. A lot of people get off the streets and I love being in the streets 24/7. I'm never home. I'm outside and the longer you'll stay outside the happier I am outside since there is no one's around to bother me. I want to be alone, I don't know, it made me happier I guess. I just get to be alone and I don't get to deal with people anymore.

KR: Let's say you were to be walking and you see a black male or woman being encountered by police and being threatened for no reason?

DBF: I'm fighting. I'm recording. I am going to set up my phone and going to intervene since you need a video for evidence to show the people and hopefully, you get them fired. However, you know they're just going to get suspended. Paid vacation. Because when you kill someone nowadays, it's cool I guess for cops but I'm not standing anymore. If I see something happening, I'm going to do something, and say something. If I see to the point where it's going to take someone else's life just for skin color, I feel like it's worth my life to intervene. I don't know.

KR: Why do you feel like you need to intervene in situations like this?

DBF: Because it's very, very ignorant. Racism is just so dumb to me. It's just melanin to me. It's just a chemical in your skin that just helps you get more or less vitamin D. That's why people are super white because they don't have enough melanin and in countries like islands it's always raining or cloudy. So, they need white skin so they can absorb vitamin D faster. African Americans, we're in the sun more or in the sun longer cause it's a sunny area. Therefore, they have more melanin so they don't get too much vitamin D. It's just like a chemical. Skin color was never an issue, something that I thought about as a kid growing up. Racism is taught, it's not an instinct and if I see someone about to die, just because of some skin color, it's sad. It enrages me so I am going to make it stop. I am going to have to stop that and if I can't stop it then I'm going to die trying.

KR: So, you would rather die than watch someone else die because of their skin color?

DBF: We are together baby. All my minority people. I ride for you, you ride for me. It would be like that forever. I'll care for other people and yeah just be a good human.

KR: How would you like to see this movement resolved?

DBF: Anarchy, complete take over the government. I want society to collapse, I want life to be different. I want everything that matters, to not matter anymore. That it's not all about currency and about power, but it's about being happy and just living. How humans are supposed to be living. We are not supposed to be in this environment where we're stacked upon each other. Living in 2 -4 cubicles and like 6 thousand people in the street every day. No, we're supposed to be in the jungle, in the Amazon. We supposed to be fishing, hike, and hunt gathers. At one point this society is going to collapse and it's all going to revert to how it was.

KR: Do you think you can be more specific about that?

DBF: It's just common knowledge to me. We've evolved so much that it's kind of bad for us. We just sit in our houses and be on social media all day, watching television all day. People are trying to create so many problems out of something so stupid. Do you know why people are on the internet all day and just complain about the dumbest thing? It's because they don't need to walk like 600 miles to get some freshwater, they don't have

to chop down wood and catch animals to go eat. They don't have to go forage for food. It's just that we were too comfortable. We getting too comfortable.

KR: What do you think would be your role in achieving the outcome, where there is no racism in America?

DBF: In America, I can't help. I'm literally incapable of helping. I'm a dropout. I have no power or whatsoever over anybody, nobody's going to listen to me. I'm just another normal kid from the streets, just a normal little kid. The only way I think I could help is if it were an actual revolution and we fought the government. That is the only time I'll have some power, overthrow the government. I want capitalism to just be destroyed, I just want no government, no one to tell me what to do.

KR: What do you mean by you want capitalism to be destroyed?

DBF: Money. Money is the root of all evil. Money is the only problem we have in our lives. If it wasn't for money a lot of people would be way happier. When you're growing up as a kid, it's oh "what do you wanna be when you're older?" "oh you don't wanna be a doctor, a lawyer?" A this and that you would have a good pension and be able to feed your whole family, this and that this and that. It's not all about money, people get so mixed up but you need money to live in this world now. You're either a sheep or someone is broke. it's just you never win. It's a weird world that we live in.

KR: What do you think the cops' response to these protests that began in May 2020.

DBF: What I see on social media, is what I see. What I see on tv is what I see. However, when I experience what real life is, then it's life. That's what I can talk about and most of the protests that I've passed by they're not mad, they're not attacking people but you see that on social media and that's going on all around the world. So, it just matters where you at, what you watching, what you doing but I don't think all cops are bad. And I understand when a cop gets mad at me for some things because it's the law and I'm breaking the law. I don't get mad at that but I just keep doing what I'm doing. To all the good cops that are out there making sure that protests are safe. I respect you all and all the cops that are just out there destructing the peace and attacking normal model citizens, you guys can rot in hell.

KR: How do you think that the good cops work in a system like that?

DBF: They're sad, they're working a system like that because they're trying to help. You see it's sad that we're asking this question at all "how do you think the good cops work in a system like that?" It shouldn't be like that. It should be like "why do you think the bad cops work in a system like that?" Honestly, if you're here to protect and serve you do your job. People are sworn to protect and serve and they don't do it, they just go out and do what they do. Harass people, just because they have power. To the good cops that are out in the forest and they know that the good ones, they know that they're stopping prejudice and all of this and I respect that. I love that. And how can they work

there? The only reason they can't, they're driven to work there by the way they see how policing is actually done. So, they watch that and they're like " Oh I'm seeing all of this, I can be one of those people. I can shut the rule straight and I can work like how this system is supposed to work. Good cops are just normal cops, just don't be racist, it's not that hard.

KR: Do you think the way the system runs, it's their fault or not?

DBF: It's not enough training, they have like 6 weeks of training Right? You're telling me that a cop is supposed to handle a criminal with a gun and try to stop a criminal with a knife or an insane person, but they can't deal with a little kid with just dancing, making fun of them like me. What do you think they have the power to actually take care of real problems. If they're getting mad over something like me just dancing and making fun of them and they want to hurt me over something so little it's not that big of a deal, but once it's a big of a deal. I wonder how they're minds react, probably all over the place. All their training goes down the drain they act on instinct. They shoot to kill.

KR: So do you believe all cops deserve to be cops?

DBF: No, Good cops deserve to be normal cops. It's just you gotta get the right training. Too many cops fall under pressure, they don't know what to do so they lash out. They let their anger get ahold of them, they just like yeah go crazy, what can I say?

KR: What are your emotions about this?

DBF: Nothing, it's sad to see. Nothing is going to happen so you might as well just desensitize yourself. Gets me mad every day that I see this happening. It gets me mad that it happens to me so often, but what can I do about it?

KR: Thank you so much for joining my interview and consenting for recording.

DBF: I'm David and I consent