

**RQ1: In what ways are community college students making decisions about their academic majors and/or potential careers?**

- **In what ways are students' intersecting identities relevant to their academic majors/careers decision-making process?**
- **What is the role of family, friends, and institutional agents (primarily faculty) in this process?**

## Lorenzo Tate

Lorenzo is a twenty-two-year-old African American, part-time student at PCC enrolled in one class for the electrician certificate program. This is Lorenzo's second try at PCC. Last year he was enrolled full-time but left after the first four weeks to handle his criminal case. Lorenzo is now a convicted felon and on house arrest. PCC is one of three different places he is allowed to be at, the other two are church and his job. For Lorenzo, attending PCC this time around is a different experience. Lorenzo says, **"Right now, I'm motivated, though. I know what I've got to do."** Although eventually becoming an electrician or plumber is not his passion, Lorenzo is hopeful that receiving a certification in either vocation will put him at a certain pay level that would in turn fund his true passion for music. Lorenzo explains **"Once I get that, and when I make this, this electrician, this was just supposed to be something that was just going to fund my music. To where I know, like you feel me, I can get out there and be famous with it and all that. I know I can... I just, the music, that's automatic for me, though, because that's initially what I wanted to do. That's what I know"**.

Lorenzo grew up in the Inglewood/South Central area of Los Angeles. One of the people that Lorenzo looked up to is the recently slayed rapper Nipsey Hussle. In his words he says **"Nipsey Hussle. When I came here last year, I got asked a question like that in my class and I say, hey, he's somebody like on the hustle level. You know, mentally, he was cruise, he was educated... He didn't graduate high school, he didn't go to college, he just started reading books. And he educated himself, on top of like, cryptocurrency. He made his own cryptocurrency, he did so much, like-... Like money wise, he educated himself on that and then also, history."** Growing up, Lorenzo aspired to becoming a famous athlete. Lorenzo says **"What job I wanted? Me being young, from the hood, I wanted to be always a sports player, NFL, NBA. I wanted to be in NBA. I played basketball in high school. But I came to my senses in 12th grade and I realized, it's ugly for me, so I mean really, besides that, I had no passion."** Lorenzo further explains **"Basketball, that was all we really had. A lot of people that made it out of our section, either play sports or rap or something. For me it was some type of talent, it wasn't too much brain work, you know. I mean after high school; people don't be going to college. Too many people can't maybe afford that and probably lazy, caught up in the streets. You know, it's just really sports because that's all we're really good at. Just beating all the other races in it, not to be like you know, like race that either. It was going to be everybody, you feel me?"**.

Aside from realizing that he was not going to be able to leverage getting a scholarship to college through his athleticism, Lorenzo faced other difficulties that gravely affected his grades. Lorenzo explains **“I was getting a lot of D's, started getting a little bit of F's. But I mean, I bounced back, I still you know, graduated. But, I just had a lot going on, fighting with different people and stuff like that. And me moving out here after being the middle of my twelfth-grade year... Yeah. Because I was living out in Inglewood my senior year and like four months, three or four months before I was going to graduate, we had to move because you know, what's it called? Something right now. Gentrification...Yeah. Out of nowhere, we had some new owners, out of nowhere and they just came in and they raised the rent up...He said, you've got to start paying this by this day, you can't afford it, you've got to move out by this day, whatever, so we ended up moving out quickly. And it just messed up the whole just”**. Lorenzo, his mom, and sister moved into his grandmother's two-bedroom apartment in Pasadena, that she already shared with Lorenzo's aunt. Lorenzo says **“Only two rooms, so you can just imagine, but that's, we've been living there since 2016 and my mom basically don't have much credit like that, so, she's been working on getting credit, but you know, she lacks a little bit, too. And I don't have the best credit, either. So, like she's working on getting better credit so that she can get another place, and she's been trying a lot. She's trying other places.”**

Thus far Lorenzo has really enjoyed his electrician classes and is looking forward to getting an internship that can pay him well. Once he starts getting steady pay, Lorenzo plans to get a car so he can more easily pursue job opportunities. At the same time, he understands that becoming an electrician is a dangerous job. Lorenzo says **“ I heard like crazy little numbers, and you feel me? I heard it's a dangerous job too, though. You feel me, but I'm-... You can die. You can be electrocuted. Even if you know what you're doing, just one mistake, you feel me? We're human, we make mistakes, so you're always at risk of making a mistake. So, you feel me? If you make that mistake, or doing what you're not supposed to do, overload a switch or whatever, feel me, you can die. So, you feel me? I'm already aware of that. It's okay, that's the risk I'm going to have to take”**. Lorenzo further explains **“Because I don't know anything else. I don't know what else. I mean, I have a felony, so I'm limited. I don't have many options, anyway. I mean”**. Apart from this first class he is taking, Lorenzo is not sure about any steps to come afterwards, including how he will find an apprenticeship.

Despite Lorenzo feeling that he has support from his family and capable of reaching out to his professor, he has not relied on his direct family or any faculty during his time in college. This was very surprising to me because his mom attended college and recently became a Licensed Practical Nurse, so I wondered why she is not leveraging her experience to navigate his time in college. During the interview Lorenzo explained, **“It's all on me, really. Even if they were to say something negative, I still would just be doing it, you know what I mean?”**. When I asked Lorenzo about his relationship with his professor, he said he believe it was very good. He said **“ I mean, I don't know his name, but... he doesn't have it on a board or anything. Nobody says anything. Nobody ever says his name. I thought he was maybe going to say his name, I don't know. But he's cool, though. He's cool. I haven't talked to him like really about this, but we**

**don't have that close of a relationship, but I do answer questions and talk in class, but we're pretty cool."**

In terms of advice for how professors can help students make a decision about their majors Lorenzo had a lot to say. He explains **"Honestly, just finding out all about your hopes and you know, of course you want to get a background in all this. And you know, you want approach everybody differently. Not everybody you know uses the same tactics to get into people's heads and you've got different personalities sitting in front of you every time you. So you need to try to get into their heads, but try to, you know what I'm saying, build a bond while you're talking to them, because you know, and don't be fake, don't show the fakeness when you're talking to them. Don't show like, you're irritated if you are, just make sure you keep that smile going, but don't be fake with it, to where it shows. It's all about how you approach the people, for to be human, and you know, give them your experiences and your background, if you, like if you had a time when you were indecisive. Even if you don't, tell them about a friend that was indecisive. You know, give examples to help out. And you'll be like okay, she told me about her friend, she told me about herself, and that's what's up. Motivation...Motivation means for me, your helping the next person out and you might not even be knowing it".**