



ASHPOfficial - Exploring a Couple's Unique Experiences as Pharmacy Leaders and Dads: An Interview with Jorge Garcia and Leyner Martinez
Transcript

Speaker 1:

Welcome to the *ASHPOfficial Podcast*, your guide to issues related to medication use, public health, and the profession of pharmacy.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Thanks for joining for ASHP practice journeys podcast. This podcast invites members to share their stories about their professional path lessons learned and how their experiences shaped who and where they are today. My name is Daniel Cobaugh. I'm the Editor in Chief of *AJHP* and Vice President of Publishing at ASHP and I will be your host today for the ASHP Practice Journeys podcast. In recognition of pride, ASHP will host four podcasts with LGBTQ leaders in pharmacy this month. With me today are Jorge Garcia and Leyner Martinez. Thanks for joining me today. Well Jorge and Leyner let's get started talking about your journey as pharmacy leaders as a couple and Oh, by the way, gay men. Let me start off by, I just want to check in with you. I hope that both of you and your family that you've been well throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jorge Garcia:

Well, absolutely. I'll go first. I want to begin by thanking you for this unique opportunity and how great it is for ASHP to be able to make this available for our members. Thank you for that. COVID-19 has been unprecedented and it's called for unprecedented coping mechanisms as a family with two small children that haven't been to daycare since March this year, it's created a void and we happen to have a great support system with both the grandmas being very involved and engaged to help us navigate through the different work demands. And it just happens that with COVID-19 at work, the demand, bringing us to the coping mechanisms that we need at work has demand that has to be more at work than before. So definitely a lot of challenges there.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Well, you know, it's really interesting. One of the things that I wanted to get to later in our conversation was the balance and how you balance the demands of career and raising a family. And I was wondering about how much family support you have and to sort of think of it in the lens of COVID-19 it really brings it into focus. Leyner, how are you doing?

Leyner Martinez:



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Doing very well, thank you also to ASHP and to yourself for the opportunity to speak on this issue. But other than that, doing very well, doing my best at work and at home, and just like everybody else trying to get to this pandemic and hopefully together united will get through it and find a vaccine and a mechanism to help patients moving forward.

Daniel Cobaugh:

You know, it's really interesting to be here with you guys today. This is the third interview that I've done as part of this series. And it just seems like yesterday when I was standing at the head of the board table, in ASHP's board room and it's in our old building and the two of you are right there. Somehow you're there during a residency visit and UPMC group was there. I immediately felt a connection with the two of you and somehow figured out pretty quickly. I'm not sure how that is. That you were a couple, what year was that you would know because it was a year, you were a resident. So I assume it was during your PGY1 year.

Leyner Martinez:

Correct! It was 2011.

Jorge Garcia:

It was so special to be there in the ASHP office and go through that exercise. I was fascinated by how much feedback you guys were looking for from us, even residents at that level, it was my unforgettable visit. And so definitely remember vividly.

Daniel Cobaugh:

And so 2011, almost 10 years ago, Leyner, what about your thoughts on that visit to ASHP 10 years ago? And it was our first opportunity to get to know each other. What, what are your reflections on it all these years later.

Leyner Martinez:

As a young resident in the field trying to make it, it was a lifetime of an opportunity. I mean, I have not been back to Bethesda ever since in my career, unfortunately for multiple reasons, but it was a very special moment to be at the headquarters near DC, right. And interacting with people like yourself and other who have been in the profession and have given so much to the profession. So I felt very privileged to be able to have those discussions and to provide feedback on how we can make residency programs better and make the organization better. So



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I think reflecting back on it, it's only but pure privilege, truly a wonderful opportunity to have in a career, especially as a resident.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Well we will have to work on getting you back Bethesda then. It's been far too long. We need to get back to Washington. Tell us about what you're doing today. You're both in leadership positions in the Baptist System, right?

Leyner Martinez:

So I'm currently the Director of Pharmacy Services about this hospital of Miami is part of the Baptist healthcare system in South Florida. It's about almost an 800 bedsides hospital where I'm the director of pharmacy and I'm basically responsible for everything related to clinical and operational. When it comes to pharmacy at a local level, we do have a very unique structure in our healthcare system that we belong to a corporate pharmacy division. We are structured to a chief pharmacy officer kind of organizational model, and that has brought a lot of changes to our organization and opportunities for pharmacists technicians and humans and interns. So I'm just very blessed to be part of pharmacy leadership as a whole, and be able to make a difference through my role

Daniel Cobaugh:

And Jorge. What about you, what's your role in the Baptist System at this point?

Jorge Garcia:

So I am an Assistant Vice President for the Oncology Pharmacy service line, and that is a little bit unique in the sense that it's not tailored to a specific facility, but it is more so tailored to meet the needs of the service lines system-wide. And so that does bring me to work close with Leyner on his inpatient oncology service. So it's not uncommon for us to be in the same meetings with his team and my team trying to approach different issues and opportunities. And also at large, we have different system pharmacy initiatives that bring us together and regional pharmacy director meetings and other meetings of that nature. And obviously we are a family and our peers know and understand that. So I think it's been very unique. I was thinking about this and for the majority of our career we have actually worked together in different organizations. And so I think that's just become our norm.

Daniel Cobaugh:



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So that's really interesting. When you think about in the Baptist system, are there other couples that come to mind where you have a married couple who happened to both be leaders in some way in the organization that are around the table together? Or are you really highly unusual?

Jorge Garcia:

I think there are others within the pharmacy division and outside the pharmacy division and we share it openly. My personal philosophy is I don't like to impose my life on others, but if others come and ask, I feel the need to be transparent and let them know like it is. And so in that life journey, I do have pictures of my family in my office. And so if the conversation comes up, I always welcome it through that. You just begin to know all of the other families. And that has been the case in our previous organization. I actually have a very nice story to share when Leyner and I were getting ready for our first baby Valentina. We were working at the Memorial healthcare system and we were both directors of pharmacy, four different areas. The whole team. So the Joe DiMaggio children's hospital, that's where Leyner was at the Memorial cancer Institute that was the division I was at. And the flagship hospital was where our offices were in that main campus. Those basically three large teams got together and put a baby shower for us. That's something truly special and meaningful for us that day. This was obviously a surprise baby shower. So we were not anticipating or expecting that that day when we both drove home, we got on the phone, I can say it was disbelief, but the level of support and encouragement that we got from all levels of the organization was so truly special. And that day we knew that our large, that it was okay that our peers were so comfortable and supportive of what was going on, but I know Leyner remembers this experience very well.

Leyner Martinez:

So I'll just let him chime in on that. I just wanted to give a little of my perspective. I'm a little bit different when it comes to warhead, when it comes to making people aware of who I am as a whole and as a whole meaning my family. To me, it's important for people to understand that I can't separate one from the other one to make my whole. I make it a point for people to be aware of my same sex marriage that I have two kids and that they were done through surrogacy. And I feel responsible for advocating through those conversations that are normally happening at any point, I drive to the point to make sure that people do understand, yes, I'm a gay man, but I have a very centered family dynamic and a very successful career and a profession that I'm very thankful that I belong to.

And I try to drive those conversations at a personal level to build relationships and to also advocate. I think it's important to tell this story to others, for people to start thinking differently.



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Sometimes in those conversations, I do them with a little bit more intent perhaps than Jorge when I'm meeting someone, especially now more comfortable in my role, probably not years ago when I was a first year resident and trying to make it. But now that it's more of an established role in who I am comfortably, I've come to terms with that as who I am as a whole concept the whole package.

Daniel Cobaugh:

You know, it's interesting to hear both of you offer those perspectives and somewhat from a different angle, both of them, but we thought about putting this podcast series together. We wanted to celebrate pride. We wanted to recognize ASHP's LGBTQ members, and also to provide support for people who may be in different places in their journey. And I think what I heard you both say is it's okay to take different approaches and one works for one of you and the other works for the other. And I think that's great for our listeners to hear that too. I want to jump to your journey to the United States. So you both immigrated to the United States from Cuba, right?

Leyner Martinez:
That's right.

Jorge Garcia
Yes. Correct.

Daniel Cobaugh:
What year was that? Leyner? What year did you arrive in the U S?

Leyner Martinez:
1999.

Daniel Cobaugh:
1999. So I don't like to do this to you, but hopefully the people who are listening won't be that quick with their math. But how old were you when you arrived in the U S?

Leyner Martinez:
16 years of age.



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Daniel Cobaugh:

You were 16 when you got here from Cuba. And Jorge, what about you?

Leyner Martinez:

So I arrived here in year 2000, September 1st of the year, 2000. I was 15 years old at the time.

Daniel Cobaugh:

You're 15. It's fascinating to me that the parallels in your lives and the journey that you made, both your personal journey, as well as your professional journey. It's just so interesting to me. What was your experience as you arrived to the United States from Cuba, or what was your experience leaving Cuba to come to the United States? So I think obviously our listeners will be really interested in hearing those perspectives.

Jorge Garcia:

Absolutely. I'm happy to start. I grew up being a very conscious and self-aware kid when it came to understanding that I was growing up in a country that was actually different and a country that was communist. And I knew that it wasn't communist super power Soviet Union or Russia, as we know it today or China. You know, I think now as an adult, I can have added perspective on what it really would mean for a communist model, as an island, isolated in the Caribbean. I remember just being very curious and asking my parents about the status of the country. I remember the revolution had this phrase that they will call a special period, and that was popular in the early nineties. Just really telling the country as a whole to get ready for a special period ahead, meaning the economic crisis and things getting a little bit worse.

And I remember asking my parents to me, the word special means good. You know, you go to a restaurant and you want the house special. It's something good. So why are we calling it that? If our country is becoming more poor, right. And kids term, why are we calling it a special period? So at the time that I was having those questions, I was about six years old, which is really early on. As I became closer to my teen years, the revolution was nearing 50 years. And I just, as a young adult, knew that a prosperous a different Cuba was not in the foreseeable future. And so it just 20 years later now today I could see that I, as a kid, I was right on that, but I came to the harsh reality of many Cubans. And that is to understand that for a better future, the only answer was leaving the system and living the island.



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So I became preoccupied with my, and my family plan to be able to achieve that at this point in time, in the close to the late nineties, you know, the Cuban government and all the external governments had many limitations in place to control immigration. And at that point we already had Mariel and Operation Peter's Pan and older, large migration operations that had already happened. And so there was more control on that process. And I just feared that I would not be able to achieve that. So I remember actually going to Catholic Church on Sundays, and I remember just praying and asking God, I only want one thing. And that is to be able to one day be able to live the country. And so many highs and lows on that plan came by sometimes seem like we had a plan to come to the U S and things will fall through, and it will be another few years waiting and trying something different.

But finally, September 1st, 2000, it really became true. And not until I landed in Miami, did I really believe that that was happening. And that was probably one of the most important life event for me, my family, obviously, because it impacted almost every aspect of my life. And then, you know, I think another conversation is coming into a new country, new culture, being a teenager, trying to fit into the high school mode of things. When you are dealing with the challenges of just being a teenager, trying to fit in, you're trying to pick up a new language. Kids are going to make fun of your accent. So that was a very interesting dynamic, but I was always determined. I knew that I wanted to be a professional. And so to me speaking English was a really, really, really big deal. And one of the only barriers that I saw between me and my ability to become a professional. And so I took that very seriously. I had, for example, some Cuban friends that I would try to speak English with to try to practice. And they would just think, you know, I was trying to show off. And so they didn't want to be friends with me. So you go through those faces and you just have to, even though you're very young, you have to understand what you want and what you need to get out of it, to be able to succeed with your agenda.

Daniel Cobaugh:

We could spend hours talking about this experience, but Leyner, I mean, you were similar in age. It was in the same timeframe that 1999 to 2000 timeframe where your experiences similar to Jorge's?

Leyner Martinez:

Yes, very similar same pathway where my family was eagerly and desperate, trying to find alternatives to try to leave the island. Thankfully we were able to do so through the U S visa lottery system, my father was able to obtain a visa and approval and then the entire main family



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was able to migrate to the United States. I arrived in Miami and yeah, I think challenges like Jorge describes adjusting to the new culture, adjusting to the country. Obviously, not speaking the language whatsoever. That was a major barrier for me in high school. And I'm not good at languages to begin with. So that was definitely a challenge. And one of the major reasons I decided to go to school and to also leave Miami as a whole and go up North on my pathway to find snow and find the American dream and the American culture, because Miami didn't have that. And it wasn't going to offer that, right? And I knew what Miami could offer, which is the Latin experience, which is what I'm all about. That set a whole pathway, my career and professional ambitions to go to Florida State university then go to pharmacy school in Pennsylvania and take a different pathway completely away from Miami to later return home as an accomplished professional, to make a difference in my community.

Daniel Cobaugh:

You layer on top of your experiences, you were adolescents, probably one of the most challenging times of life, or at least we think so. Then you were immigrating to a new country and layer on top of that, that you were gay. How self-aware were you at that point in time that you were gay? And did, did that affect your experience in some way?

Jorge Garcia:

Oh, I'll start first. I think I have always known since I can remember when I migrated to this country, I was going through a major transformation period in terms of understanding my sexuality for a long time and how that was going to come out to others was something that I really did not consider at any level in Cuba. I mean, we're talking about a culture that is notorious for being intolerant towards gays. And to me, that was just not an option. In fact, I grew up being fearful about that being something known. I did my typical things growing up, like having girlfriends and the typical things that all the boys are supposed to do. And that was the best coping mechanism that under that culture and my level of understanding of who I was and how I needed to fit in produced. And so coming to the U S was a change in the fact that this country, even though we still have so many setbacks is still way ahead of Cuba.

And so for me, going out there and seeing places where gay people meet and socialize and you, for the first time, you realized that you're not alone in the world. And that the things that you have been experiencing is very common among other people too. It really begins to change your approach on how you want to embrace and who you want to be in the new environment that you are in. So that was a very unique period. And it was clear to me down the line that I



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needed to have this discussion with my parents. And definitely that was a turning point. And then eventually getting that beyond the immediate family members to colleagues and friends. So I would say it was a self-discovery process of reevaluating, who you are in this new environment. That is a little bit more accepting than what I grew up in.

Daniel Cobaugh:
They enter. Was it similar for you?

Leyner Martinez:
Kind of, but for me was arriving, the United States was the freedom that I was able to gain, not only a political challenge in society, but also from being free as to who I am. You know, I grew up in a very small town, people know each other the entire lives, and it's a different environment when you grew up in a large city, right? Coming to Miami as a large city from a very small town is a whole different mindset. And when I arrived to Miami that was the freedom that I was looking for to better be who I was. And to me, the pivotal moment in my life from truly start understanding who I am and assessing myself fully, as I am, was when I disclosed that information to my parents and my mother. And they really embraced luckily who I was and fully supported me all around from career ambitions to personal goals, to who I was as a person. And once that happened, then for me, the concerns were different moving forward. Obviously I've always been a little bit conservative when it comes to a little bit of disclosing who I am, especially early on in my career, especially towards pharmacy school in residency process for matching. But the point is that once my parents knew who I was the rest of the world, it was only going to be informed and I didn't care more. Anything after that.

Daniel Cobaugh:
I completely connect with that Leyner. I have very similar experience. Once I had conversations with my family members, with my mother and my sisters, from my perspective that was liberating. And I often describe my journey as a 13 year journey when I first started in 1983, until I had those conversations in 1996. But now, so you both decided on pharmacy as a profession and later you made some references to going North. I believe that was Erie, Pennsylvania, right?

Leyner Martinez:
Yes. Correct.



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Daniel Cobaugh:

So tell me about when your decisions to pursue pharmacy as a profession and when you met each other sort of in that timeframe, because as you can imagine, one of the things that I'm really interested in is also talking about your experience as residents and going through the match as a couple, being in a program together as a couple and going from there. But when did you make your decisions pursue pharmacy school? When did you meet each other in relation to that and talk about where you went to school and the decisions that drove, what drove your decisions to pursue those schools?

Leyner Martinez:

From my perspective, I was in my career journey to be a pharmacist and in healthcare as a whole. I've always debated a lot when I was in college, what kind of healthcare profession I wanted to join. I considered being a dentist considered pharmacy and considered Medicine. It was a very difficult moment for me to decide which career pathway to pursue. But when I met Jorge, I had already established that commitment that I was going to go to pharmacy school. And I was only applying to three year programs. Meaning pharmacy schools have a curriculum of a three year program that are accelerated only throughout country because I've already achieved a bachelor's degree. And I said to myself, not realizing much about the pharmacy profession itself "If I can cut one year in my schooling, then that would put me into the workforce a lot earlier, right? But then I met Jorge and Jorge is also interested in the same career pathway and the same passion for professional growth.

And we both got accepted to complete opposite schools in the country, right? Like you mentioned earlier, I did get accepted into pharmacy school in Erie, Pennsylvania, and in Boston. And Jorge got accepted to school in South Florida. Yet we have probably met like six months earlier at first. And it came at a point in our, in our lives where we had to decide as a couple, not just met about six months earlier. What do we do from here on knowing that we're both very eagerly to continue our professional growth and development, but also deeply in love as young birds. Right? And at that point, we really, really decided that long distance was going to be the way I was going to go to Erie, Pennsylvania. He was going to stay in South Florida and we were going to make it through somehow. And that's how it all began in our careers and in our journey to continue pursuing a professional degree and staying in love and together and commit as a couple, no matter the distance.

Daniel Cobaugh:



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Linda, I wanted to talk a little bit more about that now, as someone who grew up in Southwestern, Pennsylvania, and one of the two big cities in the state of Pennsylvania, we'll probably get some emails about my making that comment, but you know, I'm a Pittsburgh native and I know Erie pretty well because I used to drive through when I was living in Rochester, New York. I'm interested in your experiences going to a smaller city, leaving South Florida, and the support that you had there for your long distance relationship and the network that you had there that I imagine must've been nurturing and helped you. And Jorge be successful. Did you find that support in Erie?

Leyner Martinez:

I did. I did. I, I actually have great memories from Erie and Western Pennsylvania. I have met the most kind people that you can ever meet in Erie, Pennsylvania, people that are very proud from who they are and where they from and that area of the country and Erie was an interesting dynamic because it's not as small city, not a large city. It is by the Lake. You do get that Lake effect. You know, right? I'm from Cuba. My genes not meant to be in the snow and cold weather by nature. I am defying every possible pathway for me to be there, but it's through true and humble friendships and relationships developed in school that really got me through that. And I think, you know, like people would say Erie and Pittsburgh are still in the East Coast, but people are like, kind of like from the middle of the country as well.

And it's a different mindset. I truly believe in that it was a different experience for me. I today still have long friends that I've made in Erie, Pennsylvania that helped me so much through pharmacy school on a personal and professional level. The only thing that kept us going and kept me going was the relationship with Jorge because I had somebody else to relate to where, what I was going through and talk about it and kind of have a support system, even though we were not fully out, very out there while we were in pharmacy school at the very beginning, at least I wasn't in Erie, Pennsylvania. Obviously I was conscience of the environment that I was in. Some people were very conservative and I didn't know how much I could push with me feeling comfortable in disclosing to everybody that Jorge was my partner but I did.

I had a roommate and the roommate saw Jorge coming in and we've talked about that. Right? And I disclosed that and I have my best friend and they became aware of who Jorge was and our monthly visits and plans and trying to see each other. So I think our people got to know me, like I always told you earlier on, it's important for them to know me as a whole. And I started bridging that gap more comfortably, little by little and obviously grew more bold and people talk,



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and then sometimes you don't have to address things. And people knew about it and are mindful of that and nd accept you as who you are. And I think those early beginnings were really foundational for me to really embrace me even more in a professional setting.

Daniel Cobaugh:

So Jorge, he convinced you somehow to move North and not far from Eerie to do residency training in Pittsburgh at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Did you go through the Match as a couple?

Jorge Garcia:

We did. And actually there's more to that. The journey in Erie was beautiful for me as well. I concur with Leyner completely that although rough from a personal standpoint, Leyner only knows what a proof of love it is for me to get on those tiny little planes with the landing gear down. And you would feel the aircraft was breaking in half to land it in Eerie, Pennsylvania. And I did that multiple times through snow storms and things like that. But I also agree that the journey showed a logical concern, when we knew that we needed to have this journey of long distance, we had only known each other for six months. So it wasn't like we were falling back on a very solid relationship. We were still building our trust and getting to know each other. So that was a huge risk. And we also knew that we both were going to be going through rigorous training, right?

So the stressors that come with that. But to Leyner's point, because we both were going through exactly the same thing, I think that that really helped. I think if I had a partner in the engineering industry or something else, and I was like, I had a PK exam. They may not understand what that meant, but I told Leyner I have a PK pharmacokinetics coming up and I didn't need to explain more like he knew he wasn't going to hear from me for a couple of days. And I really think that that was helpful. And it was foundational to really have us feel inside how much we really wanted to be with each other. And it's something that we work towards for a years. So when we finally got there, we understood how much we appreciated that, how much we wanted that. And I'm glad that that happened because ever since we've been together at home and at work residency together, I think life really compensated there.

We live and work together, spend a lot of time with each other together now. But when we left Erie, Leyner said, "I don't think I'll ever be back to Pennsylvania. I'm done. This is done. And then we land our match in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. So at this time we both come together for



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that. So we did do the couples match that concept of applying to residency through a match process was a little bit terrifying because that could potentially mean two additional years of long distance after we've already done some of that. And we both wanted the health system, pharmacy administration combined residency. So we knew that that was a two year commitment to begin with. So the match couple option became very attractive to us. So we studied that in detail and decided to proceed with that. What is really interesting with the Match couple is that when you apply as a single individual, you just rank the sites in terms of priority your priority level.

When you do it as a couple, you have to match every potential combination. And so for us, that was about 70 potential combinations. So it would be obviously Jorge and Leyner's first together in one site or Jorge and Leyner together on all their sites. But you get two combinations where it's like Leyner in Pittsburgh, Jorge in Houston, Jorge in Ohio, Jorge in Wisconsin, and then Leyner, Wisconsin Jorge in Houston, Ohio, blah, blah, blah. So when you do the rankings, statistically speaking, you have so many other options where you're not going to land the same residency program. You're just going to be in different parts of the country. And just going through that exercise was a bit nerve wracking to not get into the details. And we know the match rules. I would just say that later, and I couldn't be happier to have matched together in the same program and have done that in Pittsburgh. There was really no better scenario for us than that. I'm not an alcohol person. I think that day we celebrated it with alcohol.

Daniel Cobaugh:

What was the experience like as you interviewed with programs and presented as a couple, two gay men who were going through the match as a couple, how was that received or what, what are your recollections of the experience? And the process?

Leyner Martinez:

Dan, that is a very interesting question At least we never disclose up front that we were a couple, we were interviewing us two separate individuals. While applying through the couples match process, but not really disclosing upfront so much about my significant other component. Why? Because we were both actually interested in the same career pathway. We were both interviewing at the same programs, right in Pittsburgh and Houston and in Ohio and in these places were in pharmacy administration. There's also the network, right? And it's very small at that level. So it was kind of very uncomfortable to disclose that. Especially up North and in Wisconsin and in places that we've never been in and very unaware of the culture and how



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accepting they could be, or the stereotyping there on that, not knowing what you don't know. But we went through it at least from my perspective, not disclosing that information and just trying to fight for the spot as to who I was and what can I bring to the table.

Later in life, you realize that some people just know, like you mentioned, have that feeling. Some people do Google you. And back then there was only MySpace as the social media available. And there was not Facebook and all things so much put together. At least for us, you realize how much people know upfront that you perhaps, you're not aware that they know so much of you when you're going through a residency program. And they're trying to figure out who you are also as a person. That dynamic is kind of stressful because we couldn't bear to have to go with two more years of long distance and not knowing if we're going to be where we're going to be together or not. And then it is stressful also because you do not know how welcoming that residency class will be your own peers, your preceptors, your director and coordinator.

And you have to test the water little by little and try to understand the culture and how you fit into that and how you as a gay man also fit into that entire culture. But like Jorge mentioned, we were blessed to be at a subset of the residency program in Pittsburgh under the directorship of Scott Mar and many wonderful people that believed in us or who we were and who we are. And were able to see beyond all of that. And little by little, we started gaining confidence and becoming ourselves and kind of hinting as to who we really are and were and getting there. And then also feeling comfortable with us changing those perceptions on them. I think it was a dual relationship on that journey of, from everybody who met with us. At least that is my perspective.

So my biggest point is, is whoever's listening to this podcast, I think is try to find a culture that you fit in. To me, that was important when I was applying into the residency program, as desperate as I was to try to get in anywhere, because it is very competitive. It is also important to understand, can you fit into that culture and that environment, right? Because the culture of Pittsburg was very different from the one in Houston and certainly from the one in Wisconsin. So for me, it was important to see myself with people that I could be around beyond the residency hours and try to develop personal relationship with them. And I think that helped me solidify it and not only the places that I wanted to try to go after in my residency programs.



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Jorge Garcia:

So I would just add that landing a residency is a stressful process, right? And we know it's very competitive and matching in a program together and being able to not do long distance anymore was one of many other concerns we were trying to manage. And we were young. We didn't always know if we were handling things the right way. We definitely wanted to give ourselves the best shot at postgraduate professional training, we were willing and we matched options where we were both in different parts of the countries, but definitely my comfort level, being in a panel, talking about my personal things at that stage in my life was something that was difficult for me. And I'm not sure I would have done such a great job in the interview if that needed to be a part of it. And so it's something that we didn't bring up.

It didn't come up as part of the interview questions. And that's just the way it worked. I'll share it, sorry with you. Because I think it's funny. I know Leyner and I always have a laugh when we talk about this. For our career, including residency training and then jobs afterwards, we have interviewed for exactly the same positions multiple times before. And so when it came for residency was the first time we experienced this. Sometimes I will go to the interview first and Leyner second, sometimes Leyner will go first and I will go second. And we didn't have full control of that. It was sort of like how things were arranged with the program. So in Pittsburgh, in particular, Leyner went first and he came back. He told me, you know, they're probably going to ask you all these questions. These are the questions that I got.

They took me to the fancy places for breakfast and they took me to the fancy place for lunch. And it was like a beautiful experience all along. When I go to Pittsburgh, it is rainy day ASHP was doing an onsite accreditation survey. So Scott Mark was out and about with them. I didn't even get to see Mark, who was the management residency director at the time. They had no time for me, you know, with things going on. They took me, my lunch was at the hospital cafeteria. And so I had this reference point from Leyner at the end of that interview, I called him and I said, forget it. I have no chance to get in Pittsburgh. And then, you know, Scott Mark called me on the phone apologize, and we had an opportunity to get to know each other on the phone. And we're just so glad that Pittsburgh worked out in the end.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Well, I'm glad that my hometown was so hospitable to you. I'm a little curious about one thing I imagine they took you to Pamela's for breakfast, Leyner. So I'm not sure that I would call it a fancy place, but I bet that's where they took you for that breakfast.



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Yes! And my advice to anyone is do not have breakfast before you have a full day interview. I crashed after that, I was so full because it was also testing the culture, right? They wanted me to try and have the pancakes. I can barely speak after that. So my advice on the interview process is do not go to Pamela's and do not eat the entire breakfast the way I did.

Daniel Cobaugh:

That's great. So fast forward a bit. And I know we're starting to get close to the hour and there is one other topic that I really want to talk to you about. So fast forward a bit, you got back to South Florida at some point and made the decision to get married and to start a family. And I certainly, I think that listeners will be very interested to hear about when you were married and also you made Jorge before you made some references to Valentino's birth, but tell the listeners more about getting married, starting a family, and how you balance the demands of raising two young children with very demanding pharmacy executive positions.

Jorge Garcia:

Absolutely. Leyner and I talked about family specifically in the context of having kids on the very first day that we met. And I realized that that's odd, but I think it is a statement on how non-negotiable that component was for us on day one. Like nothing else needed to be discussed if that wasn't a part of the deal. And we went on to achieve many other things, professional goals, all the things before we had an organized plan for a family. But one of the things that we wanted to accomplish early on was to be able to have some sort of protection about our relationship that could not be marriage in the state of Florida at the time. But whether family for us meant adoption or any other pathway, just establishing that track record of our relationship early on was going to be conducted towards our path towards a family. So we waited and waited and I had to make the choice to go get married outside of Florida. And so we did that in Washington state.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Why'd you pick Washington state?

Leyner Martinez:

Nothing specific. We just, I mean, we have heard so much about Seattle. We've never been to Seattle. We said, why don't we go get married in Seattle? And then we find this amazing judge that really was very special, the way she conducted the marriage. And we also took a family trip to Alaska, as part of our honeymoon. We went on a honeymoon with our parents because we're



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so close. So, I mean, it was a whole package combination of marriage, location and destination, because we love traveling so much that we wanted to put it all together at once. But it was also one of the few states at that time, then that you have the option to do that other than New York, Washington, the options were not there. And certainly we've been to New York before over there, I lived in Pennsylvania, it was very familiar to us. We wanted to get married in an area of the country that was different and special to us being so far out.

Daniel Cobaugh:
Interesting.

Jorge Garcia:
Just translate that for you. Then he picked Washington state because he wanted to go on an Alaskan cruise.

Leyner Martinez:
We did get before we got married with they pursued domestic partnership in Florida, the point is that we've taken everything possible within the law to establish a relationship and take advantage of it and make a presence out of it. So we did that in Miami Dade County when there was no other option by being a domestic partner with it. But before we got married in Seattle.

Jorge Garcia:
Still brought us to no employer recognition of that domestic partnership for things like benefits. Even with our marriage license from Washington state, that would still not be valid here in Florida. So we were very fortunate because we both were employed and had great benefits. Sometimes we'll be able from an economic standpoint, do better if we were able to have a plan as a family, but that wasn't an option to us. So we would have our individual healthcare plans, but it was something that we live ourselves. And I, I remember going through that thought process. And I remember that was actually something that was actively discussed in one of our organizations. And the decision was to not enable nontraditional families for benefits until all the States were able to, to embrace the concept of same sex marriages, walking through that journey as our country was being transformed in those terms, what's very unique having that firsthand experience.

Daniel Cobaugh:



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And yesterday the United States Supreme court gave us another victory where we have full employment rights for all LGBTQ people across the United States. So that had to be heartening to you as well.

Jorge Garcia:

Absolutely transformational. We touched on it on the surface throughout different points of this discussions, but there was always fear along the way in residency. First job, second job. I think we always were conscious that just who we were and our relationship by itself could be an insult to some people. And so it was very frightening to think that that could play a role on our ability to progress in our professional journey of our level of engagement. And so to understand that now there is equal protection from that standpoint, from an employer standpoint, I think has been much needed and something that I have feared myself personally.

Daniel Cobaugh:

On that note advice, what do you say to the next generation that's coming up? Leyner, if you had the opportunity to give young LGBTQ pharmacists or pharmacy technician, pharmacy student advice, what would you say to them?

Leyner Martinez:

Dan, I would first advise always to pursue the highest training that you can. I think when you become educated and the more educated you'll become, you kind of develop this tool kit that makes you marketable right enough to have options. And I think first of all, you have to follow your passion, choose whichever pathway in practice that you want to pursue, that you fall in love with. But at the same time, try to pursue all the credentials that makes you marketable to help you grow within our organization. Right? Surround yourself. I would say by people that are good in their hearts that are humble and they're the ones to pay it forward to others. Those are the people that are going to spend time with you, no matter who you are to help you and to help your network with others, to help you get there.

I think that's extremely important. As a young practitioner, I would also be mindful of that. You have to understand where your organization or your school or whatever pathway you are, how has the environment and that location, right? Like Jorge mentioned earlier, not all the employers that we've worked with and for have always been at the same level that they're at today, right? When we first started in our previous employer, those discussions were not happening. I mean, I would personally write and note asking the CEO, when are we going to extend same sex,



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marriage, license couples from others states benefits like other hospitals in the area that are doing that. And the organization would just throw the card away and say, we're not ready to have that discussion. So I think be mindful of the organization and where they are in their journey, but also play a role in transforming that organization, right through you being an advocate through you being an example.

And it takes time to get there, right? Some people get there earlier than others, but take every advantage to tell this story, you know, like same principle when you reach out for this podcast, right? This is putting our lives out there. It's a big decision, right? It is the same feeling of responsibility that we have to be forward to all this. We have to tell this story and we have to get involved. And to that point is the thing principal for those students and people that are trying to make it get involved, be out there, use your network and surround yourself by people that have a good interest at heart to help you bolster your career. There's a lot of people that are willing to help more than you realize.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Jorge, what do you want to add to that? Or what different perspective do you want to provide?

Jorge Garcia:

So for me, looking at my own life journey, if I was to go through it again, I really think I spent a lot of time thinking about fears and concerns and managing that perceptions. I'm just naturally I don't like to disappoint. And so I realized that a lot of that was not productive towards anything that helped me personally, my family or the gay community in general. It wasn't until I really let some of that go. And I began to focus on the potential on the things that I could do, the things that I could do well, that I began to make more progress and tangible and shift, tangible results, towards building something and building my future. I would just relate that message to people that are listening. Pharmacy has been this space where I felt very safe to be able to be the best professional that I could be. That was a coping mechanism to me. You know, you've mentioned we've been very successful. We are cognizant of that and very appreciative of the opportunities to get the training and the opportunities that have presented. But I think in a way, this was my coping mechanism to focus on the things I knew I could do well and not stop wearing a little bit more about the only things that I didn't have so much control over



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Daniel Cobaugh:

Helpful guidance from both of you, for those emerging professionals and emerging leaders out there. Thank you so much. Well, that's all we have time for today. I want to thank Jorge Garcia and Leyner Martinez for joining me today to discuss their unique experience. As a couple as leaders in pharmacy, join us here at ASHPOfficial and the practice journey podcast. As we learn about how LGBTQ pharmacy leaders seek out, grow and evolve during their careers, Jorge and Leyner, along with wishing you even more happiness as we celebrate pride this month. I also want to wish you a very happy father's day on Sunday and many, many, many more happy father's days throughout your lives. So it's been great to talk with you today, your two old friends, and this has just been a magnificent conversation. Thanks so much.

Jorge Garcia:

Thank you, Dan. And thank you, ASHP for doing this for us and our peers.

Leyner Martinez:

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Speaker 1:

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