

V. *Becoming the Teacher I Needed**Equity Spotlight Vodcast Series*

Mila González, Student - University of Arizona

Dr. Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow - Wisconsin

TRANSCRIPTION

- Taucia:** Mila, I remember at one point you said in high school that "I'm not going to college." You had kind of given up.
- Mila:** Yeah.
- Taucia:** And now you have been accepted into the University of Arizona and their pre-education program to start in the fall?
- Mila:** Yeah. I remember that day. It was junior year. I was done with everything, and I knew I wasn't going to go to college. I remember the same day that I got accepted to the U of A. I was crying for a little bit there because I never thought that I would be accepted into a university, and I'm glad that I'm going to be able to start my work and create change throughout the school system.
- Taucia:** Well, in that case, I'd say continue your work because you've already started a quick change.
- Mila:** Yeah, I guess.
- Taucia:** So why did you decide to go into education, considering education wasn't the best experience for you?
- Mila:** Because of that. Even though I very much disliked my school experience, I knew that I couldn't let other students go through this, so I wanted to create great change and change the standards of what we learn, and the importance of when we learn.
- Taucia:** How so?
- Mila:** Creating change in curriculum and be more inclusive in what we learn. Not just only learning about white culture, but opening that up to others. And it was very hard for me to stay engaged when I never learned anything about who I was in school. And including curriculum where you're learning about your own culture is key to keeping students engaged and more willing to learn.
- Taucia:** So you're going to learn a lot when you go to college about how to do this work, right?

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Mila: Yeah.

Taucia: Yeah.

Mila: Hope so.

Taucia: Even though your K-12 experience wasn't easy and was not the best experience all the time, you did have some teachers who impacted you in really positive ways and who are probably strong models for the kind of teacher you want to be, right?

Mila: Yeah. In Phoenix in elementary school, I remember Ms. Diaz always having a welcome classroom. It just felt like home there. Ms. Edgerton, I remember she was always fussing at me but always pushed me to do more. Ms. Gore, I remember I did get in trouble in her class. I was a little out there, but she was able to keep a firm hand with me, but also make me feel loved in that class and have a sense of family with her.

Mila: These teachers were...when I went into their class, they saw me as someone that wanted to learn and someone that was able to learn, and they pushed me to do more than what others thought.

Taucia: What about Madison?

Mila: Madison. Ms. Neusen, one of my English teachers throughout high school...she was not only there for me in my class but also for my mental health. She always listened, and she always pushed me to do more also. And she just helped me throughout that year just to get through every day. And I was able to see her and talk to her whenever I needed, and that was something I really needed that year.

Taucia: To see beyond your academics?

Mila: Yeah. And she just gave me that support that really most teachers don't give. And Ms. Miller, another one of my English teachers, she just opened up my world to writing, and she pushed me to be a better writer every day. And I fell in love with poetry, and I express how I feel through my racial justice work through poetry most of the time, and I'm very thankful for her allowing me to be who I am in that class.

Mila: And when I moved to my alternative school, Mr. Nathan was always pushing me also, not only to be better, but to dive deeper into my racial justice work, and how to be more inclusive and think about all sides. And he allowed me the space to

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explore my passion of racial justice work in his class, and he always respected me, and even though my work was very uncomfortable to others—and to him sometimes—he knew that this is what needed to be done in order to create change.

Taucia: And he was willing to sit in his discomfort?

Mila: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Taucia: That's good.

Mila: Yeah.

Taucia: And now you're back in Arizona.

Mila: And I'm back in Arizona, and I had my first teacher of Color in science, and science was one of my favorite subjects in the beginning. And she's just...

Taucia: Who was she?

Mila: Oh sorry, Ms. Schroeder. I want to acknowledge that she is always there, and she just brings that sense of home to me here in Tucson. And I don't know, she is a very successful teacher, and she shows me what I can become.

Taucia: She's nationally board certified, I understand.

Mila: Yeah. She is recently certified, and I'm just able to go up to her and share the new things I'm doing, and she can share what she's doing. And it's just that sense of connection. Yeah, it is really meaningful to me.

Taucia: Yeah. And you're going to become a teacher.

Mila: Yeah.

Taucia: And what do you hope that your future students say about you?

Mila: I hope that they say that I'm the one that they can come to and trust, and that I'm the one that they needed, and that they hope to go into education also.

Taucia: That's wonderful. We could use more educators like you. Thank you.

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From Surviving to Thriving through Racial Justice: A Mother & Daughter Conversation



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Mila: Thank you.

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