

Ladislav Demeter 0:05

Peter, thank you for inviting me. I really appreciate to be here.

Petr Torak 0:08

Thank you.

Ladislav Demeter 0:08

Good to be here speak and speak about some of the stuff you're going to be answering, like questioning me about.

Petr Torak 0:14

Absolutely and I'm really pleased because we have been friends for some time. And we have done quite a few things together. So it's very nice to see you again, even though it's just through the virtual kind of way, but it's nice to see you.

Ladislav Demeter 0:27

Yeah. 100% Yeah.

Petr Torak 0:29

So to start this short interview, I would like to first ask about you know, yourself, you know, who you are, where you come from these kinds of things?

Ladislav Demeter 0:38

Yeah, so hello, everyone is whoever is going to be watching this video. My name is Ladislav Demeter. And I'm from Slovakia. I'm 20 years old. And I've lived in the UK most of my life. So I came to the UK probably in like 2004 or 2005 with my dad. And when we moved here, my dad just wanted to find new opportunities for our family like to do something better than just being in Slovakia because it wasn't really good for us at that time. We came here I travelled around literally most of the UK because first of all, I used to live in Bradford, like up north there from Hartford. We moved down to South in my family. We stayed there for like three, four years in Portsmouth. Then we went back up to Bradford. Then we used to live in Portland again the to Corby, which is in the Northamptonshire like about an hour away from Peterborough and then from Peterborough used to live in Birmingham. And now I live in Cambridge.

Petr Torak 1:42

I say so well, travelled then

Ladislav Demeter 1:44

Yeah, a lot of travelling here a lot of travelling since I was a kid. Yeah.

Petr Torak 1:48

So going back to your childhood. So you said you're from Slovakia. And whereabouts in Slovakia?

Ladislav Demeter 1:56

Straske, It's like small town in Slovakia. At the east side of Slovakia. So it consists of like, my four or five thousands people in total. So it's like a small town.

Petr Torak 2:08

I see. And what are your memories like from Slovakia, from school and from anything else?

Ladislav Demeter 2:15

Memories were I got some good ones. And then I got some bad ones. Like, when I used to be a kid it was everything was bit okay, because I didn't know everything like what's going on. Like, I was in like first, second, third, fourth year, I was just literally just playing with kids just having friends and stuff like that. But when it got to the point where I used to go to like, for example, a secondary school like in the UK, it's like I wasn't doing really well. Like when I turned there like probably like 11, maybe 10, 9, like

the teachers the way they were the they were talking with me comparing to other students from like, Slovakian background, but not from the Roma community, it was a bit different because they're like, paying more attention to them giving better grades to them, and not to you. And stuff like that. Yeah, like the teachers, for example. I had an English session, and we were doing tests. And I was at that time when you have to speak Slovakian and then at the end of the results, the teacher was like so the way we have our grades in Slovakia as well, like in here, you got like ABCD that's how I remember it. And it's like you have like 12345 from one to best two and 5 like the worst. So most of the students in the class got one or two and I was the one that ended up with grade four. And then I was just thinking how is this possible that I go great for when I know how to speak to the teacher like properly in English, and the rest of them got like grade one. So then what happened is I told this to my dad, my dad tried to speak to the teachers and then at the end they were like okay, we can let him redo the test and then I was like I don't really want to check you can speak to me ask me whatever questions you want me to anything when it comes to English or math or math like English with anything and then we can do it. Then I did it but still I got to I didn't get I didn't get the one and I was just yeah it's just not really good experience in general the teachers there some of the people like the youngsters in Slovakia some of them I was really just mostly friends with, they were a couple down there were like you're like Oh, we don't want to be with you because you Roma and then we just want to be separated like this white background that they have. And then rather than you being all like mixed, and there was some good people that wanted to like, oh, let's just everyone be together, I think is mostly just depending on like their parents, because their parents are the one who have this idea of Don't be friends with this. Just be friends with this and you're going to do well in life because that's not good for you. Yeah.

Petr Torak 4:39

Yes absolutely and then so your parents decided to move into the UK. So was it mainly because of the education? Or was it because of work?

Ladislav Demeter 4:49

For other stuff, back in 2004 to recently moved it was because of like to for my parents to find like a job and stuff like that. Obviously, they were thinking about our future. But at that time, I was only four years old. So my dad was trying to make the best out of his opportunities that I could get to get a job child better life for us. Then he came to like, when I was turning 12, 13, 15, he put me into school, he was going to different schools with me visiting different teachers see how I do it, then when I go into the like, age of being, like 15, 16 that is when he, like, put all of his effort into me, and try to like, really, really good future for me, which, like he did, because I'm doing really well right now. And hopefully, I think I will carry on doing as well, as I'm doing right now. And, yeah, we'll see what's going to happen. But at the start, my Dad wanted to have a good stable family as well. Like, just like really like being like mentally good like financial and everything. And then from that step, you go into the next step of helping your child and stuff like that. So that's the way my dad worked it out.

Petr Torak 5:56

That's, that's very good. And very, obviously, the best way to do it brilliant. So, how was your experience from being, you know, in Slovak schools and being suddenly at the UK schools? You know, what was your experience like with your, with the other children in the school with the teachers? How do you find it?

Unknown 6:13

So the difference It was major, it was a massive, massive difference, like, so I went into schools, I went to schools, I started in primary school. And I made a lot of friends like Aaron also, like, friendly to me, or teachers, then all like the students as well, like, because my first day, I don't know, like, every single I kid does it, like I was crying because it's your first day of school, you don't know how it's going to be. And like, they didn't leave me out, they came to me hangout as well and told me is going to be okay, you go, you're gonna have friends don't worry about everything. Because from my previous experience, like when I started school in Slovakia, I didn't really have friends at the start or anything. And I was just like being I have like, maybe one or two friends. But in here, the whole class is basically full of your friends. Like, if someone's like, because it comes to school, or so he didn't come

to school today, or I'm not going to be anyone. But in there, if someone didn't come, there was literally everyone they were together. So it was different. The teachers as well came to me, they looked away I was working, they spent around good 20-30 minutes with me, like, other couple at the start of a couple of weeks see like where they can put me how my studies are going to be what I'm good at and what am bad how can be improving. And bear in mind that was still when I was a kid. So are they were the relationship try to be looking out for my future as well. So the difference in getting support by the teachers and by the students is completely different, like slack is not the left. And then the English side is more to the right.

Petr Torak 7:39

Hmm, yeah. And that's what obviously many, I would say all the Roma students, but on not only the Roma, but many other minorities experience, you know, the attention you get as a pupil, you know, by your teachers, and by everyone else is absolutely amazing. And obviously helps then the students to progress into the next level and talking about the next level of education, what it was for for you. Like, have you thought about going into uni? And what are you doing now in terms of further education?

Ladislav Demeter 8:08

So this is 2000. So like 2026 ,17 ish. I started to study when I used to live in Corby, I started in college. And in college, I was doing public services. So if any youngsters in here want to try to join the public sector, like you start in college, make sure you get public services. It's a course that has like, the idea about like, all like about the army about the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, police, fire brigade, paramedics, and everything. So they give you an idea of what they do, they got to be doing studying them doing some assignments, writing essays and stuff that presentations. And I was going into level three public services level three second year, which is like the year like comparing to eight levels in secondary schools. And then I realised, oh, I want to be I want to try to like join the police. And that's, that's the main reason so the college gave me an idea or I want to be in the police as of now, because I seen it in a way that like I wanted it to be seen. And then from there, I was like, I'm gonna go start uni as well, because I think degree right now in this kind of age for any youngster is important because if you have a uni degree right now, the people also has union so he has a better idea of everything like he's probably going to be the potential is going to probably bit higher than the student that like or the applicant that doesn't have the degree. And then it's not just about that have you just oh, I need this degree and it is a piece of paper to do this. That degree is going to give you so much in your life that you will never ever be imagined how much it can give you like so many like theories and stuff like that, that they come up with, like how everything started like before. I had no idea on when the police began like never like in public services. And now like even without thinking like public is like the first one and was in 1829. And that's all like, unless I know this because I studied at university because they tell me do this, do that. And then you do research by yourself. So there's no like independent research, you get to know about more and more. So yeah, and right now I'm in my second year, and it's going pretty well.

Petr Torak 10:19

And so can you just repeat what subject are you studying?

Ladislav Demeter 10:22

I'm studying criminology.

Petr Torak 10:24

Criminology, that's amazing.

Ladislav Demeter 10:26

Yeah.

Petr Torak 10:27

That's very good. So we have got one or two more years to go?

Ladislav Demeter 10:32

So right now, um, I got all from now I go all the way till April. And then I finished my second year that I started in September and finished next in April, as well, my third year. And then when I finished my BAC degree, I'm going to do my master's degree as well, which is going to be another year. And then after that, I'm probably going to be joining full time, somewhere in the public sector in the police get tried to get but no idea what whereabouts I want to be.

Petr Torak 11:03

That's amazing. And talking about the police, I obviously know your desire. And you've mentioned yourself that you've realised that you want to be police officer. And so can you tell us a bit more about your desire to work for the police? And what are you doing about this desire?

Ladislav Demeter 11:17

So right now, so the way how to explain it. So the way everything styled was with my dad, he was like, I want you to be doing this job. And I'm going to help you to get there. So as you can remember, back in 2017, was when we first met me, you and my dad, and then my dad was the one that reached out to you saying I want you to help if you are possible to help my son, and then you were the one obviously that helped me to get to where I was at the specials, you gave me the idea. And I looked at everything. And I applied for the specials, as well as you know, I go through and everything. I've been doing it for the I've been special for the past few years, but I haven't done really much anything. Because of my leg injury. It was horrible. I couldn't do anything for one year. So I had somebody has put me as non operational, couldn't do anything about it. And now that everything is sorted, I'm back doing it again. And hopefully, after I finished my uni have joined the full time police officers. But right now we have the COVID situation and everything is everything's just bit difficult. We don't know what can happen at any time.

Petr Torak 12:25

Absolutely, it is a difficulty, but I'm sure you will do well, you know, you have got this enthusiasm and this drive. You know, and I've always admired this, you know, since we've met with your dad, this drive, we have got you know to achieve and that's a that's something that, you know, we are hoping through this project to pass on to other young people, you know, to have the drive to go and achieve their dream. So that's. And so, we've spoke about your studies about your job. What else do you like about the UK? Is there something particular you would mention

Ladislav Demeter 13:01

About the UK? Yes there is lots of there like obviously the weather is not going to be as much because right now, I have no idea what's happening, it's snowing, then it's sunny, then it's raining. But like I like about like the people, especially the people live in the UK, you have people coming from all over the country, you have anyone from the Eastern Europe, then you have some especially in Cambridge, you have people coming from like Asia, Africa, and the southern border came in from the United States as well just to study and then you meet all these people. And then you realise coming from such a small country, to a bigger country, seeing people how lives meant to be because I have when I speak to someone, the first thing that comes to my mind is you need to have empathy for them as well because they are from the different people from different countries. So they went through something that you know, don't even know about I just learned, just like, it's a good experience for life to be mean all the new people and I don't think I would meet as much people as already done if I wouldn't come to university, because I've met like, hundreds of hundreds of people already. Also, when it comes to food in the UK is really nice as well, because you've got so many like takeaways and like restaurants and stuff like that. So yeah, a lot of stuff to like about the UK just have to find them out right now. I wasn't always just stuck in my room, or either like doing online uni or like doing my police training and then back home. So there's not really much you can experience right now because it's just, it's everything is just really bad. I know because of the situation that we are all in.

Petr Torak 14:33

Absolutely. But you know, putting the kind of the current situation aside and thinking that hopefully this will all finished very soon. Where would you see yourself in 10 years time?

Ladislav Demeter 14:47

10 years, it's a long 10 years. It's a like, I always had to plan and you know, because when we met I was 17 by then and I told you I'm planning I'm planning to go uni join the police part-time special regulars so in 10 years I'm hopefully seeing myself with, with probably having a master's degree of criminology, probably working in a police force in Cambridgeshire probably for like full time. And like probably getting my rank up or like being like a sergeant or in the police, or I don't know, maybe apply for the detective department, or anything like that. But for now, for like, for us answering the question of where I see myself in 10 years, it's difficult because it's a it's a major, it's, it's 10 years, like, it's right now, I'm 20. So that's half of my life already that we are talking about. But in those next five years, if I may say, I see myself finishing my uni degree, getting my masters and working for the police full time 100% no matter what happens, I will always, always end up doing it. And I know for fact that there's nothing that can I can stop me because I had a leg injury for one year, take this as an example. I could have been like all along one day so long, like, what if it's not going to work out or stuff like that? I was like, No, I'm gonna get this injury done, or I'm gonna exercise gonna make sure everything so well, and carry on with what I was doing at the start. I'm going to finish what I started, I'm not going to just leave it in the middle, or like injury for one year. And I said, No, that's not how it works.

Petr Torak 16:12

That's good attitude, yes brilliant. And you've obviously mentioned in the beginning that you are from the Roma background. In what you know, what does it mean to be a Roma?

Ladislav Demeter 16:26

People may think there's not many of us. But when you think about Roma community you have Romas from all over the whole world, you have Romas from different countries. And for me being Roma and being in this position where I'm trying to speak to youngsters and to people to give them like because the way people see the Roma see is although we have to do is we can't really do this because we Romans, but that's wrong, but I'm trying to change the Romans mindset like no, and maybe in some countries, like Slovakia when you Roma or I can't do this because I can't understand like, people know it, and there's nothing to hide about it. Because once you live in once, you don't have opportunity to do it. You just can't. And it's really difficult. Some people I know so many people in, in Slovakia that study the Romans and studied at universities finished university and still don't have a job. So don't have anything to do. But once you're in a country that shows you, like gives you like the plate that you have to do something about it and 100% you're gonna take it and thank you and I will try to do my best something about it. So back to the question being Roma is really unique for me. I'm really proud of where I'm from. I'm not embarrassed when people ask me like, whereabouts walk? Well because when people look at me, either Are you Romanian or like I use why because people mostly know like, Romanian or maybe like, I don't know, Polish. I'm like, No, I'm from Slovakia. I'm from the Roma community. And then then the whole subjects come in, like, What is wrong when I try to explain to them and that's, that's how they like, get to know it. So yeah, it's really, really unique. And I really, I will never regret of being Roma, no.

Petr Torak 17:57

Absolutely. It's a very, you know, something very special, something to be proud of. And you speak Romanes?

Ladislav Demeter 18:04

No, that's the most embarrassing thing about me. So when people ask me, do you speak your language? I'm like, no. And then I'm like, and I was like, Why? Because you have many families in the Roma community, and my family the way I was brought up, so we never really speak that language. And it was mostly because so my great great grandfather, the way he was brought up, he was never speaking that language. I have some of my some of my family members that like a musician and stuff like that, and singing Roma songs that they know, because they are learning it. But I've never had an opportunity to like sit down, and just like spend a couple of weeks trying to learn the language, because I'm busy all the time. But when I know like basic words, at least I guess so. But not really fully on speaking Romano.

Petr Torak 18:53

Nothing to be ashamed of Ladislav you know, I personally obviously had the same situation, because my grand grandparents when they came, you know, during the communist regime, it was kind of prohibited, it was expected that people will assimilate, and they will not speak the language and they will not pass it on, on to their children. And that was the same case with me. So, we are kind of the consequences of assimilation, you know, and so it's not easy, but yeah, obviously, you know, annoying the longborough mind, which is brilliant tool. But it's nothing to be ashamed of, because it's not our fault. So,

Ladislav Demeter 19:28

yeah.

Petr Torak 19:30

So as a last question, what would you recommend? What tips would you give to other young Roma people, boys and girls thinking about their future about their careers? What would you recommend to them?

Ladislav Demeter 19:45

Always listen to your parents. No matter what, always listen to your parents. The reason why I am in this position where I am right now is all because of my parents. My parents wouldn't exist. I have no idea in my life, what I would be doing Because they're the ones that know more than you, and you never, never tries to be more clever than them, because they know what's the best way. And if you say, don't do this, but do this, the only thing they want to is the best because there's no parent in the whole world that wants something really bad for, for the child, because that's not how it is because it's their, you are their child. So they love you should have tried to get the best out of you. sounds the same for my dad, I was thinking back and maybe I was thinking sometimes Shall I just work normally. So the mother was like, No, you're not going to be working like this, you're going to be doing this. And it's going to be better for you. And it is because so far, everything goes so well for me. So if you will always listen to your parents, and do what they want you to be doing. Obviously, when they want you to do something, and you don't want to do or don't want to do it, then it's all about you. But the best advice I can give you as from my experience, and where right now, in my position is always listen to your parents, no matter what.

Petr Torak 20:59

That's amazing. It's very powerful, and something very, very important. You know, because in the society that we live at, currently, you know, the respect to parents, elders, is quite often, you know, disappearing, you know, from the other communities that we live around. We don't see as much respect as we were used to back in our communities we know when we were more enclosed. So this is very, very important. And I completely agree with you. So no, thank you very much. That's all for this interview. I really pleased that you came on to this interview and that you have given such an important and powerful message to all your young Roma people that will be listening to this. So thank you Ladislav. Obviously, you have got all my support, you know, you know anytime you need it. So I'm here also for you and I'm looking forward to see you in police uniform very soon.

Ladislav Demeter 21:48

Yeah, Thank you, Thank you.