

## An Investment Banker Goes Back to High School

| Segment          | Who           | Copy  |
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| Intro            | Dayna English | <p>So I thought if there was anything that changed my life, it was my education. It changed my perspective on life. And so when I turned 50, I had those things in the back of my mind and I knew that I didn't have to work anymore, but I also knew I wasn't gonna spend the next 50 years working on my backhand. So I wanted to do something that I thought would be good for me and good for society.</p>  |
|                  |               | INTRO MUSIC   |
| Podcast Overview | Andy          | <p>Welcome to Second Act Stories, a podcast that looks at people who have made major career changes and are pursuing more rewarding lives in a second act. The stories are in their own words and the words of friends and family that helped them find a new path.</p> <p>I'm your host Andy Levine. Every two weeks we bring you a new, second act story.</p> <p>Dayna English was a highly successful investment banker at Merrill Lynch. She spent most of her career in Latin America. She flew first class, stayed at the Four Seasons when she traveled and wore tailored Chanel suits. But Dayna traded all that in become a public-school teacher.</p> <p>It's been a tough, tough road. But every day for the last ten years she gets on her bike in Manhattan and rides six or miles to teach math at some of the most difficult schools in New York City.</p> |

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|                                     |       | BACKGROUND NOISE OF CLASSROOM  |
|                                     | Andy  | <p>I had the chance to observe Dayna teaching at Don Pedro Albizu Campos School in West Harlem. This sounds like the start of recess but it's not. This is the first few minutes of her math class. This year she is teaching 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders although she normally works at the high school level.</p> <p>This was my first time in a public school in New York City and the noise in her classroom was a bit maddening. The class was participating in a competition called the Stock Market Game.</p>   |
|                                     |       | DAYNA INSTRUCTING CLASSROOM  |
|                                     | Andy  | Let's go to a quieter place and hear Dayna's story. We'll start with her own education.  |
| Growing Up in Hawaii                | Dayna | <p>So I moved to Hawaii when I was in fourth grade. And Hawaii is a beautiful place to live, it's a beautiful place to grow up, but it has probably one of the worst public school systems in the United States, right there behind Louisiana and Mississippi.</p> <p>So I was a great student, you know. I worked really hard. I was very competitive. And for reasons that I don't really understand, my parents decided to send me to a private school for high school. And I fought it, you know. I was in the back seat kicking the back of the car, "I don't wanna go. Why can't I just go to my public school?" But I went to Punahou High School, which is a very fine private school. And why the story makes more sense today is I was a senior when President Obama was a freshman. So we went to the same school.</p> <p>Andy: Did you know him?</p> <p>Dayna: Absolutely not.</p> |
|                                     | Andy  | The switch to a private school was tough for Dayna.  |
|                                     | Dayna | I struggled for Cs and Bs. And I got through school somehow, but realizing, like, it was a school that changed my life. So what my school enabled me to do is go to college, ended up at Columbia University, got into an investment banking training program in the '80s.   |
|                                     | Andy  | Dayna climbed the corporate ladder at Merrill Lynch.   |
| Investment Banking in Latin America | Dayna | My career was in investment banking in Latin America for 30 years. Very successful. It was the time when the Latin America was the place to be. My Spanish was fluent. I enjoyed the travel. I enjoyed the people. I enjoyed the culture, and, I really enjoyed kind of the thrill of the deal.  |

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|  | Dayna | But when I turned 50, I kind of realized, like, you know, I'm spending a lot of time doing a lot of things that I'm really not sure how productive they are. Like, we privatized the Peruvian telephone company, but I'm not really sure what that meant for the Peruvian people. So I had this terrible feeling in the back of my mind that what I was doing was not really very productive at all.   |
|  | Andy  | Was there a life event that caused you to think about things at 50?  |
|  | Dayna | Well, I have two children, then the story gets much deeper and longer. My son who's now 33 was born in Brazil when I was working in investment banking in Brazil, brought him back to New York. And I was told by all my friends when I brought him back at three that he could only go to private schools. I really shouldn't take him to a public school because he'd never have a future, and he'd never go anywhere, and etc. So that was okay at that point. I guess his first grade was about \$18,000, but that was okay with what I was making.  |
|  | Andy  | Her son Marnix continued in private school until he entered Columbia University and then MIT.  |
| Introduction to the NYC Public School System | Dayna | <p>When my son was 10, I adopted a little girl from Samoa. And she was a child from the street. She had no early education, no English language, learning disabilities, and I brought her to New York.</p> <p>And at that time she was 6 years old, getting ready to go into first grade. And I walked her around to the same private schools that my son had gone to. And they all said, "Oh, that's really nice but she's not a fit." And I kind of knew immediately what not being a fit was. It wasn't just because she was a child of color. It was because she was a child with learning issues.</p> <p>So she ends up at P.S. 87 on my corner, two blocks away. And I think that's where I was personally introduced to what is a really challenged school system.</p> <p>And I think as a parent, I saw, well, this didn't seem quite right. My son, who I could afford to send on to private schools, you get the white-glove treatment. He got the white-glove treatment. Norine basically was babysat all day, you know. She was cared for.</p> |
|  | Andy  | So with your daughter Norine, you saw all the flaws in the public school system?   |

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|                   | Dayna | I didn't just see them. I experienced them. And most people think, well...and I knew about them with my son, but they were someone else's problem. And to me, this is now my problem. This is my problem as a parent. I've taken this responsibility of this child's life on, and I was always very proud of what a terrific single parent I was, you know. I arranged all these things, and managed all these things, and there were just certain things I could not manage for her. I could not manage a quality education for her.   |
|                   | Andy  | So you turned 50. It sounds like you were very successful financially in your investment banking career. What made you think about becoming a teacher?  |
| Teach for America | Dayna | I needed some way to fit in the fabric of New York. So schools actually put you dead center in a fabric of a part of the city that you never see, or people that you don't know. And all of a sudden I am in the middle of neighborhoods and kids and their parents and communities that I had never been exposed to before.<br><br>Andy So your pathway into teaching was through Teach For America?<br><br>Dayna: Yes. And I'm very grateful to Teach For America because it was a classic. The market completely hit the skids in 2008. Large corporations are really painful to work for when they go through these, you know, shedding of excesses, and people hanging on to their jobs with tooth and nail. And I thought, "It's time for me to go. I have no reason to be here anymore." |
|                   | Andy  | So in June 2008, Dayna entered Teach for America's training program. Amid a class of 20-somethings fresh out of college, she was the one 50 year old looking to become a teacher.   |
|                   | Dayna | And it was strange, and weird, and embarrassing. The first week in our induction ceremony, we got to Fordham University. And you're assigned a little dorm room with a little dorm bed and you live in the dorm for the summer. And so after orientation came and went, and I think everybody kind of looked at me the next morning of thinking here there's some kind of clingy parent that couldn't go away.  |
|                   | Andy  | She started teaching freshmen algebra at the Chelsea Vocational and Technical School in Manhattan.  |

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| Working in the NYC School System | Dayna | <p>I really had no idea when I stepped in except I had done a summer of teaching in Washington Heights. I had a little idea, but it really becomes very powerful when you step into a room of 30 kids that really have very little interest or very little apparent interest in trying to learn what you were trying to teach.</p> <p>Andy: Were the first couple of weeks pretty tough?</p> <p>Dayna: Yes, but I was so determined to make it work that you kind of...you go home every night and you're so discouraged because you think, "I can never do this, I am exhausted, I have no idea what I'm doing, I'm not making a difference, if anything, I'm widening the education gap."</p> |
|                                  | Andy  | What were some of the challenges initially when you started teaching mathematics?   |
|                                  | Dayna | I think the challenges are really kids' behavior and their perception of you. And I think if there's anything that I've learned in the decade, it's presenting or figuring out who I am in a classroom. I am a small, white, privileged woman, and I am painfully aware of that. And students really have no idea what you're doing there. In a way, I had no idea what I was doing there either, and I wasn't quite sure what story I was gonna tell.  |
|                                  | Andy  | And just to get a picture, I'm assuming this is a primarily minority population that you're teaching.   |
|                                  | Dayna | This is 100% minority. I have only taught in Title 1 schools. I have never entertained any interest in teaching in anything other than Title 1.   |
|                                  | Andy  | I asked her about the challenges she faces every day in the classroom.  |
|                                  | Dayna | <p>It gets really obscene, you know. I'm a fucking white bitch, and I'm an asshole. I can't teach. I'm a jerk. And that happens, I don't wanna say all day long, but it happens pretty frequently.</p> <p>I have a lot of things thrown at me. I have paper balls, rubber bands, anything kids can find to throw that they think is funny...</p>  |

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|                       | Andy  | So help me understand. So if the teaching job is so difficult, if it's...you know, it sounds like, in many points, not terribly rewarding and challenging, why do you keep doing this?   |
| A Difficult Job       | Dayna | I ask myself that a lot, and everyone who knows me asked me this, but they also know that every year that I say, "Okay, this is it, you know, I'm dropping the chalk. I'm giving away all my teaching stuff." They say, "Well, you say that every year." And they're right. I'm back in a classroom every August through September, and I think it's because I cannot stand that I have not made a difference. I cannot stand that I have not figured this out. I'm a smart person. I work really hard. I have an excellent education. And I cannot figure what is so wrong about our system.  |
|                       | Andy  | I want you to go back to sort of contrasting your work with Merrill Lynch in Investment Banking and what you're doing now. Which is the harder of the two jobs? What do you say?   |
|                       | Dayna | Well, this is so much harder than Merrill Lynch ever was.  |
|                       | Andy  | Okay Okay  |
|                       | Dayna | And I think what I miss the most, and I missed it right away, was the level of professionals that you work with every day, the level of education that you work with every day, the sense that everybody was rowing in the same direction. And, to me, it was ironic, because we were all rowing in the same direction on a really stupid problem, you know, like, all trying to save wealthy people taxes. Or we were...you know, we're growing towards this goal that was really just about self-enrichment. And that, okay, I get that. I had to pay for my kid's education, just the living, and I had to pay for all that. But once I did, I thought, well, I really have to think more critically about what I'm really doing. And at least now I feel like whatever it is I'm doing, even if I'm not very good at it, at least I'm in the fight, at least I'm in some kind of struggle. |
|                       | Andy  | Dayna, you've a really fascinating story. I wish you had a little more positive ending to it but it sounds like you're telling it very candidly.   |
|                       | Dayna | Yeah, I wish I did too. And maybe it will have a positive ending. Maybe I'll have some story to tell someday that, you know, where this all like made a lot more sense to me.  |
| Let's Talk Graduation | Andy  | Talk about graduation. When you, you know, have been working with juniors and seniors, do you attend the graduation ceremonies?  |

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|   | Dayna | <p>It's that one moment where everybody really does come together. You know, like, you're all part of this big ily. You've achieved something at the end of the year. And even though you feel like I'm really not sure what's happening with that kid next, like, the fact that they made it and they've got this hat on their head and their tassel, they're gonna turn and throw their hat in the air, it's this moment really of spectacular joy.</p> <p>Andy: And the families are all there.</p> <p>Dayna The families are usually there. But sometimes you're the only family that's there. And I have come to take lots of pictures at graduation, and walk over to CVS, and make great big 8x10 glossies that may be the only photo that some kids have.</p> |
|   | Andy  | <p>As a final question, I asked Dayna what advice she would give to someone else considering a second act.</p>  |
| Advice for Others<br>Considering a Second Act | Dayna | <p>It's like having a kid. You have to be ready to turn your whole life upside down. Nothing will be the same again. But find something that you really love. And that my alarm goes off, you know, at 4:30, and that's okay. Like, I'm out of bed. I'm ready to go. I'm on my bike and up trying to do something.</p> <p>So find something that you at least really care about. And even if you're not good at it, and even if you don't think you're making a difference, at least you have that certain passionate, everyday you've got a reason to get up and go somewhere.</p>   |

|                            |      | OUTGOING MUSIC   |
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| Thank-You and Show Credits | Andy | <p>Of course, we want to thank Dayna English for opening up and telling us her story. For the past ten years, she has been working in some of the toughest schools in America. You have to admire that grit and determination.</p> <p>If you know of a "Second Act Story" that we should profile, please contact me, that's Andy Levine, at <a href="mailto:SecondActStories@gmail.com">SecondActStories@gmail.com</a>. I'd love to hear from you.</p> <p>And if you are thinking of starting your own second act, we hope Dayna's story and the stories of others that we've profiled will help you find a new path</p> <p>We hope you'll keep listening. A new Second Act Story" is just two weeks away.</p> <p>As the music fades for a moment, I want to bring you back into Dayna English's classroom for just 30 seconds. It gives all of us an appreciation of the challenges that the teachers in America's inner-city schools face every day.</p> |