



Podcast Transcript | *The Fix*

Season 2, Episode 9

Date: July 27, 2022

Guests: Omar Harris and Rob Broccolo

Run Time: 34:34

Questions or Feedback: thefix@oatey.com

[music]

Katherine: Welcome to The Fix. The podcast made for the trades, where we sit down with inspiring individuals across the trades to discuss their unique take on the industry, including; career paths, job site stories, overcoming challenges, and everything in between. I'm your host, Katherine, a marketer here at Oatey with my co-host and friend Doug, one of Oatey's resident experts in all things trades. The Fix is more than a podcast; it's a community, a community built to support tradespeople and inspire the next generation of essential pros. Let's start the conversation.

All right. Welcome back. Again, another addition of Ambassador Fest 2022. Doug, our guests today actually know each other before arriving here. It's pretty cool to have them sitting at the table with us. They're plumbers who have developed great content, have great engagement on their sites. I'm super excited for our guest today.

Doug: I'm definitely excited about these two guys. Like I said before, we made a new acronym, the SMRs. The Social Media Royalty right here.

Katherine: Oh, yes.

Doug: We got it happening. I love these guys because these guys here can prove that shit flows downhill, and if it doesn't, you got issues inside the building, Katherine.

Katherine: You got it. I would really like to welcome our guest, Omar Harris, who goes by the handle, Omar The Plumber.

Omar Harris: How are you doing?

Katherine: All right. We've got Rob Barraco, who goes by the handle ProDrains.

Rob Broccolo: What's going on?

Katherine: All right. Thank you both for taking some time, as we start to kick off Ambassador Fest to sit down and talk with us and tell our listeners a little bit about who you are, where you reside, what type of plumbing you do, and what a typical day looks like. Omar, you want to kick us off?

Omar: Okay. I'm Omar Harris. I'm a journeyman plumber. I do a lot of residential work, whether it's plumbing in general. I know people have different takes on drain cleaning and plumbing as two different things, but both of those, and light commercial preventive maintenance and buildings.

Katherine: Where do you live?

Omar: Florida.

Katherine: Oh, yes. What county?

Omar: Pembroke Pines.

Katherine: All right. Nice. How long have you been in the industry and what you've been doing?

Omar: I've been in the industry going on eight years.

Katherine: How long have you had your social handle for?

Omar: My social handle? My handle was a different name, which I don't care to put up.

Katherine: No worries.

Omar: It's pretty funky. When I really started falling in love with the trade, when I went to my Local Union 519, at the time being in trade school, then I started taking it a little bit more seriously and went to-- You get better with your work more. I always tell people, if you don't take pictures, you think your work looks like shit. Once I started taking pictures and everybody started giving me compliments, I said, "I want to have everyone see it." I changed my name to, Omar The Plumber, deleted all that other stuff off my page, and just kept it strictly plumbing.

Katherine: That's awesome. All right, Rob, can you give us the same? Where do you reside? What type of plumbing do you do? How long have you been in the business?

Rob: I've been in the industry for about 10 years. Had my own company now for going on five years in May. I live in North Stonington Connecticut from Westerly, Rhode Island. I'm right on the border between Rhode Island and Connecticut. We service both states. We do everything from drain cleaning, sewer installs, septic installs, septic pumping, essentially everything we don't like to say now.

Katherine: Tell me a little bit, Rob, you just said too, you run your own business and you're constantly maintaining your social media community. How do you manage it? How do you find time to do all the things?

Rob: It's not easy. Most of the time when I'm on social media, it's messaging people back. I try to post as much as I can, but it's tough. Between Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, I'm getting 10, 15 messages a day on each platform, it's tough to keep up. I try to manage it in the meantime, I'm waiting between a job, I'm driving, and I can do it real quick. Once I get home and I get my hour of relaxation time before I eat, I'll sit there and play on my phone.

Katherine: Get everything done.

Rob: That's one of the things, you'll be like one in the morning, just sitting there on your phone, just going, talking to people, you're on live. You know how it is, Omar.

Omar: I have been in issues on a job where I was trying to get my cable unstuck and have to hit up Rob, or when we had a flex chef when you're showing me how to maintain it and call him and he answers his FaceTime and everything.

Rob: The best part about our community is everyone helps each other.

Katherine: That's awesome.

Rob: I don't know what every other category or electrician, carpenters, whatever, but in the plumbing industry, I feel like everybody has each other's back. You can go out to an event and everybody's hanging out with each other. On the internet, everyone's talking with each other or they're not. Instagram's a whole different beast, everyone seems to be friendly and wants to get along, wants to network, wants to communicate.

Katherine: I think that's great. I haven't had anyone bring that up to me, that you actually reach out to someone and say, "Hey, I've got a challenge or an issue, help me walk through it."

Omar: Another person that always picks up his phone, Eric [unintelligible 00:05:16], believe it or not. When I'm doing boiler maintenance and I'm stuck-

Rob: He's a good dude.

Omar: "Hey." He picks up. When I met Eric, about four years ago, that's how I first met him. I just started on Instagram direct message you could-

Rob: There's a good portion of the community that's not about posting a picture. They post that to get their name out there and show work, but they're all about helping each other. They'll instantly message you back, call you, help you on the middle of a job site in the middle of the day, when they're trying to run their own company, do their own jobs.

Katherine: You've got to weigh that balance of there's so much good that comes with Instagram, with all the negativity that happens sometimes with people that make comments and you just got to-

Omar: Oh, that's a whole another ballgame [unintelligible 00:06:00]. Don't get it twisted. There is a lot of negativity on social media and you get sometimes people are trying to be negative in telling you the wrong things. You got to be very thick-minded and open-minded to learn, because we all don't know everything. You're a master plumber, if I'm having issues and I know like-- When we here last time-- it wasn't you. What's his name?

Katherine: Aaron.

Omar: It was Aaron. I asked him about a shower that we're putting in. This is what he do. I'm not a master, but he did give me some valuable information that I could dedicate it to my customer and let her know. That was awesome. Some people just can't think you know everything.

Doug: Katherine, I'm going to jump in here for a second. Both of you guys, a lot of people, like you had said earlier, they don't think of sewer cleaning and sewer maintenance as plumbing. Let's put it this way. If you don't have that system running correctly, or you don't know how to clean that system properly or maintenance that system, nothing else matters, because it isn't getting out of that dwelling at all.

For you guys to learn the feel of the cables when you're hitting something, and then there's a lot of companies out there, they'll just throw a probe on the bottom of their cable and they'll open the sewer, and they leave the job because you got a little bit of water flow. To be a true technician, to clean that out, that's actually a big deal. I applaud you guys for hanging in there, and then also helping each other in the field. Because until you get those different experiences, you're not going to be able to understand how to get that cable-free and pull it back without [crosstalk]-

Rob: A lot of times I notice on social media too, or even anywhere is, there's different categories of plumbers, there's different categories of carpenters, electricians, or whatever that-- he could post a job doing some service and they're telling them he's doing it wrong. They've never installed a toilet in their life, or they've never snaked the drain in their life, but they're trying to critique you on it, all they do is connect pipe from A to B, and that's it. They're following the plans or they're the ones that just walked around the job site with the vest and a clipboard.

They critique you on the internet like they know everything depending on what-- I shoot a lot of liners, we do patches and stuff. [unintelligible 00:08:12] guys that have never even involved in the underground, but they try to tell you-- You always get somebody that knows more, even though they've never even done it in their entire life.

Doug: Now, as you guys go through the process of vetting out those who are just haters, I'm sure you're finding that most of those individuals are individuals who might actually be uncertain in their capabilities. If they point out your inconsistencies, it makes them feel better about themselves. Is that something that happens?

Omar: Yes. They don't have no work. At the end of the day, it takes a very proud person to showcase their work. When they say all this, I go click on their page; number one, they're private, and with one or three pictures, and I know those three pictures are not showcasing anything, so how can you really-

Rob: None of their work is posted.

Omar: None of their work is posted, so I can't even take you for the word. It's a constant battle between new construction plumbers and residential and service.

Rob: Sure. The next problem is, once you start getting attention on social media, then you get even more haters. Once you come to an Oatey event, or you go here, you do there, you talk to somebody, you post something, there's just always somebody **[unintelligible 00:09:28]**.

Omar: Everybody's been using Oatey for a long time, now it's like, "Oh, Oatey's whack." I'm like, "Okay."

Katherine: 106 years, right?

Omar: Yes. Now it'll start being whacked because-

Rob: Because of the haters and jealousy **[unintelligible 00:09:41]**.

Omar: Look how long I've been calling glue, glue. I finally realized that-

Katherine: What is it, Omar? Tells us.

Omar: - it's cement.

[crosstalk]

You see the thing is, when I correct people now to like, "Oh, what are you talking about is glue." When I was here and I learned the correct grammar and everything, it makes you even better even when we say-- somebody says, "I removed a clog." Technically it's a stoppage. When you are going **[unintelligible 00:10:08]**, you're removing a stoppage. We could still say a clogged toilet, but it's a stoppage.

Katherine: It's so true.

Doug: I think that's great. I love that.

Katherine: Oh, I knew you were going to smile real big when you had that someone is listening to your class.

Doug: We might go long today, Katherine.

Omar: If you read the Spartan, there is a pattern to show you what the cable-- the 300 machine, the Spartan M300 and 100, they have their book and it's all about drain cleaning and it's all about removing the stoppage. Like you were telling me, that's why I love what you are doing, you clean a line, you go ahead and you run the

camera. I never used to run the camera. A customer will call me back and say, "Hey, still warranty." "[unintelligible 00:10:48] cable, clean the line, remove the stoppage."

Katherine Make sure it's right.

Omar: I still run the camera to make sure that the line is clean.

Katherine: Yes, it's great best practice.

Rob: When I go, I'm trying to hold value. I don't want to hear from you again unless you want to tell me happy birthday, Merry Christmas, or you want to send me to another different call, different customer. I don't want to hear from the same job. I'll let you point out what was wrong with it, what it needs to fix it, or what the problem was originally and how it was solved and that's it. There's no guessing, no poking holes, like you said before. Just because the water went down doesn't mean it's working.

Katherine: Great point.

Doug: That's fantastic.

Rob: We do a lot of septic inspections on homes. If you're spending half a million dollars on a house, it makes no sense to me that you wouldn't want to make sure everything functions properly. Just running water at the sink doesn't mean that-- just because it's drained down to the pipe doesn't mean the septic works properly, or just because they flush the toilet and went down doesn't mean the sewer line is not in bad shape. Just because there is water coming out of the faucet doesn't mean the water's not contaminated. [crosstalk] something you could do.

Doug: Absolutely.

Katherine: That's awesome. I love it. I love all the thoroughness. Omar, talk to me a little bit about how social media's given you media exposure and visibility?

Omar: Oh, a lot, I don't even know where to start. Events like these, like what we have with Oatey, with RIDGID, and Milwaukee and stuff like that, when you get to go to these events, you get to meet different character of people, have different opinions on jobs and you can learn a lot. Then, of course, you gravitate to other people. It gives you more exposure at the end of the day.

Omar: My advice to every young person out there, no matter whether you're a business owner or you're working for a business, always keep an open mind, because as soon as you close your mind and think know something you're done, you're absolutely done, because there's always new technology coming out, advancements. There's somebody else who's had an experience that if you can learn from it, it's going to make your day better.

Rob: Are you willing to learn?

Katherine: Yes, absolutely. Rob, speaking on that, what are some of the resources you've learned as you've navigated becoming a business owner, and an entrepreneur?

Rob: Resources doing?

Katherine: Yes. Are there programs that you use? Are there support systems that you utilize to help run your business? What are some of the things that make you successful in running your own business?

Rob: Networking. I use software to help manage my schedule and my wife's become a lifesaver, where she's been doing a lot of the scheduling and the billing, because I can't keep up with it all. I think networking is probably the most powerful resource I've had with my company. I don't do any marketing, I don't do any advertising, it's just a matter of **[unintelligible 00:13:26]**. Every single person, at the end of the day, in my perspective needs our services in some form of way, so if I'm on a job site and I see a roofer or a contractor--

I'm not the annoying type to go bring a stack of business cards and promote myself, "I'm Rob, **[unintelligible 00:13:40]**." I like let making known who I am with what I do so that, at some point, if the roof's getting done, they're going to have to inspect that line going down and prove shingles didn't get into it or any nails before they get paid.

I might as well camera it versus somebody else. If the contractor goes to do a massive renovation, most times they just cover up all the old plumbing under the slab. Now most of them think in their mentality, "Why don't I just call Rob and have a camera in the lines up, and if we need to fix them, we'll fix it before we do the renovation?"

Omar: That's great.

Rob: Electrician's the same. In every form or way, whether it's at their own house, or on a job site, some form or another's going to have to use the toilet, are going to have to use water, they're going to get storm drain. At some point, in any aspect of my business, everyone's going to need me, so I try to find a way to make an introduction, to have a conversation with them, to provide some kind of value so that my number gets saved in their phone or they remember my business name so that I get that call at the end of the day.

Omar: That's a great business plan.

Rob: Then the next person's going to tell the next person. At the end of the day, that whole network just keeps growing. Same for coming to these events. In high school, we all might think we have like 150 friends, then everyone goes to college, you meet some friends, you start building a family, and what do you have like two or three friends?

Katherine: Right, get friends.

Rob: At the end of the day, you actually consider, but in this community, I love going to the **[unintelligible 00:14:50]** show, to this event, or any other event where I get to

File name: S02E09 V4 (1) (1).mp3

see people that I consider friends, I talk to every day on the internet, we get to enjoy the same thing, we have the same conversations, we do the same things versus-

Omar: We talk about plumbing a lot. Man, we be on a phone just sitting back, just drinking and just talking. A lot of stuff I talk to Alex about the biggest plumber, we'll just be talking my plumbing. Different ways he's going to try to do things, take stuff from you, take stuff from him. The most person I take a lot of stuff from, Danielle.

Katherine: Oh, yes, @thelittlestplumber.

Omar: I tell her all the time she's a badass plumber.

Doug: She is.

Omar: She'll knock me on my ass. People get upset about it too and people get, "Oh, she's not a--" Bro, her work shows itself, not because she's here. I've been telling her, I've been following her when I first got on, because especially with me being in commercial industrial, that's what she's into, we're doing the same thing. A lot of my jobs are the same Sloan faucet, same wall-hung toilets going into chase, removing stoppages, and stuff like that. I wash station resets, discards, and stuff like that. Controlled environment, so you're doing the same thing.

Rob: I Didn't even have social media until three years ago, and you were one of the first people I followed. She was one of the first girl I followed. [crosstalk]

Omar: I think I had like 700 followers at that time when we met at RIDGID and we were like, "Okay, cool." That's when the whole big thing, was RIDGID only picks people that have a major following. I'm like, "That's so not true."

Rob: I didn't even have an Instagram. I didn't really use Facebook.

Omar: Yes. Rob didn't have an Instagram. You created it when you were at RIDGID.

Rob: When you come to these events and they're like, "Use #this," and I'm like, "What the hell is happening?" They're like, "Download the app." and I'm like, "Okay, no idea." The power of networking is, now I can call him anytime and call me, so you're learning about new tools, new products, different people posting things, sharing their stories. [crosstalk]

Omar: ProPress.

Doug: Oh, ProPress. I got one in my office just two rooms over.

Omar: That's the biggest thing now is just the new fittings and just, hey-- that's the lifesaver, though.

Doug: [unintelligible 00:16:55]-

Rob: How many things do you see somebody else post that you never even knew about and it makes your life easier now every single day. You'll be in the job every

single day, doing the same routine and you see somebody post, "Wow, that is amazing."

Katherine: It's already a bigger issue. I want to switch gears here a little bit, I want to ask you some questions about the trades, and some questions for you. Would you encourage your own children to go into the trades? What have been, if that's the case, strategies that you've been using to expose them to the industry over the years?

Rob: I'm trying to build generational wealth now. She's only four years old, but I hope by the time she's 18, she runs the company, collecting the check.

Katherine: I like it.

Rob: Don't get me wrong. I want her to get her hands dirty and learn the value of working, but I hope I do good enough that she can still run the company, but not have to get her hands dirty. She can be the office side of it, manage everything. I'm 100% want her to get into it. I don't know if she's going to.

Katherine: Maybe she wants to get her hands dirty, right?

Rob: She's only four. If my wife listens to this, I hope we have our son soon. I could go for Robert Brockwell third. My daughter, I plan on her **[unintelligible 00:17:57]**. My father has a lot of real estate property and he got me into plumbing and everything else. He did an enormous amount of stuff. I'm not going to waste hours talking about it, but he's done so much stuff to help me and my family that it's built for me to get into the position I'm in. I hope I can put in the position for my daughter going forward.

Katherine: That's wonderful.

Doug: That is awesome.

Katherine: Omar?

Omar: My son and my daughter, they're all into it. I bring my son Lucian. He knows how to use a press tool. The RP 241 is really light. The M12, he uses also. He knows how to press. He knows how to use the RIDGID to Milwaukee. My daughter's pretty good too connecting P-traps **[unintelligible 00:18:39]** sink.

Doug: Oh wow. That's awesome.

Omar: My daughter is seven. Lucian is six.

Rob: Even if they don't get into the trade, they still get to learn to use their hands, and know how to do things.

Katherine: Yes, absolutely.

Rob: How many people you have been to their house, they don't know where the water main is, they don't know how to shut a valve off.

File name: S02E09 V4 (1) (1).mp3

Doug: Simple things.

Rob: Everybody should know just some basics.

Doug: One of the things that we've done throughout this journey with the podcast is, we point out the simple fact that there are so many layers in the trades. You might not have to be the technician out there doing the service. You might be the office manager, you might be a project manager, you could be a construction manager. All those opportunities are there, and who knows, your daughter and son-to-be, will call it son-to-be.

[laughter]

[crosstalk]

Your son and daughter-- Once your flight land, we'll schedule stuff for you. You can bring them into the business, but if they're not someone who wants to go out and actually physically do the installations and stuff, trust me, there are all layers where they can still be very involved.

Katherine: Yes, for sure.

Rob: What got me with you guys when I first came was this, I didn't think they really had master plumbers and people here. I just thought, "You know how companies just hire anyone?" I'm a plumber and you just could talk about it, but you never walk the walk, and then when I started introducing as a such and such plumber, master plumber, journeyman plumber that would just make it great. You call in, you have a issue with the product, I guess you're the one that's letting them know it was our issue on our end or [crosstalk]-

Doug: With us, our technical department there are in this this building, this university building and we have all of them here because we're constantly cross-training each other. If something gets really elevated, it will end up coming to me, but that means the shit has hit the fan. Our other folks, if they have a problem, we'll answer the question but then we're going to teach them why that answer was there, so they'll know in later phone calls if that same question comes up, they already know how to process it in their head just like you guys are doing on social media, you're sharing that information, we do it internally too.

Katherine: I just even want to say, from my standpoint, from a marketing standpoint, every photoshoot we do, we have someone from a technical team there to make sure that we're installing it right, we're getting the right shot.

Rob: I hate that the worst when I see posts that makes no sense.

Omar: Like a four [unintelligible 00:21:03] pipe wrench.

[laughter]

Rob: Right. A small P-trap.

File name: S02E09 V4 (1) (1).mp3

Katherine: We do. Actually, even all of the user-generated content that we re-share get's viewed by one of our technical staff members too. Because there were sometimes when maybe something wasn't installed the way that we would recommend it or there was a issue. Not everyone is great, so we have to make sure because we want to make sure we're representing appropriately as well. We appreciate, for us the technical team is just such a big part of the marketing team in what we do because we don't want to be wrong with it either.

Rob: Yes. It looks more authentic when it makes sense.

Doug: Absolutely.

Katherine: Absolutely.

Rob: I don't know how many people get a website built by these companies that claim to be plumbing website builders. I don't know if you see those **[unintelligible 00:21:46]**?

Omar: All the time.

Rob: Their pictures don't make any sense. They're using the wrong tools, they use the wrong things like, "Oh, my God, get the **[unintelligible 00:21:52]**, I'm trying to take a picture for the internet."

[laughter]

To make it at least look good. It's good that you guys [crosstalk]-

Doug: Well, I'll tell you how serious we are about real life here.

Omar: Everything bought at Home Depot.

Doug: You saw our training facility out back. When they gave me some creative freedom, we made it real life, but Katherine one time gave me the task to build a full kitchen on wheels. We had 10 base cabinets, a granite countertop, upper cabinets and a window in this thing. It took six people to move it around. That's how realistic she wanted this, so that when we were doing out trainings and our photoshoots, it felt like you're right inside of a kitchen in a home.

Rob: That's awesome. You've seen a **[unintelligible 00:22:40]** here.

Katherine: Yes, for sure.

Rob: Because it's better that when you explain something to somebody when you get hands on. That is nice thought.

Katherine: Yes, agreed.

Rob: You can tell me 100 times how to do something, but being able to put your hands on and actually do it and ask the questions while you're doing it, makes a difference.

File name: S02E09 V4 (1) (1).mp3

Katherine: We've been sharing about Moda for years now on social. I think every time someone comes back to Oatey University and they see how Moda can work within a home they're like, "Oh, I had no idea," or, "I didn't know." It was until they installed it or they put their hands on it or they actually worked with the product, they were like, "Oh, got it."

Rob: If you look at half the product or the instructions in the back are so basic. It's like, "We do actually know what you're doing." You're looking on and you're like, "Oh, what's that basic instruction actually mean?" Versus somebody showing you like, "That makes sense. I understand that."

Katherine: For sure. Well, I want to wrap it up here with one final question. A lot of what we've been talking about on The Fix is, what does the trades look like in the future? I would love to get your take on, what are your hopes and dreams for the trades and what would you like to see the plumbing industry and the trades evolve into? Because there's been a lot of change over the last couple of years, but where do we see it going?

Rob: I don't see anything good happening. I want it to be, it just feels like America has given up on **[unintelligible 00:23:58]**. It's just so hard to find good laborers and good people that want to work. If they do come to work, they feel entitled or think they know everything. You can't guide them like it used to be. When I went to school, if you didn't go to college, you were a loser. I wish the perspective now would be like, "College is great and it can be great for any **[unintelligible 00:24:18]**, but there's also this as an option like in--"

I don't know about when if you went to high school or when you went to high school. When I went to high school, there was not even an option to do woodshop. It was just something like get your hands dirty and be like, "You know what? This might be better than me sitting at a desk, or it might be better than me selling insurance, or whatever." Just some kind of way to get your hands-- This is why the option was there so that in the future so that-- Say all schools now have that class, had to be there, in 10 years, I'm sure the trades will all increase because people will actually have in their hands to try it.

Doug: Absolutely.

Rob: Versus going to college failing and trying again **[unintelligible 00:24:49]**. Going to college and it's a success five years later, "I don't like it, now I want to get in the trades." I want the opportunity after school to see if it works out for me or not.

Most people say the 20s is your time to waste, figure what you want to do in life. I guess you can dilly-dally, college party-

Omar: Travel.

Rob: Go through a 100 jobs, but it would be nice if once you got out of high school, you had the mentality that college isn't the only way or talent isn't the only way. You don't have to be a plumber. You could be an electrician, you could be a contractor, **[unintelligible 00:25:19]**, whatever. There's so many other options. If it was out

there and more known, and this podcast help [unintelligible 00:25:24] you everyday. They're like, "Hey, man, just quick before we do the history lesson today, I just want to let you guys know, college is great and it's expensive and it can do things, but just go hand out with your dad for a day in the garage. See if you like playing with tools, if you like nailing something together.

Like you said, he has his kids using a ProPress and put traps together. At some point, it might click into their head when they're at high school [unintelligible 00:25:46] like, "Did you follow your college applications?" He's like, "You know what, I don't think I want to do college. I see how good my dad does. I see how great the trades are, I could still make six figures and do that and-- You know what? I'm going to try this."

Doug: Absolutely.

Rob: If it doesn't work, you can still go to college.

Katherine: Yes, and vice-- We-

Rob: We're getting paid to do our apprenticeships, we're getting paid to go to school.

Doug: Paid to learn.

Katherine: Yes, paid to learn.

Doug: Absolutely.

Rob: We're building value in the same time. We're not going to college all day then running to do a pizza job at night to hopefully pay for our books. Then four years later get a job and start to work our way up. We're starting at the bottom while doing school, working our way up to get into that position in not four years. Not four years to get the degree, then work your way up to hopefully the position you like.

Katherine: We've talked a lot about that, that really getting more in front of the students, the educators and guidance counselors and the parents. It's this triangle of letting them know more about that trades is a viable option. There are a lot of kids out there looking at college going, "I don't really want to go. I don't want to spend all that money," or, "It's not for me-- ."

Rob: I wish they did this out of school. You know how we had those annoying assemblies in school?

[laughter]

Read the telephone book. If Oatey or another company had a schedule where the whole school had to go to the assembly, that's when they do the podcast and the next week they were at a different school. you know what I mean? Doesn't only have to be a trades school or some magnificent school in that state, because that's how it's usually portrayed; pick that one school. If they just went to all the different schools, and if that was the ability to do that, I think we would get more attention.

Doug: Let me put that in the list.

Katherine: I got it. We also had College Now on, which you would think, "Oh, College Now, it's about getting kids into college." They really even [unintelligible 00:27:22] more conversation than it's about moving students through the next learning, the next certificate, or what it needs to be, and it doesn't always have to be college.

We have seen, over the last two seasons, that there is movement happening, because a lot of schools are recognizing it. Trades schools like Polaris just south of here, they are starting to have uptake in their admissions and stuff.

Rob: A lot of signings I've been seeing on the internet where kids-

Doug: That's awesome.

Rob: - that were getting a hat, [crosstalk] signing on to professional drain services for five years.

Doug: That's awesome.

Katherine: Yes, it is awesome.

Rob: I feel like that makes you feel like you accomplished something.

Doug: He was so proud to do it.

Omar: So much on sports making him think this is the only way for the school to come and see-- this guy had a lot of people coming, his mom is happy, and most importantly, he was happy, and I was happy for him. I'm like, "That's the way to go." Because on my end, you how I feel. I'm not going to get into the political thing, because I know [crosstalk]-

Katherine: We don't have enough time for that.

Omar: - this is not the show for it, but to be 100, people don't want to work. They don't want to work. It's not about getting your hands dirty. They don't want to work. That's why I feel the trade on, even if it's plumbing, electrical, carpentry, anything, no one wants to works, and that's why there's a lack of plumbers, lack of HVAC carpenters, everyone. No one wants to work.

Doug: It's unfortunate but people don't stop and think sometimes and realize that they are actually the ones in control of their success, and if they don't put forth effort, they'll never get any return.

Rob: We're in a lot of different time, though [unintelligible 00:29:05]-

Omar: The kids that are coming up now-- I'm not saying we're old, but they're not built the same as you, they're not built like my father; one to learn a trade. There's nothing wrong with college, but I think in high school, like what Rob said, we could start weeding it out like, "What would you like to do?"

File name: S02E09 V4 (1) (1).mp3

Rob: You see, my father he worked everyday at a mill job. His perception at that point too, because he was [unintelligible 00:29:28] if his son didn't go to college, he failed.

Katherine: I would agree with you.

Omar: Yes, we don't want to disappoint their-

Rob: Like, "Robert, you need to go to college. You need to go to college. You need to go to college." I make more money than I would ever made with the college degree I was going to get now. I've made some mistakes in life and stuff, but I could think everyone has that misconception or they did, and now it's like everyone's so entitled and no one has the right direction to give you anymore, [crosstalk] is so expensive.

Omar: My mom kept it 100. We're from Jamaica. My mom was just like, "Look, you play basketball."

[laughter]

I remember I went out to a camp and my mom was like, "Hey, you're good here in Florida." When I started going up north, them basketball players were built differently.

[laughter]

Omar: That's when I realized-- I was sure, I'm thinking I'm tall, I'm calling my mom like, "Yoh, they at 6'6, 6'5, they're doing the same thing I'm doing." Mom was like, "Yes, you're not no 4.03, [unintelligible 00:30:18] right there making it. You need to get into the trades." I wasted time a little bit. Then I got into it.

Rob: We got a misconception that we're dirty, second class citizens.

Omar: Because a lot of parents don't want to tell their kids. I've even heard a father one time say, "You don't want to be a plumber," when I'm servicing his house. Charged them double."

Doug: Yes, exactly.

Omar: He's like, "Oh, what's the bill? I think I clean it." [crosstalk]

Rob: "I want to tell the kid, "Do you want to see my bank account? Tell your father to follow me."

[laughter]

Omar: Yes. He was a doctor, though. Normally, I charge \$4.29 to clean a main line to remove a stoppage. I think I did like 6.

Doug: Good for you.

[laughter]

Omar: Because it was after hours, anyway. I heard them say, "You don't want to be a plumber." How you know what your son want to do? It starts in the school. Events like these, you guys go and not talking to the students and let them know there's a different thing and they could try it. You know what I mean? That's not saying college. I'm not saying college, no college. Some people need to go to college to be a doctor. [crosstalk]

Rob: I learned stuff there that help me with my business. College had its benefits. I wish somebody gave me the option where you could go-- It's like doing a challenge or something, where it's like, "Try this, this, this and this, and see which one you fail and pass." The same way we took SATs in school, and they assess where you were, and it'd be cool if it was just like, "Oh, you know what? You actually have really good ability with your hands, or you have really good--" Like you said earlier, you don't have to be actually in the field doing the plumbing to be in the plumbing trade or to be in the trade. There's so many more aspects to it. You could go to college and be excellent at marketing and still be in the plumbing trade.

Omar: Yes, like what you guys are doing here. It goes hand in hand, and I wish a lot of companies too would go out to the schools and, "Hey, pass out the applications. Hey, why don't you learn to trade and show the sign like with that guy?"

Rob: We're all the same people, they just realize that we're plumbers when we're out and about. You know what I mean? It's just we have a misconception which is [crosstalk]-

Omar: Social media also shows the kids that being a rapper, an athlete, [crosstalk] or anything else, you want to drug deal, or whatever you want to call it, that's what the generation is looking at becoming for the fast money, and stuff like that. If you really think about it, I don't really hear no kid out there telling me except the one on TV, "What do you want to be?" "I want to be a baseball player." There's nothing wrong with saying that, but I'll say, "Hey, baseball, but hey, I could still change a P-trap. I can still install a faucet."

A lot of kids in their dorm, if they try and change a faucet, they don't know how-- My brother went to college, he don't know how to change a faucet. He can't change a-- easy, basic to-- faucet, just drop it and take it off, "Oh, man, I don't want to do that, man. That looks crazy." I'm like, "[crosstalk]"

[laughter]

Rob: "It's tight up there."

Katherine: I like it. Well, I think we might have to take both of you up on helping us with maybe some of the conversations we're having with local schools here and just talking to them about the trades. One of the things that we've always committed to with The Fix is that we have action that happens after each one of these podcasts from our learning. Don't be surprised if I fall into your DMs asking you to help support in some way-

File name: S02E09 V4 (1) (1).mp3

Rob: No problem.

Katherine: - to talk about your journey. Thank you both. We're looking forward to a great couple of days here in Cleveland.

Rob: [crosstalk] gets rid of the plumbers crack image. You know what I mean?

[laughter]

[unintelligible 00:33:30] Omar, and you're like, "Man, you could be fit, jack, tall, and still be a plumber?"

[laughter]

Katherine: Running on the beach.

Rob: **[unintelligible 00:33:37]** the crack.

Katherine: Oh, love it. Well, thank you, guys. Looking forward to it.

Rob: Do that shot like a million times.

[laughter]

Omar: We were good, though.

Doug: Great conversation.

[music]

Katherine: Thanks for joining us on this episode of The Fix. Be sure to follow us on your favorite podcast platform so you don't miss our next conversation dropping every Wednesday. If you have feedback about the show or a topic you'd like to see covered, send us an email at the fix@oatey.com, or give us a shout-out on social media. We would love to connect with you. Don't forget, you can get your daily Fix by visiting oatey.com, and we'll catch you next time.

[music]

[00:34:35] [END OF AUDIO]