



Cinderella Man

History scholar Michael Hattem looks back to BMCC, the start of an amazing journey.

At 31, Michael Hattem was supporting his family by working at whatever menial jobs he could find. "It was 2007 and our son Lucien had just been born," he recalls. "I realized I had to provide a better future for him, and going back to school seemed the best way to accomplish that."

Four years later, Hattem is graduating from CUNY's Baccalaureate Program for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies with a bachelor's degree in history, and set to begin graduate studies at Yale University—where he's been awarded a 5-year, tuition-free fellowship plus a \$26,500-a-year stipend.

At BMCC, Hattem's first mentor was Jacob Kramer, his professor for early and modern American history. "He was particularly interested in the history of the American labor movement," Kramer recalls. "He really wanted to do something above and beyond the scope and substance of our class assignments."

Writing that research paper inspired Hattem to become a historian, and enroll in the CUNY Baccalaureate program, where students design their own curricula. His major was history, with a focus on colonial America, and he applied to graduate schools to continue those studies.

"I'm not surprised that Yale offered him a fellowship," Kramer says. "There are some people who are just good at historical research. Michael is one of them." Yale not only offered full tuition remission plus stipend for five years, but healthcare coverage for Hattem, his wife, and their two young sons.

"I'm not naturally a confident person," says Hattem. "But the feeling that I could do this has been slowly building for a while. Of course, if it hadn't been for mentors like Professor Kramer, I wouldn't even have applied to these places...They boosted my confidence in myself and took time to help me outside of class—meeting me for coffee, inviting me to their homes, writing letters on my behalf."



Professor Jacob Kramer: "Michael's level of comprehension, analytical abilities and intellectual sophistication clearly stood out. He was always keyed into class discussions and always prepared to comment."