Two Pacific students challenge Forbes magazine’s notorious "Most Miserable Cities List," which included Stockton in 2009 and 2010.

Above: Patrick Walton ’10, Daniel Ray ’10 and Professor Alan Ray
cost of a four-day trip to New York in search of answers. Daniel and Patrick found that the criteria for the rankings and even the choice of the word “miserable” had been chosen in an editorial brainstorming session for the story. Results were based on available statistical data, but no outside experts were consulted. No visits to the cities or polls of citizens were factored into the final outcome.

“I created the article to show how people view their cities in times of economic crises,” Badenhausen told them in the filmed interview. “Not one person in Stockton should be surprised that it was named the most miserable,” he remarked. As the interview closed, Badenhausen promised that there would not be another “Most Miserable City” article. However in 2010, Forbes’ again published the list with Stockton at number two.

When Team Misery returned to Stockton, they filmed interviews with local political leaders and community members to find out how the community felt about the “miserable” label. The mayor, chief of police, local television news reporters, Pacific professors and students were among those captured on video.

Patrick and Daniel found out through their interviews that, although people did acknowledge Stockton has some very real problems related to unemployment and crime, for the most part the people like their city and feel it has a lot to offer. City leaders, who have been working hard for years to overcome these challenges, said they thought this kind of negative publicity only makes their jobs more difficult.

Another point they said emerged was the positive feeling Stocktonians in general have about University of the Pacific. They appreciate its beauty; attend sporting and other events; send their children to summer camps and swimming lessons; and take advantage of healthcare services. The people of Stockton also tend to have strong family ties, enjoy the easy access Stockton provides to Northern California attractions, and they appreciate the city’s diversity. The students felt there was a lot more to what makes up the sense of misery or satisfaction for the people of Stockton than the nine factors used for the Forbes rankings.

“I now realize there is a lot more diversity and there is a lot bigger story to Stockton,” said Patrick about the experience.

“Through the many interviews, we learned that the ‘miserable’ designation can be a good thing to learn from,” Dr. Ray added. They hope city leaders and supporters will continue to be motivated to keep resources focused toward addressing Stockton’s most pressing needs.

Team Misery has compiled all of its interviews and produced a documentary on their findings. They made a presentation to Pacific alumni and gave a sneak preview at Pacific Alumni Weekend in June and plan to premiere “Why So Miserable Stockton?” at the Bob Hope Theatre in downtown Stockton sometime this fall.

“We hope the film will help generate a conversation in the community about what a miserable city really is,” said Daniel. “We hope it will help people realize that Stockton can actually be a fascinating place to reside, but to also remind them that a city is what you make it.”

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