RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH M. WILMA HARRIS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and
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NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
DECEMBER 11, 2018

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an interview with M. Wilma Harris on December 11, 2018, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The interviewers are Kate Rizzi and …

Kaisha Esty: Kaisha Esty.

KR: Thank you so much for coming in today to do this interview.

WH: My pleasure. In case you haven't noticed, I love the University and anything I can do to help that. I'll even be interviewed. [laughter]

KE: Thank you so much for meeting with us today. I would like to start by learning a little bit more about your childhood, especially what it was like growing up as a black girl in Paulsboro, New Jersey. That's where you grew up.

WH: Yes, you can't hear my head shaking. [laughter]

KE: No.

WH: Sorry, yes, that's where I was born. That's where I went to school, K [kindergarten] through twelve.

KE: Were there any particular memories that you have of being--I mean, was Paulsboro segregated at the time?

WH: Yes and no.

KE: Yes and no, okay.

WH: When I say no, there were many, many black students--no, not many, maybe twenty percent black students, K through twelve. The others were your garden variety Caucasians. Some were Italian, some were Jewish, some were of Irish background. In the school system, no. My parents were the first ones to move on the block where we lived, and that was around 1945. As a result, there was a mass exodus of the white [families] … [laughter]

KE: Oh, right.

WH: They were like out of "Dodge," "They're going to pollute the area." By the time I finished high school, there were maybe two or three white families left, out of, I'll say, fifteen or twenty houses. It was not segregated in that regard, because we all kind of played together. Recently, like in April, I was inducted into the [Paulsboro] High School Hall of Distinguished Alumni, HODA. I had to think of what it's called. We were required to make remarks, so I quoted Dickens, "They were the best of times, and they were the worst of times" [from *A Tale of Two Cities*]. The best of times, there were some really cool kids growing up then, because they didn't know any better. May 4th or 5th, 1961 was the only time I ever sat on the first floor of our theater, movie theater, because if you were black, you paid your money, you made the right turn, you went upstairs and you sat in the balcony. The movie theater was not integrated at all. I don't

know if it ever became integrated, but that one time, which was the night of my junior prom, which is the reason I remember when it was, was the only time I ever, ever sat on the first floor of the movie [theater]. I was a Brownie but never a Girl Scout because at the time I was old enough to become a Girl Scout, there wasn't a black troop. Someone said there had been one in earlier years, but I don't know what happened to it by the time I was Girl Scout ready. So, the answer to your question is yes and no.

KE: That is a great answer. It's very generous, thank you. As a Brownie, was this a segregated Brownie chapter?

WH: Oh, yes, it was a black Brownie troop.

KE: Okay.

WH: Just as the Girl Scout troop was a white Girl Scout troop.

KE: Okay. If you could remember back to being a child ...

WH: You're saying it was a long time ago. [laughter]

KE: No.

WH: Yes. [laughter]

KE: I'm just interested in, even as a Brownie, were there moments where you remember speaking with your friends about being black, or being different to others, treated differently or anything like that?

WH: No.

KE: Okay.

WH: Because then, and if you ask anyone else, like [in the] early '70s, there were--how do I explain it; oh, you read it in the thing--there were gradations among blacks, so all blacks were not treated equally. Unfortunately, that's where I learned about discrimination and segregation, was from others blacks. There were--and they don't do it as much, even though I've heard it recently--light-skinned blacks were obviously better than dark-skinned blacks because I guess master loved their mothers more than master loved our mothers. You had to have flowing hair. You had to look like Lena Horne--you all know who Lena Horne was? [Editor's Note: Lena Horne was an actress, singer and civil rights activist who lived from 1917 to 2010.]

KE: Yes.

WH: Okay. [You had to look like Lena Horne] to be accepted within the black community, and you had to be thin, but that's even now. At that point, it was more important, when you're seven and eight, to want to be accepted by your own than to be accepted by others. No, we never

talked about it, but I ostensibly knew that there are certain things I can't do anything ever to be acceptable with this group, so my goal, even as a little kid, was to get out of town because I knew that that couldn't be the real world, or the real world wouldn't have existed so long for things to be evaluated on such a superficial nature. With that as a backdrop, my interest and my time was spent differently than the other black kids, whether it was within Brownies or whether it was in junior high or high school. I just had to do well in school, so I could get out.

KE: I can personally relate to that. I was raised in a West Indian community in the UK [United Kingdom] and a lot of Jamaicans believed that if you were lighter skinned, then you were sort of half better.

WH: Even now?

KE: Yes, even now or twenty years ago. That also drove me to want to kind of see a bigger world beyond that because it is so limited.

WH: Because intuitively, you know it's more. It can't be ...

KE: Absolutely.

WH: It can't be that way. Then, of course, if you succeed, however the definition of success is in that world, then this must be an exception. It's not that. It's more than just how you look. It's your character and who you are and that's how you value a person, which gets to one of my insights on being at Douglass in the '60s, that there I could practice my thesis that it's your character and who you are that makes you worthy of my time, for lack of a better term. If you come in with a clean slate and Kate treats me well, and, you, Kaisha, treat me like [waves hand in the air dismissively], "You're not worthy to breathe the air that I breathe," guess who I'm going to want to spend my time with.

KE: Right.

WH: Not you just because you look like me, but the blonde, white Kate because it's her character that's more important than how she looks.

KE: Right.

WH: I'm off that soapbox.

KE: Interesting.

WH: You asked about Brownies, and I just went off. [laughter]

KE: No, that is very interesting to me because even having these thoughts as a child, to what extent do you think maybe it was your parents that were helping to …

WH: Oh, no, they bought into that stuff, too.

KE: Okay. Were they …

WH: I mean, that's all they knew.

KE: What was their skin tone?

WH: Your garden variety black.

KE: Okay.

WH: Like me. I would call it caramel cinnamon.

KE: Okay, so both your parents were the same [or] similar skin tone.

WH: [Yes]. My uncle, my mother's younger brother, told me I would never get married because, "Why would anyone want to marry someone who looks like you?" [laughter]

KE: Wow.

WH: When you're a kid, you believe that. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on who you talked to, that's been a guiding principle. I better excel at what I do because no one's going to be out there taking care of me because no one's going to marry me and Uncle Bobby wouldn't make that up.

KR: You were driven and you got to Douglass and you had this fundamental belief that people should be valued by their character. Where did that come from? Where did that belief come from?

WH: There was not a particular moment that I can think of but just knowing what I was growing up in didn't make sense. It just didn't feel right, because if that were the case, then all of the brown-skinned people would've been killed a long time ago and none of them would have been successful at anything and they all couldn't be aberrations. I think over time you just kind of say, "No, this is bogus. I can't believe this." Maybe if I had stayed there the other fifty-five years, I would've believed it because that's all I would've seen. So, there was not a pivotal moment.

KE: Can you just describe, for the recording, what you mean by brown skinned or the kind of terms that were used to describe the different gradations?

WH: Oh, certainly. I may have a different one because I'm a foodie. Light skin's vanilla, [laughter] like ice cream. Brown skin is like cinnamon, caramel, anything of that tone. Dark would be like ebony wood. Does that help? [Note inserted by Wilma Harris: After the interview, Wilma remembered the "brown bag test." If one's skin tone was the same color or lighter than a brown paper bag, then you were okay.]

KE: That's great.

WH: I'm looking at Kate because you know what I'm talking [about].

KE: I do. [laughter]

WH: Does that give you some …

KR: Yes, definitely.

WH: If one's going to evaluate you, if you have any vanilla fudge, you go to the next darker category. You don't get the benefit of the doubt of the lighter category.

KR: Yes.

WH: Okay.

KE: Okay. So, you were a member of the Brownies. You mentioned in your previous interview that you were a member of a church as well, your mother's church.

WH: My mother's church.

KE: In Swedesboro was that?

WH: Yes, very, very good, which is Exit 2 on the Turnpike. It was founded by the Swedes in 1603 or something like that, so you may have heard of that.

KE: Right. Presumably, that was a black church.

WH: Very.

KE: What denomination?

WH: Baptist.

KE: Baptist, okay. Can you talk about some of your experiences there?

WH: Yes.

KE: Okay. [laughter]

WH: They were probably the most discriminatory. I'll give an example, which kind of covers my life with them. There was a group statewide, the Baptist Young People's Assembly, and they would send high school-aged children to the, at that point, three state college campuses. Then, it was Glassboro, now Rowan, Trenton, which is now The College of New Jersey, and Montclair, which had the nerve to keep its own name. We would rotate among those three colleges and learn biblical things, but more than that, it was exposure to other people your age and getting to

meet people, some of whom I'm still in communication with fifty-six years later, a long time later. [laughter] The churches sponsored individuals, and whoever they sponsored were really like a reflection of them. "This is the Third Baptist Church of Hennefene and we have lots of vanilla people not known for their morals and their character and all that, and this is who's going to represent us at Summer Assembly." That's what it was referred to as. Hennefene is a term that I made up. It can be used as a surname or whatever. I forget the amount of money, but whatever it was, by 2018 standards, it was not a lot. Even though, at that point, I was on honor roll and all those things, that don't mean a thing; they never sponsored me. My parents had to pay out of pocket for me to get that kind of experience and that kind of exposure. I really didn't expect them to. The general buzz was that, "Gladys and William are wasting their money. Why are they wasting their money? She can't be anything. Just kind of look at her." So, be that as it may, that was then and this is now. I went all four years. I loved Summer Assembly, loved, loved, loved, loved, loved. We had such a good time, probably too much of a good time and not much of a studying time, but that's the neither here nor there. I was the commencement speaker at Summer Assembly when we graduated.

We go forward four years, and now I'm graduating from Douglass. It was Wednesday the First of June. The next Sunday, when I went to church, no congratulations, nothing. They had given everyone who had graduated from college a gift. To this day, I'm sure it was lost in the mail. I never got a gift. Then, I was twenty-one and very bold, and so I walked out and one of my friends (Ikey) walked out with me. I've always referred to it from then on as my mother's church because it was not my church. Had it been my church, I feel the treatment would have been different. It would've been more Christian-like. A former co-worker of mine just sent one of those email Christmas greetings, "Let's put the Christ back in Christmas," so I replied to all, "Let's put the Christ back in Christian." [laughter] I didn't get a response.

KE: That was a good jab. [laughter]

WH: But that's true, and I didn't think their behavior was my concept of Christianity should be.

KE: Did you go on to join your own church?

WH: Eventually. After years of wandering around, just wandering around, but now I have a magnificent church in Summit. When I lived in Ocean County, I also went to a magnificent church in Red Bank.

KE: Is that a …

WH: Baptist church, yes.

KE: … Baptist church, a black Baptist church?

WH: Yes, a black Baptist church that is real with the world in 2018. One of the recent sermons was be yourself.

KE: That's great.

WH: The minister is just inspiring. It's like getting the gas tank refilled when you're on a quarter full because you're never empty after a week there. It's like, "Okay, it worked. I'm charged up to do right again." Yes, I'm happy.

KE: That's great.

WH: Because now I have a basis of comparison. I know, by my seventy-four-year-old definition, what Christianity should look like to confirm what the seventeen-year-old Wilma thought it should look like.

KE: The reason why I asked about the church, your mother's church, as well as your experiences as a Brownie is because I am interested in what kinds of lessons you received in terms of what women are supposed to do, or particularly what black women and girls are supposed to do.

WH: Oh, they go to college to be school teachers, because otherwise they'll be cleaning someone's house or working in a factory. Maybe some were secretaries. I'm trying to think. There were eight, seven or eight, other black women in my graduating class, and none were in college prep. So, it wasn't like I had the classroom experience with them, and I think they were in the business curriculum. In '62, the economy was great; everyone was employed. It wasn't like you needed an advanced degree to be able to lick an envelope, as it is now, nothing against our economy or things like that or what they value. So, I forget your core question.

KE: Even growing up ...

WH: Oh, the role of women.

KE: Were you sort of raised to have your own mind, or were you sort of raised to prepare for marriage?

WH: [laughter] Not the latter, not the latter. The former because you have to be independent to take care of yourself. They were [teaching me]--I was independent--that's what you taught me to do. I mean, you're the adults, you know, so I have to do what you say, be independent. I think there were times when they rued the day that they encouraged me to be independent.

You know how I got to Douglass, how I wound up at Douglass, because if you were a woman in 1962 and you wanted to go to the State University, that was the only game in town because Rutgers College didn't admit women until '72, I think. There was no Livingston College. I didn't want to be an Aggie [at the College of Agriculture], so that was it. If you couldn't get into Douglass as a woman, you weren't going to the State University. My mother worked. All of her friends worked. All the black women worked, because they needed the income to support the family. So, it wasn't an expectation that I was going to be Muffy and Buffy and sit around and play bridge all day and go to lunch, like I do now as a retiree. [laughter]

KE: You've worked for it. [laughter]

WH: So, the expectation was that women can support themselves if they had to, that they would work, that if you were going to do anything honorable, not dirty, like your nails wouldn't be squished down, your hands wouldn't be all blistered, you'd have to go to college to do that. Those who did go to college primarily went to Glassboro State, because it's twelve miles from Paulsboro, maybe four miles from Swedesboro, all those little towns down in Gloucester County.

KE: You used the term Aggie, what does that mean?

WH: Oh, what's SEBS [School of Environmental and Biological Sciences] now used to be the Ag School, which became Cook College in the late '60s, early '70s. I'm sorry, Agricultural School. [Editor's Note: Rutgers became New Jersey's land-grant college in 1864 with the establishment of the Rutgers Scientific School. This was the culmination of the successful efforts of Rutgers Professor George H. Cook in lobbying the New Jersey Legislature. The Rutgers Scientific School later became known as the Rutgers College of Agriculture, which later became Cook College.]

KE: I see.

WH: The land grant college, like that's the one where we got our money for a long time.

KE: I'm going to move more into questioning around your college years specifically, but before we get into that, can you describe what the Girl Citizenship Institute was and your experience in relation to that?

WH: Okay. It's what its name implies, to encourage and foster young women to understand their role as citizens. It was like a five-day experience. If memory serves me, we went to Trenton for a day to kind of see what the legislature was all about, the kinds of things that were done, so that we could be better citizens.

KE: Was this interracial?

WH: It was sponsored by the Federated Ladies, New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs--they have long, long initials--and there are chapters all over. So, the chapter sends people from the high school to that five-day program, to answer your question succinctly, yes. [Editor's Note: The New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs was formed in 1894 and is headquartered in New Brunswick, New Jersey. It is part of the national General Federation of Women's Clubs. The NJSFWC founded the New Jersey College for Women (NJC) in 1918 as the coordinate women's college of Rutgers College. In 1955, NJC became known as Douglass College in honor of its founding dean Mabel Smith Douglass.]

KE: Okay. [laughter]

WH: TMI [too much information].

KE: That was a very succinct answer, thank you. [laughter]

WH: If I'm giving you TMI, just say, "TMI."

KE: No, this is great. You're very generous with your responses, thank you.

WH: The goal is to help you. If I just say yes, that's not helping you.

KE: Exactly, I have to ask you more questions to get more out of you.

WH: Let's get this over, let's get this over, no. [laughter]

KE: In your previous interview, you mentioned that the year, or around the year, that you started at Douglass was the same time that Burlington County had the largest Klan chapter in the United States.

WH: Whether that's myth or reality remains to be seen, but there was a presence, a Klan presence there.

KE: Can you speak to that? Is this something you felt on campus or while working?

WH: Oh, Burlington County is not where I lived. My point is that many people think, "Oh, New Jersey's the North. New Jersey is like Massachusetts." Oh, no, no, in my mind, New Jersey is more South than many places in the South. I'm going to show you a picture that was taken on August 27th of this year in Gloucester County, New Jersey. Just keep talking; I don't want to take up your time. I can multitask, trust me.

KE: Okay. [laughter] I was using that as a sort of segue into the kind of political climate outside of Douglass, as well as inside Douglass, during the year that you were starting at Douglass.

WH: There was brewing activism because there had been the killing in Birmingham, my sophomore year. The sit-ins were, I think, the year before I came to college, but I was never marching because of the physical danger, which was evident in the newspapers, Chaney and Schwerner and I always forget the third one, Freedom [Summer] ... [Editor's Note: The sit-ins that began at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina on February 1, 1960 sparked a wave of sit-in protests throughout the South and led to the formation of the civil rights organization Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). On September 15, 1963, a bomb went off in the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, killing four young women. In 1964, civil rights groups organized voter registration drives in Mississippi that have become known as Freedom Summer or the Mississippi Summer Project. On June 16, 1964, civil rights workers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney disappeared. Their bodies were found beaten and murdered six weeks later.]

KE: The three, yes.

WH: … Who were killed. As an only child, I knew that my parents would have a heart attack if I did anything like that. If they needed background work or stuffing envelopes, things of that sort, that I would do. Yes, there was political activism. I would say many of the white students

on campus were more active in the marches and things than I. That's more intuitive. I don't know that for a fact, but I just felt that. So, yes, everyone was aware--not everyone--those who read the newspapers were aware. I don't know how you couldn't be aware.

What I'm showing them, just for the microphone, this is in Thorofare, New Jersey, which is like two miles outside of Paulsboro, right across the Delaware River from Philadelphia. I was visiting my cousin, and there's this car that has a Confederate flag on its front plate. I took a picture of it for everyone who believes New Jersey is North. I say, "Oh, no." This is August 27th in 2018 that I took that picture. That's what I'm showing Kate and Kaisha.

KE: Oh, thank you for that.

WH: People think that, "New Jersey? New Jersey?" Quite honestly, there are racists and racist behaviors in all fifty states. Back to my statement about judging people by what they do, you can't make a characterization that everyone from the South who is this pale of hue is a racist just because they're from the South, just as you can't make the assumption that everyone who is pale of hue from New Jersey, oh, they're liberal and they understand. Not. It wasn't that way in 1962, and it's obviously not that way in 2018. I'm off my soapbox.

KE: No, please stay on your soapbox. This is wonderful. While you were preparing to go to Douglass or even looking forward to Douglass as a college option, what were some of your preconceptions about it? You knew you did not want to go to Glassboro.

WH: Rowan, yes.

KE: Okay, Rowan.

WH: That's what it is now. Then, it was Glassboro. I would've lived at home and I would've been around the same mindset. I believe--here we go again--that one should get more than a degree. They should get an education. If you just eat mashed potatoes all the time, you'll never know what rice tastes like. You'll never know what orzo tastes like. Going to a school that's twelve miles from where you lived, even if I had lived on campus, it would be more of the same. So, no, I didn't want to go there for those reasons.

KE: Sure. Okay, so, what you said was really interesting. Once you get more than a degree and more of an education ...

WH: You get an education, yes.

KE: Right, which is I am understanding is more holistic sort of thing. Was there anything about the philosophy that Douglass presented that really drew you or the message of the University that inspired you?

WH: It was not in Paulsboro.

KE: Okay, okay, and that's fine.

WH: Number one. Number two, Douglass had such an awesome, awesome reputation. Even now, "You went to Douglass? They didn't admit people like you then." I say, "What do you mean?"

KE: That's true.

WH: Which is going to get me to my hypothesis later about the '70s. It was its reputation and, based on its reputation, knowing that I would get a quality degree and, if I were willing, a quality education. That was the lure. At that point, it was about 2,500 people, and Paulsboro, when I lived there, was around seven thousand. It wasn't like I was going--I applied to Ohio State; please don't ask me why--it wasn't like I was going to some place ten times larger than the world I knew and I felt that I could probably survive in that world. I mean, there were times with all those people like, "Who are all these people?" As an only child, you're just not used to that and people around all the time.

It was the right size. It had the right academic credentials. If I wanted to, I could get on the little bus right across the street--I'm pointing at Albany Street; that's where the bus stop used to be--it would take me to Camden, which is like twelve miles from home. It was the geographic appeal, close enough but far enough, and it was really the Douglass reputation. It was awesome then. It's not Douglass College anymore. It's Douglass Residential College. When I go down the stairs at home in the morning, I have my diploma, with Ruth Adams' and Mason W. Gross' signatures. I say, "Yes, yes!" That's what appealed to me. [Editor's Note: Ruth Marie Adams served as the dean of Douglass College from 1960 to 1966. Mason W. Gross served as the president of Rutgers from 1959 to 1971. In 2006, the undergraduate colleges of Rutgers-New Brunswick, Rutgers College, Douglass College, Livingston College and University College, ceased to exist as degree-granting colleges, as the School of Arts and Sciences became the consolidated undergraduate institution. Douglass College became Douglass Residential College. Cook College became the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS).]

KE: That is great. You arrived at Douglass.

WH: Oh, don't talk about that. [laughter]

KE: Well, I have done some research into some materials about Douglass, and I keep coming across this ideal Douglass woman, this Douglass woman kind of ideal.

WH: What was that?

KE: I was going to ask you what that was. [laughter]

WH: What time period are you talking about? I would say there was an ideal Douglass woman maybe in the late '40s, early '50s, June Cleaver and all those. Then, they came to find a husband and they had to take home ec [economics] and they knew how to cook and all that nonsense.

When I came, I don't think there was a Douglass stereotypical woman, except we were all bright, or we thought we were, or we wouldn't have been there. We would challenge and question, which is why I think the faculty enjoyed teaching. "Oh, I don't understand. What do you mean? Say more about that." At that point, it was a religious mix, no Muslim students, but there were Jewish students, Christians, 99.8 percent Caucasian. I don't think there were any Hispanic students. If there were any Asian students, I don't remember them, and I knew a large portion of my class. The majors were mixed. There were people in the STEM, as they call it now and not STEAM, a lot in the A [arts] of STEAM, social sciences type. So, it wasn't like you went there to become a teacher, which is what Glassboro and all the other state colleges were. You went there to broaden your mind. By the time I left, maybe they were beginning to look hippie-ish, or I'm not sure whether that was when I came back to work. [Editor's Note: STEM is science, technology, engineering and mathematics. STEAM is the acronym for curriculum focusing on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.]

The reason I groaned when you asked when I first came to Douglass--you know that when I grew up, it was all based on appearance and things like that. Well, on my first day on campus as a freshman, I had this little blue dress and gloves on. I was like, "Oh, God." Nobody else did. [laughter] They all had jeans. You had to schlep this stuff up and down two flights to get to your room, but that was important.

KE: Everybody seemed a lot more casual.

WH: Yes.

KE: Interesting.

WH: No, it wasn't.

KR: What about dinner in the dining hall?

WH: When I was a waitress?

KR: When you were a freshman in 1962, did women have to dress for dinner?

WH: What do you call dress?

KR: Skirts.

WH: Yes, they had to wear skirts, but the fashion police would've arrested them because--for the mic, like Kate has on a floral top, well, it depends on whose closet or locker you went to. She may have had on a checked skirt or a plaid skirt. It was like you had on a skirt. It was not about how you looked. You just had on a skirt. Yes, we had to wear skirts.

Most dinners, I worked; I worked as a waitress three semesters. The reason I preferred working dinner, not because I was coordinated, God forbid, because you had the tray service and you had to do that [carry a tray]. If you didn't work dinner, we had cafeteria style for breakfast and lunch

and then you had to clean garbage, and I'd rather carry a tray than clean garbage, even today. Yes, but dinner, they had to wear skirts. It was called the Cooper skirt. The Cooper Dining Hall of 1962 is torn down, but it was cool old building. Yes, it was cool.

KE: Were there any other sort of traditions, like the Cooper skirt, for example, that everyone had to have to observe?

WH: Oh God, how much time do you have? [laughter] Freshman couldn't go down Sacred Path. At that point, there were four old classroom buildings behind College Hall. There was the Science Building, the Botany Building and something else, and they have new names. I think one was maybe named after Ruth Adams. Down the street that runs perpendicular to George Street, going toward the river, maybe Bishop, that's where all the classes were because there was no Hickman Hall then. All of that is to say there was a path that went past College Hall, as opposed going down Chapel Drive and making a hard left and walking down to the buildings. Well, freshman couldn't take the shortcut until the Sacred Path ceremony. Freshman couldn't wear red until Sacred Path, which was like the moving up ceremony. If you got a class ring, you couldn't wear that until after Sacred Path at the end of your sophomore year and you were going to be a junior, an upper-class student, and you could wear the ring. Yes, I have a ring. Yes, it was purchased for twenty-nine dollars and ninety-five cents, which was a lot then, while now it would cost a thousand dollars because of the price of gold. Hence, I don't wear it, because I'm afraid I'll lose it, unless it's a very special event. I'm sorry the two of you didn't rise to that occasion today. [laughter]

KR: Yes.

KE: That is fine.

WH: There was Campus Night, which was like the kickoff of the semester. Yule Log Ceremony, which was just held a couple weeks ago, the 100th Yule Log was just absolutely the most beautiful thing. It was an honor to be selected as a stair senior. The seniors were on the stairs, and some had speaking parts. It was ecumenical.

KE: Yes. I have never heard of Sacred Path before. Can you talk a little bit? What was it, like a ceremony?

WH: It was like a moving-up ceremony.

KE: How did you get to participate in Sacred Path?

WH: You just went. If you were a freshman, it meant now you can take a shortcut to the classes, so you just went. The sophomores, I'm pretty sure, kind of lined the path, to kind of welcome you. We all had sophomore sisters who were kind of [laughter] your mentors in 21st century terminology, except mine taught me how to smoke, so I'm not sure. [laughter]

KR: The sign of a good sister. [laughter]

WH: Then, it was like no big deal. Now, golly, could you imagine a sophomore sister teaching her freshman sister how to smoke? She'd probably be kicked out. The health fanatics would have her banned from the University. I'm trying to think of other traditions. Yes, I'm sure there were. That goes back to that whole education thing that I wanted to see it all, "Bring it on. Let me find out what all of this is." You're asking me stuff that's like fifty plus years.

KE: No, that is fine. You mentioned earlier that there were roughly about seven or eight other black students in your whole graduating class.

WH: In my class, yes. The most there were at the entire college during my four years was nineteen--and then James Bond was popular--and so that was 007, .007. That was the percentage of black students. [laughter] There are four of us from my class alive. I see one, Juanita Wade Wilson. I talk to her one the phone maybe once every two or three months. Right now, she's in Atlanta. Joyce Carrington [Kouassi] is in New York, and I saw her maybe at reunion, I'm not sure, but I've seen her within the past decade. Then, Betty Davis, not like with an E, with a Y, is in Canada.

KR: Yes, Toronto.

WH: You've talked to her.

KR: Yes, we have interviewed her.

WH: Oh, I love it. Do you have a picture of her?

KR: I do not.

WH: That's too bad because when we were students, you know how they say all blacks look alike, people would get us mixed up. [laughter] That's why. I was wondering if she still theoretically [looks like me]. [laughter] The year ahead of me was Golden Johnson, who was a judge, just a magnificent woman. She passed away in 2010. Well, at reunion, this woman said, "Oh, are you still on the bench?" I said, "Oh, no, I think you have me mixed up with someone." She tried to beat me down that I was Golden. I said, "Oh, no, the woman you're thinking about passed away like eight years ago." So, I was so sick of her. I said, "You know we all look alike," and she just kind of shut up.

KE: Oh, that is embarrassing. [laughter]

WH: But she wasn't getting it, like, "I'm not Golden. I know Golden." If you talk to Betty again, please give her my best.

KE: You lived in Corwin, right?

WH: As a freshman. Katzenbach as a sophomore, Lippincott as a junior, and then back to Corwin as a house chair my senior year.

KE: Was Corwin desegregated? Was it integrated?

WH: What does integrated mean? When you only have seven people and you have twenty houses, some of them are going to be all white. [laughter]

KE: That's true.

WH: There's no way.

KE: In theory then, did you have a black and white …

WH: Are you asking if all of the black students were on one campus?

KE: Yes.

WH: No, they weren't.

KE: Okay. [laughter] Can you tell me about your roommate at Corwin?

WH: My freshman year roommate, absolutely delightful woman. She's in Arizona now, bright, bright, bright. Oh, my goodness, she came at age sixteen, so you know she was bright, really, really studious. [She] thought I was going to hell in a handbasket and she's probably right [laughter] for the bad habits that I picked up while I was there. Will she ever be my very best friend? No. Do I respect and like her, and whenever we communicate, does it put a smile on my face? Oh, yes. That was the first, Corwin.

KE: She was white.

WH: Oh, all my roommates were white.

KE: Okay.

WH: I'm sorry about that. I'm in contact one way or another with all my roommates, except sophomore year. I'm not sure where Patty is, but Carol Trovato and I are on Facebook. Then, my senior year roommate, Kate Stuart, used to live in the city, but now she's out in Colorado. She came for her 50th in April, so I got to see her. I have a picture with Kate and me too. I'm in communication at one level or another with three of the four, all of whom were of the paler hue.

KE: What was your initial experience with having a white roommate? It was, I imagine, was your first time living in close quarters with a white person.

WH: It was the first time living in close quarters with any roommate. [laughter]

KE: A roommate; that, too.

WH: "What do you mean, I have to share?"

KE: I imagine it was the same for her as well, the first time.

WH: Oh, I forgot one key factor. When I said she thought I was going to go to hell in a handbasket, her father was a minister. She was very devout, very, very devout. I don't think she is as much now. Junior year, she went to Stockholm, spent I'm not sure the whole junior year abroad, but she was there and studied there. Then, after graduation, she went and worked in Florence, Italy and married an Italian gentleman. I don't know if he was there at the time or how they hooked up, but, yes, she became less like her father. He was never rude or condescending, just very formal. He didn't know about the drinking and the smoking, because he probably would've wanted her moved away from this heathen. [laughter] Yes, it was [my first time living with a roommate]. Back to my earlier, underlying premise, she was not disrespectful to me. She was there to study. She was there to learn. I could respect that. Her religion, she wasn't superimposing it on me, so not my monkey, not my circus. We got along. I was messier than I'm sure she liked, but that would've been the case with any roommate.

KE: From some of the stories that I have read about and even spoken to people about, it seems that during those years, you see a lot more interracial friendships emerging on campus, right? We are using Douglass campus as an example. In those friendships was where white students could feel comfortable asking questions to their black friends.

WH: Because of who they were as people.

KE: Right.

WH: Like Juanita, who I mentioned, her roommate, she had the same roommate all four years, Lydia Agnoli [MacMillan]. Lydia is in Colorado now, and Juanita just went out to visit her last year.

KE: Oh, nice.

WH: That's a friendship fifty-plus years that sustained itself. I would agree with you that there were more interracial friendships built and sustained. I'm saying that and thinking at the same time. [There were] more intra-racial friendships also built and sustained, because we appreciated and needed each other. Now, if there are lots of black students, they don't really need to know you. They don't need to know anything about you because I can have another black friend over here and I keep thinking, "Oh, God, we had each other's back no matter what was happening." We were there for you. As an example--how much time did you allot for this?

KR: We have plenty of time.

WH: As an example, one of the black students in my class was a commuter. Paula Fitzgerald Weakley was her name, Fitzgerald when she graduated, and she lived in New Brunswick at the corner of Handy Street and Throop Avenue. After she graduated, she went to Howard University and she had been a music major and was teaching. She developed MS [Multiple Sclerosis], and Juanita, who I mentioned earlier, would go down like once every two months to

relieve her husband and take care of Paula. That's what a friend does. You just don't have a superficial relationship like that. That's the kind of community, for lack of a better term, that we lived in then. I didn't sense that when I came back to work. I don't go on campus enough now to make any kind of an assessment, but it was a kind of thing whenever I saw any of them or even talked about it, it just put a smile on my face. To your initial premise, yes, I think there were more intra-racial friendships.

KE: I'm asking this partly because I have also been in this situation, even today--not today, today.

WH: [laughter] Literally today.

KE: In contemporary times, where some of my very close white friends have asked me about my hair or just kind of questions that they feel comfortable asking me because they know me but they may not feel comfortable asking another black person.

WH: Of course not, because like, "Why are you asking me about my hair?"

KE: Right, did you ever had any weird questions or were made to feel--you mentioned the word novelty in your previous interview, that black students were a novelty.

WH: Let me go back. Then, the cities were more integrated, so white students had gone to school with black students. It's those who lived in rural New Jersey or poo-poo-shi-shi towns, like Far Hills and Essex Falls and things like that, that had had no exposure. That would be where, it would be like a staring. After swimming, we'd have to go to Golden's room because she had the straightening comb.

KE: No, please say more, please.

WH: Because our hair would revert from the water. It would just be little kinks and everything. You didn't have a class right after that, because they would've thought you had escaped from someplace. I have no talent for anything domestic or taking care of yourself, so we had the Golden straightening comb. Because you don't know what you're doing, it was like hair burning. I'm sure the hallways smelled [laughter], and people probably [were smelling and saying], "What is that? What is going on down there?" She lived in Woodbury, which was a new dorm over on [Dudley Road], near Neilson Dining Hall. That's where she was. I didn't know people there, so they didn't ask me, but it wouldn't surprise me if she were alive or her roommate, who lives in Texas, that people would asked them, "What was that? What was that smell?" because they knew each other well enough to do that. I think things of that sort were unique because even if you had friends in high school, you weren't going to be at their house while their hair was being fried to know about that. Yes, I think because Douglass had its reputation of being all that and a bag of chips, which it was of course, we had to have been novelties, like, "How did they get in? What is this? Why are they here? They must be brighter than I am," which may not have been the case, as bright, yes, but probably not brighter. So, that's kind of what I meant by novelty.

KE: For sure, and that's great. I'm really interested in these kind of everyday experiences of being a black student at Douglass, so this straightening comb to me is all wonderful example. Did lots of students from different classes use that same comb?

WH: Wait, a lot of students. The most we had was nineteen.

KE: Okay, nineteen students shared one comb.

WH: You had to have swimming by the time you ended your sophomore year.

KE: Okay. So, swimming as a sophomore.

WH: You could exempt swimming, just as you could exempt health. You could exempt speech, swimming. I think they were the three. For all I know, someone may have taken the swimming test and not had to take the class, but I guess we all did. No one had their hair natural then, unless they had "good hair," which is another one of the criteria. It's really not the criteria. You could get away if you had long hair, but it didn't have to be good hair, good hair meaning you didn't need to use the straightening comb. You could just wash and wear and [laughter] go on with life. Those who needed it used it, and that was something that you learned early on, you know, "Golden has a straightening comb." We said, "Okay." [laughter] We knew what that meant.

KE: You were talking about skin complexion. Colorism, that's the term that's often used to describe that. Did you find that kind of followed into Douglass's small black community?

WH: Because I rejected it, so I couldn't tell you whether they were vanilla, caramel or ebony. I don't know. Do you have a yearbook?

KR: No, I do not.

KE: Oh, that is a good question.

KR: I do not have any Douglass yearbooks here.

WH: My guess is [that] Juanita, Paula--Paula may have been a light caramel--but I think the rest of us were just garden variety blacks, I think. I don't know.

KE: Did anyone talk along those lines? Did anyone make references to, "Oh, you've got good hair, so you don't need to use theirs," you know what I mean, that kind of thing.

WH: I know what you mean. If those comments were made, they didn't stick in my mind later. It's not like, "How come Mary Jane is never here when I use the comb?" because obviously there were different gym classes, so she may have been there in a different class. I don't remember those kinds of conversations.

KE: Do you have any questions?

KR: I do. I have a Douglass institutional question. There was a time that roommates were assigned based on religion or race. In the 1950s, if there was a young woman who was Jewish rooming with a woman who was not Jewish, the parents were called and asked for permission, and, likewise, in the 1960s, if there was an African American woman rooming with a white roommate, both sets of parents were called. I am wondering if you have any experience with this.

WH: Oh, okay. I didn't know that until last summer when Juanita told me that Lydia's parents had gotten a call, Lydia Agnoli's parents--I don't know what her married name is--had gotten a call, and Juanita said her parents did not. I said, "I didn't know any parents got a call." That's all I know of that. Both of my parents are deceased, so I can't ask, "Did you get a call from Douglass, when I was going to room with Lolly?" That was my freshman year roommate. My year, coming in September of 1962, was the first year there were racially integrated roommates. I don't know how they made that decision of whom got whom, but Juanita said that the Agnolis got a call and she said her parents did not. Lolly and I, I could always ask her, but for what purpose, "Oh, by the way, did your folks get a call fifty-six years ago?" [laughter] Like, "Why are you asking me that?" If my parents did, they never mentioned it to me. I just know about the Agnolis getting a call. Did you ask Betty that?

KR: I actually know it from Betty's interview. [Editor's Note: Betty Davis said in her oral history from September 27, 2016 that her roommate's parents were asked for permission, but her parents were not asked for permission.]

WH: Juanita's did not. I don't know about mine.

KE: Interesting.

KR: When did you find out who your roommate was going to be?

WH: Maybe the middle of August, early, mid-August, and we came September 11th. Then, when I came back to work, oh, my goodness, parents would drive to where the roommate's address was--and then, I was in College Hall, '74, '75--and they would call and demand that Jan Yocum move, "My little Muffy and my little Buffy because I drove past such and such a street and it looks like black people live there."

Move forward to the mid-'70s--and I'm not saying it happened universally--but poor Jan Yocum, who was the Assistant Dean of Students for Housing, you knew when it was the middle of August because the phone's going to start ringing.

KE: Interesting.

KR: What did Jan Yocum do? Did she keep those room assignments?

WH: My recollection is yes. That's my recollection. We don't make assignments based on race. We make assignments randomly. The mere fact that you would drive around--and obviously you

weren't in the same town--to see what kind of neighborhood it was. I said, "Whoa, things have really, really changed in the past twelve, ten years."

KE: Do you think that was the result of more black students, greater visibility on campus?

WH: Oh, I have my own hypothesis on that. Are you ready for it?

KE: Yes, please.

WH: How many more questions do you have?

KE: Oh, we're fine. We're doing good for time.

WH: All right, because I kept asking myself, "Why was it different when I was a student than when I came back to work?" Not necessarily the first year, but I felt it more after I had kind of oriented myself to the environment. It's a question of history. We're history people here. In 1962, there was no affirmative action. There was no equal employment opportunity. In New Jersey, there was no EOF [Educational Opportunity Fund] program. The white students, whether they liked it or not, had to acknowledge that the few of us had been admitted on the same playing field as they. As you got affirmative action and recognition of the disparity that had been going on for hundreds of years and programs were put in place, it reaffirmed, in their minds, the superiority of the white race because, "I'm here because I should be here. You're here because of some special program that the state or the federal government has put in place." That was not true. There were black students who were regularly admitted, just as all of us had been prior to that, but they had to live with that baggage of being assumed to be less than by the white students. The white students could feel that, "I'm all that and a bag of chips with a little onion dip on the side," because, "The only reason they're here is because of some program." That's my hypothesis as to why it's different.

I can't imagine the impact that has to have on a student's self-esteem. First of all, the work was hard, and you had to bust your butt. Then, to have people in your dorm or in your class or in the student center or in the dining hall thinking, "You're not as good as I am. You're only here because of some program," has to really impact your self-esteem and how you view your experience. That's my hypothesis.

KE: It is a very interesting and well thought out hypothesis and based on historical developments.

WH: I really think that's why it was different, because I kept thinking, "It wasn't that many years. What happened from the time that I graduated until I came back?"

KE: Do you think that this was even reflected among the students? What you described before was parents driving around and trying to control what campus looks like. Was there something that was felt among the students, white students, as well?

WH: In my feeling, oh, yes. I think that the students felt that they were better than the black students who were there at the same time because, "My friend Muffy or Buffy, who didn't get in, probably could've gotten in had it not been for A, B, C." Back in the Stone Ages, they knew there was no program, and, like it or not, "I guess they're qualified to be here. I'm not sure how or why, but I guess they're qualified," and the assumption on the part of many that the students were not. I don't want you to write this because it's going to be identifiable, I think. A black woman who was one of my house chairs, graduated in the Class of '71, retired as a judge. When she walked into her dorm, freshman year, this Caucasian student said, "You're here?" with that tone, and she was regular admit. How can you feel good about your experience when that's your first introduction to college, coming from one of your peers? This person was '69.

KE: This question is related to students that did not get to graduate as part of your class. [I am wondering about] the students there that sort of fell off and some of the reasons you may know why they had fallen off. You mentioned one student that did ...

WH: The one whose parents had to pick her up in the middle of the night.

KE: She had a mental health issue.

WH: Oh, yes, that's Dr. Wilma's assessment. She was kleptomaniac. Her roommate, from one of the Oranges--which is the most affluent Orange? West Orange, I think. Anyway, her roommate and she got along famously. It was from the roommate that she was taking things. The reason I say she was ill is because some of the things she had taken, she gave to the roommate as Christmas gifts. You don't steal and then give it back to the person you stole it from unless you have some mental issues. The day she left was the last time her name was ever mentioned. It was like she didn't exist, because no one really knew what happened. It was that kind of community. Maybe it was just the individual. We didn't gossip. I mean, even now, if I talk to [alumnae], it's not a gossipy kind of thing. I just thought that was so terrible and I wonder how many other people [that happened to], but mental health isn't treated well in 2018, so I seriously doubt it was treated any better in 1963. This was February of '63. The next morning, everyone said, "So-and-So's parents were here last night." Then Joyce, one of the surviving four, had been a witness at Honor Board, and she basically said, "She's gone" and that was it. Anyway, what were you going to ask me about that terrible night?

KE: Oh, you mentioned Honor Board and I want to know a little bit more about that. As it relates to this student, I was interested if you knew how the University handled it. What led to her expulsion?

WH: It wasn't a University thing. It was a college thing. Douglass had an Honor Board, an honor system, which was a beautiful thing. You could take an exam anywhere. You take an exam and write on your blue book, "I have neither given nor received information on this exam," sign your name and date. You could go to the Student Center and take your exam. If it was a nice day, you could go outside and take it because we weren't going to cheat. That's not the way we roll, and so it was wonderful. That's when we had our own academic criteria.

There was a reorg [reorganization in] '81, when Bloustein was president. There were several reorganizations. I think it was the '81 [reorganization] when Douglass no longer had control of our own faculty. The Douglass students were at a disadvantage because others didn't live by that code, which meant that they could cheat to their heart's content. It was a curved exam. The Douglass women were at a disadvantage. I don't think you can mandate honesty, [that] you can mandate that kind of character, that, yes, you're going to do your work and you're not going to plagiarize. I don't know how they do that now with Wikipedia and all that. How do you footnote that stuff? That's another story. [laughter] I'm glad I'm not there. So, it died. [Editor's Note: Edward J. Bloustein served as the Rutgers president from 1971 to 1989. During his tenure, in 1981, the separate faculties of the undergraduate colleges of Rutgers-New Brunswick were reorganized into a single unit, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS).]

Any kind of infraction of the rules that were in Red Book could result in going before Honor Board, and the expectation was that if I saw Muffy or Buffy doing something in violation, I would report her, or if you saw me, vice versa. It was student run. They had student elections, and people ran for Honor Board positions. Maybe five or seven students were on Honor Board, and Dean [Marjorie] Trayes, [who] was Dean of Students, was the advisor. She took no prisoners. She was tough. That was Honor Board.

Why other students left? I was trying to think of who some of the others were. It was hard. There's no doubt that it was academically hard. I don't know whether they left on their own accord or they left because there were too many white people were around, "It's like I'm drowning in white people. Let me get out of here and get back to where I feel more comfortable and embraced." I don't know. It could be either of those factors, or they just didn't like being around all women. Even though Rutgers was three miles, not far, across town, yes, it's like all women [at Douglass]. So, you eat with women, you have classes with women, you stay in the room with women. I was like, "Enough already." I'm not sure why those who didn't graduate didn't, and, in my class, there may have been, other than the one who was expelled, maybe two or three students who didn't go through the long haul.

KE: You were at Douglass during very exciting, crucial years as part of the modern civil rights movement.

WH: The modern?

KE: As a historian, I believe in a long civil rights movement.

WH: You certainly must. [laughter] It's fifty years ago, come on, Kaisha.

KE: You mentioned that yourself, you rendered it too dangerous to participate in protests and marches.

WH: This is the early '60s where people were being shot and the Selma marches and things like that. Bring out your dogs, kill them, no one's going to protect these people. The mere thought of thinking about going to the South and doing that, someone would have wanted to know what kind of drug I was on, like ,"You're going to do what?" But that didn't mean the support wasn't

there. It just didn't manifest itself in tangible, like my body, I'm willing to give you my life. My soul, yes, my life not. [Editor's Note: In March 1965, Martin Luther King led three marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in support of voter registration efforts. On March 7, civil rights marchers were violently attacked by Alabama state troopers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge.]

KE: Were there any sort of protests that were organized on campus that would've been a safer environment to demonstrate your support?

WH: Yes, there were, and I knew you were going to ask me about that. There was an NAACP chapter on the Rutgers campus and there was a NAACP chapter in town. I saw the president of the New Brunswick chapter just recently at the Paul Robeson Plaza groundbreaking, Roy Epps. I know we did things with them. I'm not sure who sponsored it, but it was '64 when Barry Goldwater was running against LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson] and we thought he was cray, cray [crazy]. [laughter] Now he'd be like the sanest man in the Republican Party. What happened? [laughter] In your heart, you know he's right, but in your gut you know he's nuts. No, he was very sane; it's all relative. Anyway, so there were marches and rallies for LBJ per se. There were rallies, that Sunday, when they killed the kids, there were rallies then. I don't know where we were with Selma, or maybe it was happening over a period of time that it wasn't one in-your-face event. Yes, there was activity on campus, and with so few black students, it was primarily white students. [Editor's Note: Since 1967, C. Roy Epps has worked with the Urban League of New Brunswick, which now is known as the Civic League of Greater New Brunswick.]

KE: Do you remember some of the organizations that were specific to Douglass campus? You mentioned there was a NAACP chapter at Rutgers. At Douglass, were there any particular political organizations?

WH: This is when I'm a student.

KE: Yes.

WH: No, and I think it was because of numbers, a small number. The reason I'm hesitating, there was a Young Republicans Club, but I'm not sure whether that was when I was a student or whether when I was working. But they weren't very active. You just knew they'd have meetings and things of that sort, but there was not a groundswell for Barry Goldwater because he did seem too off the chart.

KE: Even outside of politics, what kind of societies were you a member of? Did you join any?

WH: No, I'm not a joiner. If someone invites me to participate in something or I get nominated for something--because you're going to say, "How were you class president?" this, that, and the other, since you've read all this nonsense--it's not like I volunteered and said, "I want to do this." What did I do voluntarily? I'm not a joiner.

KE: Okay.

WH: I can't think of anything that I joined. Maybe a few bridge hands.

KE: Sure.

KR: Tell us about your involvement with the Government Association.

WH: That was the student governing body. We'd make recommendation to the Dean of Students and things like that about the campus really. I learned, and I don't know how or when I learned this, so don't ask me to find a defining moment, [laughter] because I can't, I was vice president of Government Association because I learned the power of running the meeting and the vice president ran the meeting. If somebody's rambling on, you can stop [them]. The analogy, in my mind, was Great Britain. The queen was the queen and she was out there. If you need somebody to make a speech, you ask the president of GA because that's the face of the organization, but it was really Winston Churchill who was wielding the power [laughter] in the background, "Where do you stand on this issue?" Politics in the pure sense. "This is why I think this should be. I'm going to call on you, just before I call the vote" kind of thing. I think I was a GA rep--don't hold me to this. I was a class officer a couple of years, and I think class officers were on Government Association. I'm not sure. I know senior year, I was vice president and I learned Robert's Rules, which even now comes in handy when people let their meetings run amuck. You just call the question, call the question, bring this puppy back home, we're out of control here. I enjoyed being on GA. [Editor's Note: *Robert's Rules of Order* is a book outlining Parliamentary procedure in the United States that was first published in 1876 by Henry Martyn Robert.]

KE: My last couple of questions relate more to you working and returning to Douglass in the '70s and working there and the kind of changing campus culture. You've already eluded to some of this, but, for example, were there more students wearing Afros?

WH: Oh, God, yes. I bet no one had a straightening comb. [laughter] I bet there wasn't one in the room. Black was beautiful then. That was, what, '69, '70, that that came out, and people demonstrated pride in their heritage. I'm going to get back to that in a minute, before I finish.

KE: Sure.

WH: It was a good feeling. People had on kente cloth from Ghana, and they were proud to be black and for the culture, to be part of the culture of the University. One, I don't know what job it was, but it was Residence Education, students paid a Residence Education fee, and so we made sure that we had programs that were diverse. Back to my concept of education, Allen Ginsberg was here. I don't think Douglass Residential College has its own newspaper, but the *Caellian* was the paper that we had. So, a *Caellian* reporter would ride with me, so that she could interview with Allen Ginsberg on the way back from New York to campus and then back up to his dad's house in Paterson, so that they could get that kind of first-hand experience. I had dinner with Maya Angelou and Dick Gregory and Julian Bond. It was just the wonderful amalgamation of the world, which you couldn't do if you just had nineteen black students. That was like so exciting but there were more. That's just like the tip of the iceberg of the broadening of the Douglass culture so that everyone could benefit. Everyone paid Res Ed money. Now, there was

a student from "Chicken Switch," New Jersey who may not have known who Julian Bond was but was able to spend an evening listening to his program, or Dick Gregory, with conspiracy theory like all over the place, to hear some of his, and even the black students who were young when they were in their primes got to be exposed to that. That was exciting, that having a critical enough mass to impact the culture was a plus.

KE: Did you find that from a sort of administrative perspective, like looking at it from the other side, that the college was supportive of this kind of change, or did you see it more as tension between the students establishing their own culture and an existing Douglass culture?

WH: I felt, surprisingly, because these were old white women [laughter]--sorry, they're dead now, most of them are dead--that they were very receptive because I think on a very intellectual level, they saw the richness of the experience for the students. The world was not like Douglass College in the '60s, and so if we want to continue to be a premier institution where people come out and they're able to function in the real world, this is what we need. More of the higher-level administrators who were dealing with strategy knew. Others kind of went with the program because if that's what they think, I guess it must be good. [laughter]

Now, one of the things that upsets me remarkably, and it's too late to do anything about it, my generation, and I'm referring to those who graduated [in] maybe 1960 to 1970, that period, have been--and since I have no children, I can only speak from what I hear--have been reluctant to share the segregation experience, the Jim Crow experience, with their children. Unlike Jewish families, who know about the Holocaust and they know how horrific the Holocaust was and they know the impact on their culture. I don't know whether it's, "I don't want them to know that I had to go to the utterly disgusting 'Colored Only' bathroom or I don't want them to know about segregated movie theaters," but we have been derelict in sharing that experience with our kids. With that said, they're making the same mistakes. Never, not in my lifetime, will the playing ground be such that our children can do the same thing as Muffy and Buffy's children and get away with it, but, somehow, because your children went to the Hun School or whatever, they think they're all that and they can live by the same norms. It's not happening, "How come I got fired for doing this? Muffy's son didn't." Well, don't you understand, that's the way the game is played and it's been played like that and if Mommy and Daddy didn't tell you that, shame on them. That's why I'm sensing a regression in some areas because the current generation, those who are like thirty to forty-five, don't know--don't give me that look. You know, the kids. [laughter] Don't know what it was like, don't appreciate what it was like, don't realize, and even it's true now; you have to be better than your white counterpart. Yes, there was a black president. Big whoop. Look at the outcome of that, because now we have Bozo the Clown in the White House, because America was not ready for that. The expectations of the black community were not ready for having a black president, that he needed more support at the grass-roots level than at the strategic level. Shame on my generation, because I think it's going to take a long time to get us to where we were and that's the scary part. Anyway, I'm off that soapbox.

KE: If you don't mind taking just one step back. [laughter]

WH: No, I devoted the whole afternoon to you. I don't have anything until five o'clock.

KE: Okay, great, and we won't keep you for very much longer. Did you feel, even as a student, that you had to be ten times better than your peers?

WH: Oh, yes.

KE: At Douglass, you felt that? Was that reinforced by the teachers you had?

WH: No, it was in my head, just like at work. After I went to work, not just here, I mean, when I worked at Pru [Prudential], I knew that I could not operate on the same standards as everybody else, so I set my own bar. Nobody told me I had to do this. This is just in my head that I knew, "Okay, if you're going to do this, your definition of excellence is this plus that, and, yes, will you achieve it every time? Oh, no, you'll be lucky if you keep it ten percent of the time, but that's your bar." That's the way I operated and operate.

KE: Did you feel a pushback or hostility from teachers maybe, while you were taking classes? Did you feel that they were devaluing you or underestimating your abilities?

WH: In some classes, they should have, like math. [laughter] I don't think so. In the classes that were in my wheelhouse, I never sensed that they didn't think that I was on a par, in some instances, even better than my white counterparts. In some classes that were required, and we had requirements, science and math and foreign language, all this stuff, they probably should have because that was not my forte and I didn't pretend that it was and, "Give me a 'Gentleman's C' and I'll be a happy camper in this class."

KE: Do you have any follow up questions?

KR: I do.

WH: Sorry. [laughter] Kate, I'm kidding. [laughter]

KR: Your time at Douglass ...

WH: Working or student?

KR: Your total time, student and working in administration.

WH: Okay, twelve years.

KR: Your time at Douglass spanned three deans. I was wondering if you can tell us about your interaction with the deans.

WH: Oh, Ruth Adams was my dean. She left the year I graduated. All my letters, because I wrote to her after she left, and she would write back, they're with our class historian. She was an English professor. I think her specialty was Victorian literature. You know how prim and proper the Victorians were. Well, what Ruth Adams reinforced or really taught, because I had

never known anyone like her, you can be bright, bright, bright, bright, bright and funny. At Campus Night, that kickoff thing that I talked about, she would find poems from the attic, and somehow she had spies among the students I'm sure and she would bring up things that students had done and put them in the poem and they were absolutely hysterical. She supported the students. [In] '64, '65, the University wanted to tear down Corwin, and the students loved Corwin because it was homey, like twelve to sixteen people living in a little house. It was a very family-like environment. Of course, now, as an older person, they certainly weren't economically feasible. You had to heat these individual buildings, as opposed to one building. Anyway, so we fought it, and she supported us. Obviously, we prevailed. I loved Ruth Adams. [Editor's Note: Ruth Marie Adams served as the dean of Douglass College from 1960 to 1966.]

What I learned from Margery Somers Foster, the business aspect. She was an economist, and she looked at things from a fiscal kind of perspective. Dean Foster was a strong advocate for women's education. Yes, this is an academic institution, but it's also a business. She would speed when she drove. [laughter] That was cool. She left before I left. She was on the board at Prudential, which is where I went to work, so I would keep track of her then. I just respected her. If she was as funny, I didn't have enough interaction, because Dean Adams would have the students over, so I would see her in her rare form. [Editor's Note: Margery Somers Foster served as the dean of Douglass College from 1967 to 1975.]

Then, my last year, Jewel Plummer Cobb came. I loved Jewel. Then, she went to California and then she came back. She and I would have dinner when she came back to New Jersey. [She was] just so, so bright in the sciences. I respect people who know things that I don't know or never even think about. From my lens, she was so very, very bright and she was compassionate and she cared about the students. As the cohort of black alums grew, she was very supportive of the creation of the Black Alumnae Network, so that we could share and learn from one another and give it to the future alums and work with them. Jewel was a tennis player, just a really, really cool person. I liked and respected all three of them but for different reasons because each was different, which was one of the beauties of Douglass, that the difference was appreciated and valued, probably more when I was a student than when I was working, because the students didn't get to know the administrators as much. I think the student body may have been growing or it felt like it was growing, when you're wearing a different hat. [Editor's Note: Jewel Plummer Cobb, a professor, biologist, cancer researcher and administrator, served as the dean of Douglass College from 1976 to 1981.]

KR: What were your dinners like with Dean Cobb? This is something that does not happen anymore, students and administrators going out to dinner with higher-up administrators.

WH: I wasn't a student then. I was working with Dean Cobb.

KR: Right.

WH: She lived in Maplewood, and I lived in Springfield. So, I would just pick her up, and we would go to different restaurants. We would just talk like big people talk because, yes, she was only twenty years older than I. When we were students, Dean Adams would invite students over to her house, primarily like class officers or sometimes she would just see somebody, "Come on

in," and have brownies. Back in the day, we had to have the Dean's Tea and all that, and you'd have to wear gloves and you also had to go to the president's house. I'm sure they don't do that anymore. [laughter] Going out with Jewel as an adult was just like going out to dinner with any adult, which was fun. What else is on your list?

KE: Can you talk a little bit more about fashion at Douglass, as a student?

WH: Fashion. There's no fashion. They all wore jeans and they wore sweatshirts. [laughter]

KE: Was that received as kind of radical at the time?

WH: No, because we were here to study. We were here to study, but if there are events like the Dean's Tea or the President's Reception or whatever, we did our little--they called us "Debbie Douglass--our little "Debbie Douglass" thing and went to them. Back to the education part, we knew not to put our finger in the clam dip. [laughter] We knew you worked from the outside in with your knife and fork. You knew where the glass was supposed to be. There was not a course on that, but they're just the kind of things that women in 1966 needed to know when they went to a job of how to succeed. So, oh, no fashion, no, no.

KE: Do you remember learning proper dinner etiquette?

WH: You watch.

KE: You watched.

WH: You watch, and you say, "Okay, I guess that's the way you're supposed to do it." Then, the next time you got to a dinner, "Okay, they do the same thing. I guess that's just the way it is." Or you don't start your watch and see what others do and you kind of, you know, you learn that kind of crazy stuff. [laughter]

KE: Who were some of your role models while you were a student at Douglass?

WH: Oh, my goodness.

KE: Were there even black faculty members?

WH: Oh, my goodness. There really weren't, to answer your core question. There was one black faculty member, Cecilia Hodges Drewry, who taught speech and just got honored by the Links in October and I went to see her ...

KE: Wonderful.

WH: … and participate in that. I didn't take a speech course because I exempted speech. I didn't have a South Jersey accent. Dr. Drewry would invite the black students to her home in Princeton maybe once a semester to have a real home-cooked meal and just be, which she didn't have to do. Even today, when I remind her just how much it meant, it's like, "Why are you even

mentioning this? That's what you should do when you're part of a community and you want to be supportive and you want others to be successful." Unfortunately, I never had her for a course, but she still does readings. She still does oral readings. The last one I heard was at Paul Robeson's father's church in Princeton, and she did Maya Angelou readings. She'll be ninety-three or ninety-four next month. [Editor's Note: Reverend William Drew Robeson was the pastor of the Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New Jersey.]

KE: That's incredible.

WH: She's incredible. You should really talk to her, if you get a chance. I know you want the students' perspective, but you would love it. Anyway, I adore her. I never had a black instructor for an academic program. I had a black phys ed [physical education] teacher--that's why I made that qualification--in high school. Role models, we didn't call them role models then. That's a late twentieth century term.

KE: Excuse me. [laughter]

WH: No, I'm thinking who. No one leaps out at me.

KE: Celebrities even?

WH: I knew I didn't want to teach. I didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up, so it's not like there was a black woman in business that I said, "Oh, I want to be like ..." I certainly didn't, at that point, think I was going to be in higher education, and if there were any black presidents at an institution other than an HBCU [Historically Black College/University], I wasn't aware of her. Mary McLeod Bethune was so much older; I just knew that she had done great things in terms of founding within Cookman. No, there wasn't. [Editor's Note: Mary McLeod Bethune, who was a civil rights activist and Director of the Division of Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, founded Bethune-Cookman University as the Daytona Literary and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in 1904.]

KE: Were there any opportunities for you to learn more about African American history?

WH: [Editor's Note: Ms. Harris shakes her head no.]

KE: Did that education come from home?

WH: No, no, and it wasn't even covered in the history books. Probably more curiosity after I had graduated, although I was telling Kate, I love the Tudors and the Stuarts, the Tudors more. One of the seminars I took senior year was on the Harlem Renaissance and the '20s. Well, I love the '20s because they just say so much about so many things culturally after World War I and women getting the vote and all the black culture that was coming forth. That may have been my first taste into, "Oh, there's a whole lot of stuff that I don't know anything about and I'm supposed to be a history major. How could this be? Look at me, I'm one of them and I don't know about

my history." It certainly wasn't any course. There were no courses of that ilk when I was a student.

KE: What area of history did you go on to specialize in as an undergrad? What did you write your final thesis on? Do you remember?

WH: Yes. I didn't remember. One of my classmates remembered because my hypothesis, unfortunately, turned true. I love the Tudors and Stuarts, and the '20s, you think about the women getting the vote and then all of a sudden, people start looking like flappers and looking like men and cut their hair, like what kind of message are we sending here? My senior paper was on Nigeria--and, obviously, I was brighter than I thought--the impact that the tribes would have on Nigeria trying to become a cohesive nation, which was prophetic because they really have had an impact on it becoming a cohesive nation.

KE: That's incredible.

WH: It really was. My girlfriend mentioned it. I said, "I don't even know where the paper is. I'm sure it's buried some place." I said, "Wow, you're right, that was my topic."

KE: In terms of conducting research for that topic …

WH: Oh, see, I liked research more than writing the paper.

KE: If you could remember, what professors were helping you through this. How did you go about doing that research is what I'm trying to ask?

WH: I don't know.

KE: Okay.

WH: I don't know. I don't think I had a course in African history. I don't know.

KE: It is fascinating.

WH: Yes, it is. When my friend, Sue, said, "You know your hypothesis proved true." I said, "Yes, it did. Unfortunately, I'd love to have been wrong." [laughter] I don't know. I know who our senior thesis adviser was. I can't answer that.

KE: I am just really interested in the idea that you chose West Africa as a topic.

WH: I know. We have the Tudors here. We have the Harlem Renaissance here. [laughter] We have Nigeria here.

KE: You love history.

WH: The only book, I hope I still have it, is the art history book *Janson*. It was a big book, heavy book, expensive book then, because I believe the art and the music tie in with what's happening in the history of a particular period, so it all kind of melds together. The music of the Middle Ages was certainly so down and dower compared to everything from the Baroque period. Well, that's what I meant by this education business, like later for being practical and knowing the Tudors completely in and out or knowing the Harlem Renaissance or knowing ideas. I'll just have a smorgasbord, a little bit [of everything]. [Editor's Note: *Janson's History of Art* is a book written by H.W. Janson and first published in 1962.]

KR: Who was your senior thesis adviser?

WH: Alison Olson was her name. She left, I think, the year we left or a year after. She wasn't here when I came back. Someone said they had seen her within the past ten years. She's at some institution in Canada. Anyway, Alison Olson.

KE: You mentioned earlier about black pride and how this was a great feeling on campus during the late '60s.

WH: Early '70s, when there was a critical enough mass.

KE: Right. Were there any kind of particular feelings towards what becomes later described as black militancy? Was this seen as a threat in any way on campus?

WH: Oh, I'm sure it had to be. I'm sure it had to be to the students who had been the overwhelming majority population forever. Now, there was a Black House on old Gibbons, I think, and then it moved to Jameson. Now, you have this critical mass of all these black people living together and what are they doing in there, even though they had a graduate assistant who used to help with programming and things of that sort. I'm sure that the same parents who were riding around [were saying], "They're plotting a revolution over there in Gibbons." I can't just imagine the feeling not being there. I was in new Gibbons A, next to the conference center and the residence halls there. No one came to me and said, "What are they doing in the Black House back there?" I am sure, especially those who, let's say, were there in '67, when we had just a handful and then who now saw this infestation of black students and, "They have their own house, no less. What terrible things are they doing? They're going to take over the University." I don't have anything empirical but I can't imagine it not being a fear.

KE: Were you around for the inauguration of the Black House? Do you remember its inauguration?

WH: I think it started in September '68 or September '69. If it was September of '69, that's when I was starting and I don't know the specifics. By the time I moved out of residence in June of '72, it was a vital and vibrant part of the community. Are you going to talk to Maxene Summey?

KR: I have been trying to get in touch with her.

WH: Okay, because she was there '66. She came in September of '66--when I left in June '66--until 2002. She would know when the Black House opened and things of that sort.

KE: Okay, great.

KR: I am wondering, between '69 and '72.

WH: When I was in residence?

KR: Yes. What were your impressions of Livingston College?

WH: You're asking the wrong person, because I was on the committee my senior year, '65-'66, with Ernie Lynton who chaired the committee that established Livingston College.

KR: Wow.

WH: So, I was really excited by the concept and what it could do for the University and broadening the university's perspective, so I'm a little biased.

KR: I never even knew students were on the ...

WH: The Planning Committee.

KR: The Planning Committee.

WH: Yes, '65-'66. I just thought it was a great idea. Now, earlier, I had mentioned Douglass thinking it was all that and a bag of chips and the black students. There was not a lot of love between the Douglass women and the Livingston women. You didn't have to be "Alberta" Einstein to pick that up. I think, and I don't know if they would admit it or not, and this is my perception, that the Douglass students thought they were better than the Livingston students because, after all, "We're Douglass and Douglass is all that." The Livingston students, I'm sure, thought the Douglass students were bourgeois, bourgeois blackies, and, "Who do they think they are? Don't they understand that I go to the bathroom the same way they go to the bathroom, so why are they keeping their noses up in the air?" Don't you understand, "Why you are fighting each other? There's enough of an enemy. Get over yourself and work together," but they were eighteen, nineteen, twenty-year-olds. There was not a lot of love lost, for various reasons. I mean, Willie Lynch did a good job. [Editor's Note: Willie Lynch refers to the concept or theory that centuries of institutionalized racism have resulted in disunity among African Americans. For many years, people believed that a slaveholder named Willie Lynch delivered a speech that discussed controlling slaves by turning them against each other, but this speech has been disproven as a hoax.]

KE: The Livingston students were kind of more characterized as coming from ...

WH: Urban areas.

KE: Urban areas.

WH: Because that was one of the focuses of it, an urban education to explain the urban experience in America and all of that. The concept was great. I'm sorry Livingston doesn't exist anymore. I don't know what happened toward the end, when all the colleges were going away, whether it still had that focus or not. It was not a loving relationship at the beginning.

KE: Being a black student at Douglass around the time even Livingston was created, was created …

WH: '69 is when it opened.

KE: … The black students were presumed to be middle-class because they went to Douglass and not Livingston?

WH: That's my perception.

KE: Okay, interesting.

WH: Now, are you going to talk to some Livingston women?

KE: There's another faction of the committee [researching for *Scarlet and Black*, Volume III].

WH: Because I'll be very interested in what they thought about the women at Douglass. Or starting in '72, the women at Rutgers College, what do they think of them? "Up there just to get a husband." No, I can hardly wait for Volume III.

KE: Absolutely, me, too. [laughter]

WH: For different reasons.

KR: Do you mind if I ask something?

KE: Yes, go ahead.

WH: Of course.

KR: I just want to go back to your time on the Planning Committee of Livingston College.

WH: Oh, God, that's ...

KR: How many students were on the Planning Committee?

WH: Maybe two or three of us. It wasn't a lot, trust me. I think we were just their tokens.

KR: How did the opportunity come about?

WH: My guess, Ruth Adams was probably asked, "Can you recommend someone from Douglass to be on this committee?" That would be my guess, because with having your own faculty, it wasn't like you had lots of classes over there for people to know you. They probably asked the deans of each of the colleges, "Can you recommend somebody?" That's pure speculation. She also knew that I wouldn't say no, because I wouldn't say no to her for anything that seemed reasonable.

KR: What did you think of Livingston by 1972, having been on the Planning Committee and knowing the ideals that it was founded upon and then how it is put into practice?

WH: I thought that it was a work in progress. I thought it was a work in progress. They had some awesome faculty. They were able to bring really oh-my-goodness faculty to that staff, and I'm not sure the students appreciated who they had teaching them. They were also younger, so I'm not sure why I would expect them to say, "Look whose standing in front of me? It's Sonia Sanchez and she's a poet." I saw it as a work in progress. I'm not sure how effectively its mission was communicated to the entire University or to its students, for them to realize what a unique opportunity they were having and what a unique opportunity it was for the whole University. I don't know, but I saw the whole--I see the University even now as a work in progress. Yes, that was a cool thing.

KE: Great. Questions?

KR: I just have one last question.

WH: You can have as many as you want. What time is it? 3:30. I have to be in Berkeley Heights by five. I'm good.

KR: Okay. We will get you there.

KE: Yes.

KR: The sexual revolution took place in the '60s.

WH: Late '60s.

KR: When you were a student, it was kind of before that, and then you are in administration, I am just wondering if you can contrast social norms from the early '60s to the late '60s and '70s, in terms of sexuality, gender, birth control.

WH: On Sunday, let's see if I can get this straight, your father could come to your room. I think your brother, but, regardless, three feet had to be on the floor. What was the term, parietals, I'm not even sure what it means, but by the time I left working in residence, everybody was sleeping with everybody [laughter] at any hour of the day or night. That was among the complaints when I was in residence that I would get because, "I can't study in my room because Johnny and Mary are screwing all night long." I would say it was like 180 and the freedom of not being with

Mommy and Daddy, you just went to hell in a hand basket. I think we went from the Puritanical, and because it was new, I'm sure now it's like men walking up and down the halls, going into the bathrooms, it's like no big deal, but, trust me, it was a big deal then. The student didn't want the roommate upset so they would come to me. What the hell am I supposed to do? Have a midnight raid. It was challenging because you try to talk about respect, "You have a roommate and this person has to study also." There were study lounges, but maybe you want to study at your own desk and you don't want to take your books and everything down to the lounge. Yes, it was a 180, I'd say, in an eight, ten-year period. I didn't even think about that. I hadn't thought about that for a long time, for obvious reasons. It was very hard. It was hard, I think, being a student then, because it was hard being a student [with] what was happening in the world, Vietnam, Kent State. It was easier to focus on academics, I think, when I was a student. I quite honestly don't know how they manage in those rooms now. They have computers and television and the rooms are no larger now than they were in 1962, but we didn't get to see what was happening in the world as it was happening because there wasn't a television that you could turn on or even you could stream from your phone or your computer. Now, not only do you have the rigors of your academics, you have the rigors of the real world, which are not necessarily pretty, in most instances. *Time* identified those reporters seeking the truth as the Person of the Year. Ah, the sexual revolution, oh, God, yes. [Editor's Note: *Time* magazine's Person of the Year in 2018 are the journalists who seek truth and as a result have been killed or have faced violent retaliation.]

KE: Was there a strong feminist presence?

WH: Oh, it was growing, most definitely. It wasn't called feminism when I left, but you could see it growing because Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinem were coming into their own in the mid, late '60s, but by the time I came back, yes. There was not that much tolerance among the feminists for those who weren't strong feminists. Well, like, "Get over yourself; people have a right to have different opinions." I didn't sense a lot of empathy on either side. I hadn't thought about them or the sexual revolution in years.

KE: I guess my follow-up question to that, black feminism. Did you see that as a growing faction during your years, even after you came back to work there?

WH: Oh, after I came back to work. Obviously, more than when you have a handful. Yes, but it wasn't that public. It was a small population, and I'm not sure I'll call it black feminism or feminism of people of color within the feminist movement.

KE: Right.

WH: So, it wasn't like a cohort of black feminists. They had been assimilated into the feminist movement overall. I'm not sure [of the] timing. Someone recently mentioned that So-and-So was a lesbian. I didn't know that. That's was what they said. Well, maybe she was when she was a student, but she just didn't feel comfortable sharing it with the black community, whereas she did with the feminist community. I never thought about it, but, that, I've recently learned within the past month or so. I think she may have been class of, early '70s, but there was not a black feminist group. It was assimilated into the feminists overall.

KE: Was there speculation even of same-sex coupling during your student years? What you described in the later years, was there any kind of discussion, growing discussion, about that?

WH: Discussion.

KE: Gossip?

WH: No. Perception maybe, people felt that way. It wasn't, "Did you know that So-and-So is with …?"

KE: Right.

WH: It was like, "Maybe they are, maybe they aren't, who cares," except, I just found this out, this past June. One of the seniors, juniors or seniors, in one of the dormitories, had a relationship with the Assistant Dean of Students. The Assistant Dean of Students was let go at the end of that academic year. How come, "You didn't know why Ms. So-and-So didn't come back?" I said, "No, it never crossed my mind why Ms. So-and-So didn't come back." There was obviously coupling going on, and if it was student and administrator, I'm sure it was student and student.

KE: Right. The culture around dating, I imagine Rutgers was where a lot of Douglass students looked to for dating.

WH: Yes. I don't think any of the black students, when I was a student, married--that's not true. One did, I can think, two, Class of '68, married Rutgers men.

KE: Black students?

WH: [Yes]. The plan for several Caucasian students, I can't say many, sophomore year you get lavaliere-d, junior year you get pinned, senior year you get engaged. It didn't seem to be a goal for the black students.

KE: What were the kind of opportunities to socialize with Rutgers men?

WH: They were, in my mind, like big brothers. Whenever I see them now, I'm just really happy to see them. Cecilia Drewry would arrange for us to go meet the men at Princeton, [laughter] which got the men at Rutgers in an uproar. [laughter] I don't know if any of the black Douglass students married Princeton men or not, but they had the clubs and I guess they still have the clubs at Princeton and all that. If Douglass thought it was all that, you know what Princeton thought of itself. They probably still do. I would say probably three weekends out of four, I was in the dorm, but there were fellows who belonged to Tau Delta Phi or Phi Sigma Kappa and if they had parties, they would just kind of swoop us up and go, so that we're just not sitting there, sitting there in the dorms. We didn't have televisions in the little Corwin houses. There was one television in Katzenbach and Lippincott. They were just really nice guys.

KE: I asked earlier about interracial friendships. Now, I'm going to ask about interracial relationships.

WH: How's that? Oh, you're talking about boys and girls.

KE: Yes.

WH: Yes, it was an "in" thing for a black man to go out with a white woman. Now, it's like really cool because now white men are marrying black women. Be that as it may, there were enough of those--motivation, I'm not sure. I can't think of her name. Her parents disowned her, and we all went to the wedding over at Kirkpatrick to be supportive. He was an artist, Class of '65. Anyway, she married him. The marriage may have been in '64. The parents didn't come. She had to drop out of school because she couldn't afford to pay her own tuition.

KE: This was '65?

WH: He was Class of '65.

KE: Okay.

WH: I can't believe you brought that up. I haven't thought about them in years. They were the only couple that I know that married. Others may have afterwards. He was black, and she was white.

KE: Did she go to Douglass?

WH: [Yes].

KE: Okay.

WH: Yes, there was interracial dating. Probably all of them or the majority of black fellows, at some point, dated someone white. It's just my feeling. I've never done a poll to ask them [laughter], but that was the norm then.

KE: How did black women students feel about that?

WH: "What do you mean? We're not good enough."

KE: Right.

WH: Not positively, but culturally this was what you did. It still happened. Now, it's acceptable and it's not like I'm sticking my finger up to my nose and saying, "Nah, nah, look what I'm doing." It's like you never know who you're going to love, so you just can't say, "It's good. Bad. How dare you." Yes, there was a lot of that, and I say a lot, enough of it for it to be noticeable and memorable for me to remember it now.

KR: What class would she have been?

WH: Mine, '66. He was an artist. I don't know anyone who has a yearbook from the Class of '65.

KR: Yes, I have Rutgers College '65 yearbook, but I don't have a Douglass.

WH: I'm not sure whether he graduated either. If you find out, let me know. [laughter] You've brought up the sexual, biracial, the feminism, things I haven't thought of forever.

KE: I think I am out of questions.

WH: Guess what, if you aren't, I do have a phone. You know how to reach me.

KE: Oh, thank you so much. I appreciate that.

WH: This is not, "Okay, you blew your time. No more questions ever in life." [laughter]

KE: Do not talk to me ever again. [laughter]

WH: "Kaisha who? Kate who? I'm sorry, you have the wrong number." [laughter]

KE: It is like we never met. [laughter]

WH: What I realized when I read those things, I don't speak in total sentences. It's like, "That's half a thought."

KR: I think you speak in total sentences.

KE: I think you do.

WH: When you read it, it's not going to be total sentences. Anyway, how many shots do I have at proofing this? What's my time?

KR: Well, I will conclude the interview for the record.

WH: For the record, yes.

KR: Thank you so much for being so generous with your time.

WH: I am glad that it's over. [laughter]

KE: Thank you so much.

WH: I am glad we did it in one sitting, because I'm not good at doing this two times.

KE: It was wonderful, thank you.

----------END OF TRANSCRIPT----------

Transcribed by Jesse Braddell 12/22/2018
Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 2/6/19
Reviewed by Wilma Harris 3/20/19