RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
CAMDEN

AN INTERVIEW WITH

WAYNE GLASKER

for the

BLACK CAMDEN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

in collaboration with the

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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(recorded remotely)

SESSION 1: FEBRUARY 18, 2022

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and

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Kendra Boyd: This begins an oral history interview with Dr. Wayne Glasker on February 18, 2022 with Kendra Boyd, and I'm joined by

Jesse Bayker: Jesse Bayker.

KB: Thank you so much for joining us today, Dr. Glasker. To begin with, can you tell us where and when you were born?

Wayne Glasker: I was born in Philadelphia, PA in January of 1957. In a different century. [Laughter]

KB: What were your parents' names and where were they born?

WG: My father was Morris Glasker and my mother was Mary Johnson Glasker. They are now both deceased and they were both born in Virginia, about 40 miles away from Charlottesville. [Morris was born in Woodville, VA in 1936 and Mary was born in Washington, Rappahannock County, VA in 1937]

KB: Starting with your mother, do you know any background about her family and how they came to the area; did they always live in the area?

WG: To the best of my knowledge, they had lived in that area since the time of the Civil War, and somehow they were landowners.

KB: What about your father's family?

WG: My father's family also lived in the area since the time of the Civil War. My great grandfather, I believe, was born a slave. They were tenant farmers and so they rented a farm.

KB: Can you tell us how your family ended up in Philadelphia?

WG: My parents were part of the Great Migration. There were very few job opportunities in Virginia, so they left and came to Philadelphia. It was also the case that my maternal grandmother had moved from Virginia to Philadelphia, leaving my mother with my grandmother's mother, which is to say my great grandmother. So my mother was actually raised by her grandmother more so than her own biological mother.

KB: Can you tell us a little bit about your experience growing up in Philadelphia, what it was like for you in the city, your K-12 experience?

WG: I went to public schools all the way through. I was fortunate. When you're a kid, you're not aware of tracking. It's only later that you become aware that it even exists. Retrospectively, I realized that when I was in the third grade, the teachers decided to move me from what I assumed was an average class, or a regular class into the accelerated class. I just did what they told me, I didn't know why I was being moved. By the time I was in the fifth grade, when we had reading, they sent me to another class and I had reading with the sixth-grade class. I didn't know why. I now realize it's because I was reading above my grade level and they didn't have anything more for me in fifth grade, so I had to go with the sixth graders. When I was in middle school, my teacher selected me or at least nominated me for a magnet program. So I went to a magnet high school, which was Overbrook High School in West Philadelphia.

When I was in the 11th grade, we had an exam in my history class, and everybody failed, except for me, and therefore my teacher nominated me to go into AP [Advanced Placement courses]. So I went into AP, and had AP history, while many other people were having what they call general math and general science, etc. I had a college prep curriculum: biology, chemistry, physics, foreign language, those sorts of subjects to prepare you for college. In retrospect, I realize that there were only about 90 of us in that program, so it was an honors program. There was also a very enriched music program and art program. While it was very good for me as an individual and for this tiny group of 90 students, everybody else was getting general science and general math and shop classes. But when you're in that little bubble of the magnet program and honors, you're not quite aware that not everybody else is getting that.

I ultimately graduated fifth in my class, and I had an unusual experience in 1974 where I received a letter. This letter was from the mayor of Philadelphia and I was nominated for a mayor's scholarship which allowed me to attend the University of Pennsylvania. It just kind of dropped out of the sky as a blessing. I didn't know that the mayor's scholarship existed prior to that time. Ninety-nine percent of me was thrilled, but the letter was signed by the then mayor of Philadelphia, who was a man named Frank Rizzo. I'm not sure what kind of karma that is, that you get a blessing but it's signed by Frank Rizzo. Rizzo had a horrible reputation as a racist, especially when he had been the chief of police prior to becoming mayor. But you take your blessings where you can get them.

KB: Can you tell us what your experience was like attending the University of Pennsylvania?

WG: For me, one of the great things about UPenn is that as someone who was sort of academically inclined, for the first time in my life I felt like I was surrounded by other people who were also academically inclined and motivated. I felt like I was where I belonged. On the other hand, in some ways it was a rather isolated experience because they were so few Black students. So, it was good in some ways, but challenging in other ways. I made the Dean's list in my freshman year and there were some students who looked at me like they thought I was from

Mars because their stereotypical image of Black students was that we all are on academic probation, we're all struggling, we all are remedial, and in some of my classes, at least, I was getting A's and I was on dean's list. And I'm like, "you know, you have to read a book once in a while and you can't party all the time." So in many ways it was a great, positive experience.

KB: Did you connect with the other Black students at Penn when you were in undergrad?

WG: There was a dormitory, or a portion of a dormitory, that was two floors of a four-story building called Dubois College House. This dormitory was for students of any race or color, who wanted to learn more about Black history and culture. I chose to live there and many of my roommates or other people in the dorm were Black, so I had a sort of support system of other Black people. But one of the things that I learned, which I guess I had not known so much in high school, is class stratification within the Black community. That there are people who come from more bourgeois backgrounds. Whereas I had come from a very working-class background. My father worked at the carwash, so I was not from the class of Black people who were doctors and lawyers and engineers and accountants. I went to college with Marc Morial, whose father Ernest Morial was the mayor of New Orleans, and with Vicki Jordan, whose father was Vernon Jordan. There was a whole mix of people from different kinds of class backgrounds.

KB: You finished your degree at Penn for undergrad in 1980, is that correct?

WG: That is true.

KB: You later went on to get your PhD from Penn as well, and I'd like to talk about that. But first, I know you've mentioned previously that you were involved with the Black Student Union and other types of activism related to anti-apartheid on campus. Can you talk some about that?

WG: I was a member of the Black Student Union when I was an undergrad. When I was a graduate student, I was active in student government, of all things. I mean, we actually had a graduate student government. Somehow, I became the chairman of the Graduate Student Government. My Black friends used to tease me and they said that I was the Black president of a white organization because initially I was the only Black person in the organization. I suppose my white colleagues had some level of confidence in my ability, and so I was elected as chair of the graduate assembly. That's a position where you meet monthly with the president, the provost of the university, and the chairs of the Faculty Senate. It was actually a great learning experience for later on when I became a college professor because I was already accustomed to how shared governance works. Penn was a university where they did have at least the facade and the appearance of shared governance. At least there were institutions in place, and there had to be a meeting once a month and the president and the provost had to come and pretend to listen to you, even if they then disregarded everything that you said and do what they wanted to do anyway. So

I sort of got my feet wet in that system, as a graduate student. Also as a graduate student, I did become involved in the anti-apartheid movement at Penn. Penn had more than $93 million invested in companies doing business in South Africa. As student activists, and with people from the community, we demanded that Penn must divest that money, and of course, they ignored us. We had protests and sit ins, and I was a part of that. Without going into great detail, let me say that I would have finished my graduate degree sooner if I had not been involved in the anti-apartheid movement. But I do not regret my involvement. Eventually, the Congress voted to impose sanctions on South Africa, and the federal government required that institutions such as Penn divest, and so even though we lost in our effort for us to force the university to divest, in fact, we won, because the Congress required that the university and other institutions divest. So I was involved in the anti-apartheid movement, involved in student activism on campus, and it did slow down my academic progress. But that's the price that I was more than willing to pay.

JB: I wanted to follow up on that. What kind of tactics did you use? Could you describe for us what that activism looked like on the ground and your involvement?

WG: Part of it is you're appealing to public opinion. So you send letters to the editor, and there are petitions. We went down to City Hall in Philadelphia to testify, to ask the city to embrace anti-apartheid legislation. We went to Harrisburg to encourage the state assembly in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to embrace divestiture. Then of course you have your sort of routine campus rallies and protests, and you have speakers. But it also reached the point of some sit ins, some longer than others. I was involved in two sit ins. One was in the office of the president of the university. And a year or two later, when I was the chair of the graduate assembly, I'm there meeting with him on a regular basis. So it was like, “well, here I am again.” Originally they regarded me as a thorn in their side, but eventually they saw that's not all that there was to me. Some of the other tactics involved things like building a shanty town on the campus green in front of the administration building to demonstrate the poverty that existed in South Africa.

JB: Were there any other issues that you pushed for as part of the Black Student Union that were important to you, besides the anti-apartheid activism?

WG: Yes. When I was in undergrad, one of the issues we were fighting for was an increase in Black student admissions because the number fell from approximately 150 in the early 70s to 104 in 1978, or 1979. So we were fighting for issues of admissions, for issues of financial aid, and the issue of retention. I don't want to go into excessive detail, but there was a study in 1976, or thereabout, which showed that 30% of the students who were predicted to fail did in fact fail. In other words, they were predicted to get a GPA in their freshman year of less than 2.0, and then they would be on academic probation. So they were at risk, they wouldn't have made it anyway. And 30% of them did get below a 2.0. So the argument was made, "we ought to stop admitting remedial students," or students who are not well prepared. But the Black faculty and the Black

Student League took the view, “okay, 30% of the people who you say are predicted to fail do fail. But that also means that 70% of the people who you said were going to fail, did not fail, they got better than a 2.0.” We sort of know statistically 30% of the people who are predicted to fail, will end up on academic probation. The difficulty is, out of any 10 students, we don't know which three are the ones who will fail, or which seven are the ones who will do better than expected. So do you sacrifice the seven because of the three? Is a 30% attrition rate acceptable? Ultimately, the university decided, no, it's not, we need to do a better job of recruiting students who we think will succeed. But those were some of the issues that we were dealing with.

Although it was difficult to articulate at the time, part of what was happening was a racial disparity in financial aid, which is to say that Black students might receive just as much financial aid as white students, but the white students were receiving scholarships, while the Black students were receiving loans. So at the end of the day, they can say “well you both got $50,000.” But what is the content of the package? Of course, we were also demanding more Black faculty, because there were so few. It’s the same issues that you find at almost any university in that time period, and even still now. The issues have not changed a lot.

KB: So you finished your PhD in 1994, is that correct?

WG: Yes. More or less. It was a December degree.

KB: I want to shift to talk about your time at Rutgers-Camden. You worked at Rutgers-Camden from 1990 to 2020 correct?

WG: Yes. Let me say about that, again, sometimes these blessings just dropped down out of the sky, they just fall into your lap out of nowhere. As fate would have it, back in 1990, a Black professor who was at Rutgers left to go to the University of Virginia and it created an opening. Apparently, it happened sort of last minute, that’s what I was told. In the middle of August, I received a phone call from essentially the chairman of the History Department at Rutgers-Camden asking me if I could come and teach one course, as a part time lecturer, like starting in two weeks, like "it's August 15 and we need you here by September 1." So very last minute, this just dropped out the sky. I had not finished my dissertation, so I was more or less ABD [All but dissertation]. And I said, okay. So I came and I taught the one class and it went well. Then they said, “can you come back for the spring?” And I said, okay. In the meantime, there was a search to fill the full time position. I had some reservations about that, since I still had not yet completed my degree, and how do you finish your degree if you're teaching five classes a year? Back then it was a three-two course load. Still, I applied for the position, and I received the position. At some point, I took like an adjunct year or maybe a few years. But in the end I finished my degree, I published my book, and I got tenure. Even as an untenured professor, I was asked to serve as

Director of Africana Studies. So when these opportunities present themselves, you don't look the gift horse in the mouth, you just go for it.

KB: Can you tell us what race relations were like on campus when you first started in the early 1990s.

WG: I think there was a good deal of ambivalence. I say that because even in the history department, prior to my arrival, there had been a situation in which a Black part time lecturer, one of my colleagues in the anti-apartheid movement, had some kind of blow up with the students, I guess it was a mutual blow up. He said, “they were a bunch of racists,” the students didn't like him, and the department had to resolve this. So I came in a few years after that had happened and I think the department was looking for someone who could teach both Black and white students together in the same classroom without it all blowing up in everybody's face. I guess I did that sufficiently well in my first semester and my second semester that they asked me to continue and I was selected for the full-time position. Beyond that, I think that there was a good deal of indifference on the Camden campus at that time. It's mostly a commuter campus, so people come, they take their classes, they go to the library, they do whatever they need to do at the campus center, and then they leave. Relatively few students live on campus. So there's not the same opportunity for friction that you would have if everybody was living together for nine months. Of course, there were very few Black students, and very few Black faculty. The university I think, was trying to pay lip service to diversity, but was having trouble getting there.

JB: I would like to ask you about a situation that happened in the mid 90s, with President Lawrence. In November 1994 Rutgers President Francis Lawrence met with a group of faculty at Rutgers-Camden, and they were talking about SAT scores. He made some controversial comments at that time. He called African American students, "a disadvantaged population that doesn't have the genetic hereditary background to have a higher average." This became very controversial on campus. I wondered if you have any memories of this situation, and what was going on on campus at the time?

WG: I recall the news reports that he had made the comment. It was very ironic that, at that time, the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Camden was a Black man (Robert Catlin). So, if you're part of the administration, you're trying to defend your boss in the administration. But faculty were not happy about that. The AAUP [American Association of University Professors] was not happy about that. I was not present at the meeting, but I was aware that there are people who have that point of view, who believe basically in the genetic and cognitive inferiority of people of color. I think that President Lawrence was referring to those people, I don't know if he was necessarily saying that he himself believed that, I think he was trying to say there are scholars who say this, but it did not help him at all. I think it just sort of deepened the sense of alienation on the part of minority faculty and students, to perceive that we have a president who

doesn't believe that we're capable of accomplishing anything. In the fullness of time, President Lawrence was gone, so life went on.

JB: Another thing that we wanted to talk about was the demands that students at Rutgers-Camden had started making back in 1969, when there was a takeover of a building on campus, and they presented their demands. Then in 1991, early on in your time at Rutgers, one of the their demands came to pass and that was renaming the library for Paul Robeson. I wonder if you remember being there or want to share anything about the renaming, or about any of the other demands that students were talking about and what you saw when you arrived at Camden?

WG: I don't remember the exact number of demands, whether there were 18 or 25. I think by now in Rutgers circles, it is well known that there was a sit in, in February of 1969, and that apparently seven students were involved. This was when I was in middle school. The students chained shut the door to the Campus Center late at night. It was around 10 o'clock at night, and there was hardly anybody there at that point anyway. They sort of seized control of the building by locking it. Then the next day they left after getting some concessions from President Mason Gross, the president at the time.

If you look at the demands, one of the things that the students demanded, was a department of Black studies, I believe with its own dean. Sometimes you get half a loaf. I mean, to this day, there is no Department of Africana Studies at Rutgers-Camden. In terms of the half a loaf, what the students did receive in the fullness of time was an Africana Studies program. It's an interdepartmental program. The faculty have their appointments in English or History or Sociology, whatever it may be, but there is still no Department of Africana Studies. The budget for the Africana Studies program is so pitiful. I mean, if you have $3,000 or even $5,000 a year, what are you really supposed to do with that? You invite one guest speaker and that's gone. What the university did back in 1969, was to say, “okay, we will bring in a part time lecturer to teach a course in Black history.” That was something that was easy to do. There's a PTL budget, they can bring someone in for September of 1969, and that's what they did. Harry Amana taught courses from 1969 to 1971. Later he went on to a distinguished career in journalism at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. In 1969 the History Department hired Dr. Elbert L. Harris in a tenure-track position to teach African American history. In 1970 the BA in Afro-American Studies was created, and Harris taught until 1982. He was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania.

The students demanded a department of, it might not be called Urban Studies, but Urban Education, and for a while there was a Department of Urban Studies. It is now an interdisciplinary program, and mostly graduate level. It took more than 20 years to get the library renamed. As far as having a school of Black Studies, that did not happen; having a separate Dean who was Black, that did not happen; having someone who would be in in control of the financial

aid for Black students, who was Black, that did not happen. Many of the demands were not met. Now, there's a section in the library of books named in honor of Ulysses S. Wiggins. That was one of the more remote demands, but that did happen, at least temporarily. I think part of the enduring legacy of that sit in is that, I would say in the absence of that sit in, I don't know that we would have gotten as quickly the courses in Black history, or that we would have an interdisciplinary program in Africana Studies. It has been a tremendous battle to recruit and retain Black and minority faculty. When I arrived at Rutgers-Camden, there was not one single tenure-track Black professor in the School of Business. There were some people who taught part time, but it was not until Wendell Pritchett was the chancellor, that we began to get tenure-track Black faculty in the School of Business. [Editor's note: Wendell Pritchett served as Chancellor of Rutgers University–Camden from 2009–2014.]

In the nursing school, we had one Black professor in the entire faculty of 18, one Black professor. Then they bought in a second person. Well, as soon as she arrived, the first person left. So there was no net gain. We still struggle not only to bring in Black professors in the nursing school, but to retain them because essentially what happens is that they come for a year or two and then they leave. In arts and sciences, it is the same kind of issue. We have difficulty retaining people. I mean, I can name names of people that we have lost. Imani Perry is a very famous national scholar. She was in the law school. She left to go to Princeton. Robin Stevens was in Childhood Studies. She left to go to the University of Pennsylvania. Michael Afaa Weaver was in the English department, he left to get an endowed chair at Simmons College. It is very difficult for Rutgers-Camden to compete. So even when we bring people in, after a year or two, they leave and move on to something better. After a while, if we can't compete, then it becomes a bit demoralizing to encourage people to come here, knowing that we just don't seem to have what it takes to keep people. Now, our student bodies were diverse, but essentially at Rutgers-Camden, and it pains me to say that we have a more diverse student body that is being taught by a lily-white faculty. It hasn't changed because the powers that be don't want to change it.

KB: In your opinion, what are the issues with retaining the Black faculty at Rutgers-Camden?

WG: I think part of it is salary. We have a colleague in the Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice Department, Chinyere Osuji who was offered a better position at the University of Maryland, and Rutgers was unable or unwilling to match the salary. Why would she stay here for less money? And of course Rutgers always pleads poverty, "we just don't have the money." The harshest thing that I could say, is that Rutgers-Camden is the lowest colony in the Rutgers imperial system, it is always shortchanged, it gets the crumbs that fall from the masters table, and we just don't have the resources to compete.

JB: Can you talk a little bit about the students and any changes that you have seen with the student body at Rutgers-Camden since the 1990s until now.

WG: When you talk about the students, there are a lot of challenges there. Relatively few...Let's put it this way. Until recent years, especially during the chancellorship of Phoebe Haddon, relatively few students from the city of Camden, come to Rutgers-Camden, the great majority of our students come from the suburbs. [Editor's note: Phoebe Haddon served as Chancellor of Rutgers University–Camden from 2014–2020.]

We have a suburban population, even our Black students come from Willingboro, they come from Sicklerville, they're not coming from the city of Camden. Very few come from Camden. In recent years, that has begun to change, but that's a double-edged sword in itself. Mostly we have a very suburban student population commuting to the urban campus. Some of our students are very good students, we have an Honors College. There are students who have 4.0 GPAs, there are students who do wonderfully. But at the other end, our students tend to be a bit older, they're not like 18 to 21, they're out in the world. Our students tend to be married, and they have jobs. They're working part time or full time. Many of them have families, so they're trying to balance all of that. School is just one of the three or four things that they're trying to do all at the same time. So they do not have the privilege and the luxury to simply devote themselves to being students.

The statistic that concerns me the most is how many of our students graduate in six years. For those who do not know the significance of the six-year benchmark, it is that for students who are attending school full time, they exhaust their Pell Grant after six years. In other words, 150% of time, usually it's four years, and then you get an extra two years and then it's over, no more Pell Grant. After that, if you want to go to school, you better get a loan. If you're coming from a low- or moderate-income family to begin with, you really do need the Pell Grant in order to be able to go to college. If you look at the students who entered in, say 2014 and then you ask how many of them graduated by 2020, over the course of six years, about 70% of the white students at Rutgers-Camden graduate after six years, that's a good thing. About 50% of the Black students graduate after six years. And you begin to wonder, well, do they ever graduate? Or are they in a situation where they spent six years trying to get a degree, and now they have exhausted their Pell Grant, they don't have enough credits to graduate, they cannot continue, and they just leave having invested six years of their life, and they have very little to show for it? It's not clear to me that some of them ever graduate. What has happened to the other half of the Black students – and that figure is almost the same for the Hispanic students about 50% – it's almost like a 50% attrition rate in my view.

We know that in terms of the students, many of them are first-generation. Some of them come from backgrounds where they did not receive good preparation, some people would call them under-qualified. A small percentage of them have the support of the Equal Opportunity Fund, EOF. But there are people who need it who don't get it, there's a limited number of slots for EOF.

[Editor’s Note: The New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) provides financial assistance and services to students from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds who attend universities in New Jersey.]

So as far as the student body, on the one hand, Rutgers as an institution can say, "we gave them an opportunity." But on the other hand, we may be admitting people who come from backgrounds where they're so underprepared that we should have known in advance, they were never going to succeed at Rutgers. We don't have the kind of support system in place to give them the guidance and the counseling that they would need in order to succeed. It's almost like they've been set up to fail. So, I feel very ambivalent about that. Because I believe in access, I believe in giving people opportunity, giving people a chance to swim. But I have just seen so many students who come in and they take courses that they never should have taken, they're taking, like 300 level upper-division physics courses, because they think they're going to be an engineering major and transfer to New Brunswick after two years. But this is someone who takes a math placement exam and fails it and has to take elementary algebra, which is high-school level math, and a non-credit course that doesn't count for graduation, and then they fail that. But wait a minute, this is somebody who's going to be an engineer, you can't do high school-level algebra, but you want to be an engineer and we allow you to do that? Then they take that course, and they fail it. So next they need to take intermediate, again, which doesn't count for college credit. They take it, they fail it, they have to repeat it, then they decide, you know, "I'm not so good at math, maybe I should change my major. Oh, I'll go into computer science." Okay, but guess what? In order to be a computer science major, you have to take calculus. If you couldn't successfully complete elementary and intermediate algebra in two years, how are you ever going to get to calculus? So by that point, they flunk out, and we have allowed that to happen. I mean, if someone has a weak background in math, which you can diagnose on an exam, you don't allow that person to go into the engineering curriculum. So that's like neglect. That's someone who falls through the cracks. I will tell you, half of the minority students who take a course such as elementary algebra in their first year fail the course and have to repeat it. We have a math requirement. You take intermediate algebra in year two, and you fail it, so you have to repeat it. Now you go to year three, all these courses, which you're paying with your Pell Grant, and failing and repeating, which puts your GPA in the toilet. Then now in year three, you're finally getting to college algebra, which you fail and repeat.

I literally had one student I guess this was three years ago, who managed to fail both elementary algebra and English Composition I in his freshman year. Now would I say we never should have admitted that student? No. But evidently, he needed a lot more support than he was getting in order to succeed. I'm not going to call it a crisis, but if only 50% of our Black students are graduating after six years, I think we really have to examine what we're doing. Because it's almost tragic. But my critics would say, “but that's probably true nationwide. It's not just

Rutgers, it's probably true everywhere." We need many more "success coaches" to support struggling students.

KB: I know you were for many years the director of the Africana Studies program at Rutgers-Camden. Could you tell us a little bit about your history leading Africana Studies?

WG: What I would say is we tried to do more with less. We had very few resources. What I learned to do was to join forces with other people, other offices at the university that had a lot more money than we did in order to have programs. The office of community involvement, campus involvement at the campus center, they have money from the student fees, so they have plenty of money. We would join with them and the Honors College and have programs. Usually what I would do is to combine my class with another class, and try to mandate the students to attend the program so that people actually do come and attend the program that you have organized. We put together a Black History Month calendar most years. Although we had very few majors, I encouraged students to double major. I did not encourage anyone to go out into the world with only a major in Africana Studies. I encouraged students to combine the major in Africana Studies with another traditional major so that they were double majors, because there are still people who will say, "Africana Studies, what is that?" I'm talking about the employers, who say "what is that?" We had very good enrollment in our courses. You would often have courses such as African American literature or African American history that were full to capacity, every seat in the room was full, so we had very good enrollments. The dean at the time, Margaret Marsh was very pleased with the enrollments and with the performance of the program.

KB: Just for the record, what years were you director of the Africana Studies program?

WG: If memory serves, it was from 1998 to 2011. Basically, it overlapped with the deanship of Margaret Marsh. [Editor's note: Margaret Marsh served as Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School at Rutgers University-Camden from 1998-2007 and from 2009-2010]

JB: Can you talk a little bit about the relationship between the university and the Black community in the city of Camden, as you have seen it and experienced it during your time at Rutgers?

WG: That is a difficult question to answer, in part, because there's Rutgers and then there are other stakeholders who are involved in what is happening. When we look at what's happening to the city of Camden, it isn't even the mayor because for a period of time, the city of Camden was in receivership. So there are stakeholders who essentially want to gentrify and what they want to do was to build up the university district and build up the area around the waterfront, and around Cooper Hospital, and attract middle class people with income to move into the area. Those are

the kinds of people that they would like to have in the area immediately around the university. So, it's bigger than the university. The university is just one of one of the players, among many. And of course, bringing people with money in might require dislocating the people who are already here who are poor, and don't have many resources. There's a process of gentrification taking place in what we would call downtown Camden.

The relationship I think, is very ambivalent between Rutgers University and the city and the Black community, the Brown community in the city, despite what people say. People are always going to say the right things for public relations purposes. But if you look at the buildings on the Rutgers campus, the entry to the buildings is on the inside of the campus. The doors that face the street are closed, or blocked, in essence, to keep the "wrong people" out. There's this perception that Camden is poor, and it's dangerous, and it's crime ridden, and we need to protect the campus from those elements. How do you do that in a way that is subtle and not slapping people in the face? What Rutgers has begun to do, perhaps for reasons that are necessary, is to say that students, faculty, staff will have a card that you swipe in order to enter a building. If you're not, Rutgers faculty, students, staff, you don't have a card, so you can't swipe to get into the building, because you're not supposed to be in the building in the first place. There's this exclusion of people from the community, in order to protect the campus from crime, and people who are perceived to be drug addicts, there's this perception, for example, that people from the community come into Rutgers buildings, and they shoot up drugs in the bathroom or something. And so we have to keep those people out in order to protect Rutgers students, faculty, and staff. Rutgers tries to be supportive, and says it is supportive, and provides scholarships for low-income students, yes, that is true. But on the other hand, there is also this element of fear and we need to protect ourselves from them. How do you do it without building a wall? That's part of the dirty little truth that nobody wants to talk about, so I probably committed a heresy by talking about it.

KB: We are getting towards the end of our interview, so I wanted to ask if you had any other memorable moments from your time at Rutgers-Camden that you wanted to share?

WG: When I was director of Africana studies, we did a program to honor Rosa Parks, and that was one of the highlights of my time. The Postal Service gave us a blown up version of a commemorative stamp from the Montgomery bus boycott. The Postal Service also gave us a blown up image of Paul Robeson, which is now hidden in the Paul Robeson Library. I hate to say it, but it has to be hidden away because the hard, cruel truth that no one wants to admit is that if you put that enlarged Paul Robeson postage stamp in a place where everybody could see it, it would be defaced by people who still are bearing a grudge against Paul Robeson because they perceive him as disloyal to America, and a communist or communist dupe. You would be setting up a target. We also had a similar program for Langston Hughes. I created the course on the Civil

Rights Movement at Rutgers-Camden and I created a course on what was not often taught on Malcolm X, and we had great enrollments. Those are some of the highlights that I recall.

KB: Is there anything else you want to share either about Rutgers-Camden, or Camden or the Black experience in Philadelphia?

WG: I happen to believe that faculty should be advocates for students. And in the position that we're in, we are essentially gatekeepers, whether we like it or not, structurally that is where we are located. And when you are a gatekeeper, you have to at some point make up your mind, is my role to keep people out? I'm here to guard the gate and keep people out. Or is it my role to open the door and let people in and let people have access to opportunities? And so somewhere in my career, I decided that my role was to open the door and let people in, rather than use the excuses to keep people out. And I suppose the other thing I came to realize at some point in my career, is that when you are the professor, it's not enough to be a professor. Student success requires that we be coaches. And so if you are a coach, then you understand that the students are your players, that you understand that, sometimes they're having a bad day, you understand that sometimes this person just needs a pat on the back. This person just needs a word of encouragement. And sometimes this person needs, not literally, but a kick in the behind. I mean, what was that? I'm reminded of John Cheney, who was the coach of the Temple Owls, and he was a basketball coach. And he was a tough coach. But sometimes, people need a kick in the behind. [Laughter] So, you have to know when do they need encouragement and when do they need a push or nudge, let's call it a nudge. So, those are my parting words of wisdom for other people who are going to be faculty.

I should not say this, but there is one other thing I want to add. Rutgers-Camden is, as I said, the lowest colony in the Rutgers imperial system, we do not get the same resources as New Brunswick and as Newark. And I think the position of Chancellor is one that is structurally compromised, because to put it bluntly, you cannot serve two masters. The chancellor at Camden is on the one hand, serving the President and the administration at New Brunswick and functioning therefore as kind of an overseer on behalf of the master at New Brunswick. But on the other hand, the chancellor is the chief advocate for our campus, trying to get as many resources as possible for us so that we can be the best that we possibly can be. It's very difficult to do both of those things at the same time. So you end up with this very delicate balance. I don't think it's an accident that on average a chancellor at Camden lasts about five years. After about five years, there's not much more that you can do. I want to thank the two of you for allowing me to do this interview.

KB: Thank you so much Dr. Glasker for allowing us to record your history.