

Harold Washington, Class of 1975, Tuck 1977  
Dartmouth College Oral History Program  
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World  
February 15, 2013

DONIN: Today is Friday, February 15<sup>th</sup>.

WASHINGTON: The day after Valentine's.

DONIN: Two thousand thirteen. My name is Mary Donin, and I'm at the Yale Club in Manhattan with Harold Washington, Dartmouth Class of—

WASHINGTON: 'Seventy-five.

DONIN: Nineteen seventy-five, Tuck '77. Can't leave out Tuck. Okay, Hal, we always like to start this off, as you probably saw in the list of questions I sent you, with a little bit of background about you. How it is you ended up coming to Dartmouth back in, let's see, 1971. Did you learn about it from your guidance counselor? Did you have family members that came ahead of you? Tell us about how you ended up at Dartmouth.

WASHINGTON: Completely by chance. There was an invitation. Someone called my house and invited me to come up for Winter Carnival weekend around this time of the year, on a bus trip up to Dartmouth. Went down to city hall. I remember the bus was at city hall, and there were three other young men who got on the bus with me and we came up to Dartmouth. Had never met the guys before, didn't really know who was inviting me up, but went up.

DONIN: Did they explain how they discovered you?

WASHINGTON: No idea. But that was a time when I was taking a lot of tests. So I don't know that it wasn't a National Merit Scholar thing. A lot was going on. Got on the bus, went up for the Carnival weekend. Stayed in a three-room—a three-man—suite. I forget which hall. But I remember three guys who were really great: Ralph, Reggie, and Fred.

DONIN: And they were upperclassmen?

WASHINGTON: I think they were sophomores.

DONIN: Uh-huh. Okay.

WASHINGTON: And they showed me around the campus. It was just the way they got along, interacted with one another, that made me feel, this is the place to be. The campus was fantastic. Snow. It was out in the wilderness. I'm a New York City kid, so I was really happy just to get out of the city. And I had never heard of Dartmouth before. I had a summer job, and I had worked at Columbia University Teachers' College after school as a library page. I went to Manhattan College High School. And I had even won a CYO, Catholic Youth Organization Scholarship to Iona College before I even heard of Dartmouth. So I was college bound, I thought, but I didn't know where yet. And when I saw Hanover, I said, This is where I want to be.

DONIN: What about it appealed to you? Was it the location? You said you liked the idea of being outside of Manhattan.

WASHINGTON: Getting outside of Manhattan, the way the campus looked. I think it might have just been the fresh air. My body just knew this was a healthy place to be. And I said, This is where I want to go.

DONIN: So how did it— The campus probably didn't look like what you were accustomed to in Manhattan in terms of the number of black people that were there.

WASHINGTON: Well, the three men I mentioned, Reggie, Fred, and Ralph, were black.

DONIN: Oh, really!

WASHINGTON: So even though what you say is true, and I lived in the South Bronx—I was coming from the South Bronx—my concentrated experience was very comfortable because those three guys were black. And I was one of two black students in my high school. So even seeing them was a lot to be in an academic situation for me because Manhattan Prep and Manhattan College were predominantly white.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

WASHINGTON: So it didn't feel too weird for me. But that was just unique to Catholic parochial schools and Catholic colleges in New York.

- DONIN: So you were used to that.
- WASHINGTON: Very much so.
- DONIN: Being a minority in a large group of white people.
- WASHINGTON: Very much so.
- DONIN: Uh-huh. So was it an easy decision that you were going to go—that was it? You were going to go to Dartmouth?
- WASHINGTON: It was an easy decision for me, but I was accepted to Princeton. And a priest friend and my mother wanted me to apply to Harvard. And the person I respected the most as an undergraduate, another black student—as a high school student I should say—was at MIT in Boston. So there were other places that were on the radar. In addition to that, I was working at Teachers' College, as I had mentioned, and I looked into their books about competitive colleges and supposedly what were the best colleges in the country. And they taught me something that I didn't know: That the small Ivies, Swarthmore, Bard College, Haverford, Bryn Mawr were supposedly more academically challenging. So I said, wow! So I applied to Haverford, and I went to an interview at Haverford. A gentleman met me at the bus stop, walked me across campus. And by the time we'd reached the main office building, it turned out he was the president of the college, and he said, "You're accepted."
- DONIN: Whoa!
- WASHINGTON: Yes, that's what I said. So that experience was weighing in the back. But by that interview, I had seen Dartmouth. So it was weighing Haverford against Dartmouth really, in my mind.
- DONIN: Uh-huh. And what swung your decision to Dartmouth?
- WASHINGTON: I had a really good time. I just had a really good time. I knew Haverford was a great school, but I didn't know if I was going to have a good time there.
- DONIN: How'd your family feel about your going so far away?
- WASHINGTON: I'm an only child. I didn't realize it at the time, but it probably devastated my mom. I think she was probably saying, oh, that's the thing you have to do, and that's the next step. But since she didn't

go to college, I don't really think she understood the ramifications of me going to college and going so far away.

DONIN: Did she come and visit you?

WASHINGTON: She never made it to campus until graduation.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. But she did see it.

WASHINGTON: She did see the campus.

DONIN: That's great. So tell us what you found, how it was when you got there, when you started in September of '71.

WASHINGTON: Having been impressed by the three guys, I also had—my freshman roommate was somebody I had met in New York and who went to Spellman High School, Rick Jones. And we had seen each other the previous year. So I was living with somebody I knew from New York, who understood the South Bronx. So I felt safe immediately. We moved into—I don't know how I moved into it, but I moved in with him into Topliff Hall, which was the jock dorm, right next to the football field.

DONIN: Yes.

WASHINGTON: I had no sports background, but he was on the basketball team. So I got to get that exposure. But I also then was made to feel quite inept because all these captains of football, track, were living in this dorm, and I was just, you know, ambling along as a nerd.

DONIN: [Laughs] So who became your sort of group of friends when you first got there?

WASHINGTON: In truth—good point. The most outlandish group of guys, headed by a young man called Gary Gibson, Elwood Gustus, Paul Jackson. And they were just outlandish and insane. But they were men of color. But they had no fear. It was like, this is their world and welcome to it. But I have to be honest because I was very busy also. I had to work—coming from a very meager background. I remember hitting campus with \$35. So right away I had to look for a campus job. So I worked in Thayer [Dining] Hall.

I also had a sense of adventure. So I immediately looked...went over to Hopkins Center and went to see what plays I could get into

because I had a lot of success in my high school in theater. So as opposed to doing nothing, I wanted to get involved with that. I also was impressed with Baker Library. And since I had worked at Teachers' College Library, I said that's the place I want to work at some point in time. So I was in there a lot. And just exploring Hanover. So I immediately joined the canoe club called the Ledyard, I should say, Canoe Club and learned how to canoe. And we'd take canoes out.

DONIN: Speaking of canoes....

WASHINGTON: Yes?

DONIN: Excuse me interrupting you. But did you choose to do a freshman trip when you first got there? Was everybody doing those trips then?

WASHINGTON: Freshman trips—I was invited to do that. But because I had to work at home, I had a summer job at Teachers' College, it was a financial decision in my mind. Then also I wasn't a jock. So even though they had invited us to go on these trails and I was a failed Boy Scout, I really didn't, you know, have these skills to successfully do the trip.

DONIN: Uh-huh. So you skipped that.

WASHINGTON: I skipped that, which I would urge anybody who goes to Dartmouth to do that because weeks into the term, all of a sudden we had a class president. And I was saying, Well, how did he become president? I never even met the guy. And I'm sure he had gone on that trip, and he had influenced people.

DONIN: Yes, yes.

WASHINGTON: So I guess that had something to do....

DONIN: I guess that's one of those bonding experiences that you probably missed out on.

WASHINGTON: Definitely.

DONIN: But it sounds like you found a group of friends to be with anyway.

WASHINGTON: Being an only child, I was very independent. Having a roommate whom I had known before I hit campus, made me very secure.

DONIN: Yes.

WASHINGTON: So I didn't feel like I had to go find anyone. I knew nothing about Frat Row. I knew nothing about "Animal House." But also I remember walking into our dormitory, first day, and there was a keg on the steps. But I didn't drink. You know I had a sweet tooth. Now if it was cake, I would have eaten the whole cake. [Laughter] But because it was beer, it was like, oh, thanks, but no thanks. So I didn't strive to fit into that crowd.

DONIN: So you said you headed right to the Hopkins Center which was, I guess, newly opened at that point—or relatively new.

WASHINGTON: And the reason it drew me so quickly was because it looks just like Lincoln Center in Manhattan, another home place. So it was a no-brainer.

DONIN: Was that something you were thinking about doing as a major, doing theater as a major?

WASHINGTON: In fact I have a dual major in government and drama.

DONIN: Ah-hah.

WASHINGTON: So, yes.

DONIN: And did you.... In those days, and we're talking, you know, the early 70s, was it common for you to have an advisor or a mentor who looked after you?

WASHINGTON: We had a freshman advisor, and I want to remember the professor's name. What I do remember is that he had a house off Occom Pond, and he invited us to a party. And he was a white-haired, distinguished-looking—I believe he was in the English department. And it was nice that he was there. But I really didn't pay him a lot of attention. And it's not his fault. But it just wasn't... He wasn't an individual whom I felt I had to get to know.

DONIN: Mm-hmm. And did you find that there were teachers, professors, in your classes that first year that you could go to and get advice from? Or you didn't feel you needed it?

WASHINGTON: Really, I think I was very independent. But my GPA probably suffered for that.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

WASHINGTON: To be honest with you. Because I was all over the radar. So from an education point of view, good. But for building a major and thinking about grad school, bad. I had written on my application that I wanted to become a lawyer. But I really enjoyed math. So engineering was in the back of my mind. And I knew I enjoyed theater. So with those three things in my mind, no one really sat me down and said this is the way you should go about this. But on the other hand, because no one in my family had gone to college, I was free to do whatever I wanted to do. And on top of that, because I had a full scholarship, I didn't feel the pressure to worry about, this is being paid for with this money, so I'd better do certain things.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

WASHINGTON: So I had total freedom in one sense. But it wasn't necessarily a smart freedom.

DONIN: So it sounds like you really sort of hit the ground running because you were an independent sort of person.

WASHINGTON: Yes.

DONIN: Part of that coming from the fact that you were an only child, you knew how to sort of get along on your own.

WASHINGTON: Definitely.

DONIN: So the idea of sort of finding a community of people to be with was not high on your list of priorities, it sounds like.

WASHINGTON: And in fact it was conflicting because I was Roman Catholic so I knew there was Aquinas House. But I didn't feel the need to go to Mass every week. There was the Afro Am, which was a great place, so I felt, you know, because of the music, there was someplace I could go and go to a party. But we were all male. I was the last all-male class. So it was going to be a matter of how were you going to find companionship?

- DONIN: Mm-hmm. How did people of color find girls to date?
- WASHINGTON: Well, you had to take a road trip.
- DONIN: Yes.
- WASHINGTON: You had to go to a sister school. And that meant you had to know upperclassmen who had cars or who knew what buses to get to go to the other schools.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- WASHINGTON: And that was a whole other way one had to go.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- WASHINGTON: But because if anything, I felt myself to be bisexual, I felt very lucky to be up at Dartmouth because there were...I had no problem with meeting people whom I could get close to.
- DONIN: Really! Interesting. That's a good thing.
- WASHINGTON: It was great! It wasn't an issue of me having to go like, say, to a gay center, and saying, I am gay, accept me into this community. It was just like looking around and seeing who else was out there and who was available and making friends with them.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- WASHINGTON: But it became an issue because at one point my freshman roommate said to me, "Well, where are you going?" Or "Where were you?" And I remember being in the bathroom sharing it with like ten other people and being put on the spot. And having to say to him, quite boldly, I said, "Well, I'm an independent person, and I can go and do what I want to do." And not wanting to be closeted from him individually, but not necessarily wanting to come out publicly in the jock dorm.
- DONIN: So—oh, yes, being in the jock dorm. Yes. What I was going to say is, the stories we're hearing from people who had either discovered or were discovering their sexual orientation in those days, during the 60s and 70s, it was not an easy thing to be a gay man on the campus. But you did not find it was a problem.



WASHINGTON: Not at all. Because the people whom I became friends with, they were, if anything, militant gay. And in the sense that they were very confident about who they were. They were very out about who they were. And they were used to being combative. So when one was putting out those vibes in an all-male environment, there was no hassle.

DONIN: Ah-hah. So did you ever get any sort of pushback from people who didn't accept the fact that you were gay?

WASHINGTON: Quite the opposite. I was shocked. I remember at the end of my freshman year, a good friend of mine, Gary, was in a confrontation with a black student because the black students were upset that he was so flamboyantly gay. And there was a big conference in the Afro Am. And we all had to go to the Am, and we were going to have all the black students, and we were going to have this debate or this confrontation about the way black gays were handling themselves on campus.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

WASHINGTON: And being representative of black people in their gayness. Gary was very upset about it. So I remember saying to him, "Gary, if you know what's going to happen and if this is going to be a confrontation—" And Gary was from Texas. "—Why don't you just go home if you've determined there's no reason for you to go to this meeting?" So because we were close friends, he felt relieved. He went home.

But the meeting still occurred. I went to the meeting, and surprisingly enough, my freshman roommate was at this meeting, too. And all these other black students were at this meeting. In the discussion that was going on, one of the students turned to me and said, "Harold, you're friends with these people. What do you think?" And I was shocked because I'm saying, even though they knew I was friends with them, no one had assumed that I was gay. And I told them what I thought. I said, "These are some of the most academically successful students on this campus, hence powerful. So I would give them their leeway. Don't mess with them. Leave them alone." And that was the end of the meeting.

DONIN: Good advice. So did you ever get involved in the sort of politics of being black on campus or black and gay on campus?

WASHINGTON: Only in that I was obviously black. So that was a statement. Going to the Afro Am, feeling free to do that. But myself, coming from New York and having come from an academic background that was mainly white, I felt that may be a trap in that seeking out a Gary Gibson who later became a Fulbright Scholar. Or a Paul Jackson who later became a professor. Seeking out these students of color who were academically excellent was more my goal than just being a black student. They may well have been academically excellent, but it wasn't obvious to me. And many of the black students who were here at that time, many of them were into sports. So even though that's definitely an indicator of intelligence, it might not be heralded that way. So I didn't have those skills. I didn't have the sports skills.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

WASHINGTON: So I was always looking to associate myself with people who were doing well academically, if I was going to associate myself with anyone.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

WASHINGTON: But then you have to remember I was very independent. So who do I spend my time with?

DONIN: Right, right. And you didn't have that much time to spend given everything else you were doing.

WASHINGTON: Not at all.

DONIN: So did you get involved in performing at the Hopkins Center?

WASHINGTON: Mainly because at that time, one of the main figures at the Hopkins Center was Errol Hill.

DONIN: Oh....

WASHINGTON: And Professor Hill—I remember two people who made a profound influence on me, was Sam Smith, who was in admissions, and Errol Hill. And I said, Well, if Errol's here, I have to do whatever Errol wants. You know, he has my full support, and I would hope that my efforts in dance and my efforts in the theater helped him become tenured.

DONIN: So you did—you performed in the theater.

WASHINGTON: I performed in the “Bacchae,” I performed—

DONIN: What was the word you used?

WASHINGTON: The “Bacchae.” It’s one of the classical plays.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

WASHINGTON: “The Bacchae.” I performed in “King Lear,” small part. And I fortunately got the lead in “Abraham,” which was an original play by Paul Jackson.

DONIN: Wow! Now did Jonathan say to me that you were in Pilobolus?

WASHINGTON: No. Alison Becker Chase, one of the founding members of Pilobolus, was a dance teacher at the time. I peeped into a dance class, never having taken dance. Dance was *verboten* in my household simply because my mother thought it was too ethnic. It was a stereotype in her mind. Tap dancing, performing, she just had bad vibes about it.

But I enjoyed seeing dancing. Because of Alvin Ailey, I’d seen a lot of him in New York. I’d seen Alvin Ailey, I’d seen other modern companies. I went to a dance class one day, and it looked like half the football team was up there because they were trying to do yoga to stretch so that they can improve their game. So I said, Well, if the football team can do dance, I can do dance. [Laughter] And so I enrolled in a couple of her classes.

But then it became a normal thing because dance was like at 8:00 in the morning. So what better way to start the day than to go to a dance class? Next thing I know, I’m signed up to do performances, which was a challenge at first. But I saw Merce Cunningham dance. I took Becker Chase’s class, and I did dance in a couple of programs that Alison put on initially. So I guess I was one of the original members of Pilobolus.

But I had no thought of being able to go dance. And one of the main reasons was that I had weightlifting. And I had delivered furniture before I had come to college. So I wasn’t going to—I didn’t have the stretch. I had the strength, and I had speed. But I couldn’t, you

know, get my body to do the things a real dancer needs to do. But I was able to learn how to choreograph.

And one of the nicest things that's ever happened to me was that after I had graduated from Dartmouth and I was at Tuck School, a young man knocked on my door out of the blue and says, "Professor Hill says come to you, and you should choreograph something for me for the talent show." And I said, "Oh, by the way, I have something in the back of my mind." So lo and behold, I choreographed a dance for Steve Rooks who later went on to become a lead dancer for Martha Graham. And recently he wrote me a little note and said, "Hey, I went into dance because of that experience that we had together on campus." So even though it was out of the blue for me to be involved with Pilobolus and dance.... I was shocked to see him one day dancing in Japan because I had no idea he went into dance.

DONIN: And it all started at Dartmouth.

WASHINGTON: It started at Dartmouth.

DONIN: Amazing...amazing. So, you know, this project that we're working on is obviously documenting how Dartmouth has changed over the last 60 years or so, through the view of people's feeling of community and what the Dartmouth community is. Did you ever have...I know you've emphasized that you were a fairly independent fellow. Did you ever have a sense of not belonging or of being sort of on the outside rather than on the inside? Were those experiences you had?

WASHINGTON: Because of the type of schools I'd gone to, I always felt, once you became a sophomore, then you had jumped a hurdle. You were a sophomore. So this space was yours. And when you were a junior, it was definitely yours. And a senior, you know, you owned the school. [Laughter]

It was funny because by my first year in Tuck School I had come and before the term had started had sat in Thayer Dining Hall to get a meal. And a young Caucasian freshman came up and sat right next to me and started talking to me. And in retrospect, I'm thinking he was just, you know, a good kid from the Midwest who was just being friendly, and he had picked a black student to sit and talk to. But I gave him this withering look. I said, "How dare you come and talk to me. I'm a grad student," you know. [Laughter] But it just

shows how strange my perception of entitlement was on the campus.

My senior year a young lady and I were dating. Dating? We went out. She made me laugh. Diane. Diane and I said, "Well, let's go to the senior prom for a lark." The senior prom was being held in Alumni Hall. We got dressed up to the nines. We went. And there were no black people there. And when we walked in, we knew immediately that this was a place we were not welcome. So we turned around, and we left.

A couple of weeks later, walking across The Green, after having performed in Hopkins Center, after having worked for the library system and being a senior fellow in the library system, I heard the word "Nigger!" and I looked all around me. It was comical because I wanted to see who was being called a nigger in Hanover. I had heard the word many times in the Bronx but never in Hanover. No one else was on the campus but me, and this speeding car went by with these young white kids. And I was shocked, not—because of where I was, and I was getting ready to walk and get my degree. I had been to Spain, I had been to Africa. I was shocked.

I ran to Casque & Gauntlet to find my freshman roommate. I said, "Rick! Rick! Someone just called me a nigger." And he laughed at me because he had played basketball. So that wasn't an uncommon occurrence for somebody on a team. But I had gone through four years in Hanover and never realized that that word could be heard on campus.

So that experience, it was traumatic for me only because I had gone those years without realizing. After he explained to me, I said, "Oh, I was just protected." The way I had gone through Hanover, I lived in a bubble in the ivory tower and never really realized the things that were going on. That was another time when I can now realize, only because I didn't have a clue that that was going on. But those were the only two times I can really say that I didn't feel like the campus was mine.

DONIN:

Uh-huh. So we can't forget to also talk about the fact that—and you alluded to it—in 1972 women arrived on campus as students. And this Diane person you mentioned who went to the prom with you, was she a student, or was she an off-campus—

WASHINGTON: She was a transfer student, and she lived in California. I've forgotten what school she transferred from. But she wanted to come here, and she got her degree from here.

DONIN: Uh-huh. And how did that change the campus for you?

WASHINGTON: Not at all. And the only reason that was, was because I worked in the library system.

DONIN: Surrounded by women. [Laughs]

WASHINGTON: Smart women. Very smart women. And, oh, the head of the Feldburg Library, Phyllis Jaynes. And I just realized, because I looked her up recently on the Internet, she worked for the college for 40 years, and she'd put together the engineering library and the business school library and became in charge of all user services for the whole library and helped form Berry Library. In New York City I worked for a very sharp woman who was from England, Ann Riato. She was a librarian. So as far as intelligence and capability, I had very clear images that women were capable, at least in academia. So their coming on campus didn't affect me *per se*.

But I did have a traumatic experience. I had to decide whether to tap into KKK, Kappa Kappa Kappa, or go to Africa.

DONIN: Was this on a Foreign Study Program?

WASHINGTON: Foreign Study Program to Sierra Leone.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

WASHINGTON: I finally made the decision to go to Africa. Eight students were going, all people of color: six guys, two women. The women were transfer students, very independent women, very capable. Our group leader, Ahmed, was from the Middle East. I think he was out of Harvard.

His perceptions of a woman were, they had a place. Having grown up in the South Bronx from a single mother, I understood the independence of black women. Before we left to go to Africa, I said to him, "Maybe it's a good idea that you not let these two women go simply because it's obvious from our classes to date that you are having friction with them, and you're having a problem." And he said, "No, no. They're going to go, and they're going to obey me."

DONIN: Oh! He said “obey?”

WASHINGTON: Obey. And from a man’s point of view, he was our teacher. I can understand him wanting obedience. Because if you really think about it, he can make or break you academically. Because three of our grades our whole term are going to be graded by him. We went to Africa. Oddly enough, oh, “Roots,” the lead guy in “Roots” was on the plane with us.

DONIN: The guy who wrote—Haley?

WASHINGTON: Not Haley. The one who, the actor who—Kunta Kinte.

DONIN: Yes.

WASHINGTON: Yes. He was. But I didn’t really know who he was until after “Roots” came out.

But we flew then 12 hours to Africa. Get to Africa. Fantastic experience. We met the president, Jacques Stevens. The women, two black women who were very clear about who they are, were stars. They were going out with ministers. They were driving around in Mercedes Benz. They were doing whatever they wanted to do whenever they wanted to do it.

Every day Ahmed would pull all the six guys into a room and tell us how wrong they were, how they were not doing what women should do. How they were terrible people. And I knew this was not right. But I also understood it was coming from him in a cultural sense. But it was an issue of people of color.

We survived Africa. We get back home. They were up for charges to be expelled. And I’m thinking about this, and I’m saying, Well, it’s not their fault *per se*. Yes, they could have been more obedient. Yes, they could have done what they were told to do, just like we guys did what we were told to do. But on the other hand, they would have never made it to Dartmouth if that was their mindset, and because of all the other forces on women and people of color.

So I broke down one day. I was going by the administration building. I think it was Parkhurst. Went in, found a dean, and just poured my heart out about how it was the worst time I’d ever had on Dartmouth campus and the reasons why. Lo and behold, the

young women got sanctioned, but they didn't get expelled, and they were able to graduate.

DONIN: Ah-hah!

WASHINGTON: And Ahmed went on to teach somewhere else.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

WASHINGTON: So all the experiences I'd had up to that point—being an only child of a single mother, being at Dartmouth, understanding the forces as they came into play, and helping the college solve a difficult situation.

DONIN: This was your junior year, you said?

WASHINGTON: Senior year. Second term of my senior year. Because we went in the fall. We went to Africa—actually, no. When did we go? We went to Africa in the winter of my senior year. So this was the spring just before we walked....

DONIN: The final term.

WASHINGTON: Yes.

DONIN: That's pretty powerful stuff.

WASHINGTON: Yes, it was. Only because of the coeducational issues and all that was going on, politically and just at the college.

DONIN: So how would you describe the way your community at Dartmouth changed from when you first arrived there as a freshman to the spring of your senior year? Did your community change?

WASHINGTON: Yes. Well, only because I changed. You know, I was a freshman trying to learn the ropes to I was a senior having to decide whether to accept being tapped by a frat and whether to go to Africa and where to go to grad school. Professor Hill said to me, "If you want to go to the Yale School of Drama, I can get you in." Because he had gone there. Professor Radway, my government professor, said, "If you really want to go to the Air Force Academy, I have the connections. You can go there." And Tuck School said to me, "Even though you have no business background, we'll give you a chance. You can go there."



So my community changed in that I understood I still needed to go on to school. But I had evolved into it. And I'd have to say, Phyllis Jaynes did also say she would have helped me get into library school.

DONIN: Pretty great choices you had there.

WASHINGTON: Yes.

DONIN: Sounds like your community broadened.

WASHINGTON: Very much so.

DONIN: Or deepened.

WASHINGTON: Because of going to Spain, because of going to Africa, and later on Tuck School offered me the chance to go and work in Japan for a summer. So the world opened up, yes. It did. I never really looked at it that way but it did.

DONIN: So you did sort of stick your toe into Greek life, but then didn't take the plunge because of these other opportunities for you.

WASHINGTON: And I have to admit to this day I have never been to a party on Greek Row. I used to walk all the way, because Aquinas House—

DONIN: Yes.

WASHINGTON: If you know where it is, it's at the end of Greek Row. But Diane and I used to go on Saturdays so we could watch "The Jeffersons" and "Archie Bunker." Those were the two shows we used to....  
[Laughter] Because they had... At that time, you couldn't get a signal in Hanover.

DONIN: Right.

WASHINGTON: That was the only place they had cable. And we would walk all the way down. And it's a terrible thing for a Catholic to say, I would walk to Aquinas House to watch those two shows every week. [Laughter] And I never went into a Greek.... But the Afro Am was a house.

DONIN: That was your community.

WASHINGTON: That was my community. And I only went through there because I really didn't hang out there, you know. I mean it was like entitlement. I could walk in, and it was one of those places I could walk in on campus where other people wouldn't dare walk in. Okay? So in that sense it was, you know, a place. But I didn't—you know it was walking.

DONIN: So you spent another two years then at Tuck—immediately following graduation?

WASHINGTON: Well, I should have taken a break because I really wasn't clear in my mind where to go to school. I was afraid.... I took my LSATs but I was afraid to go to law school because I was from New York and I remember sitting down one day and opening up the *Yellow Pages* and looking up lawyers and seeing how many lawyers were in New York.

And I had no connections. Refer back to Rick Jones again. Rick's uncle was a judge in the Bronx. So it was clear that Rick going on to Georgetown Law School made sense because he would know what to do with it when he got out. I didn't have those connections. And I was afraid of, well, what are you going to do? How are you going to feed yourself? You know, what's going to happen, knowing my financial situation?

So I said, well, you're here. Apply to a business school. And I applied to Tuck School. First year, still thinking about drama, thinking about everything. Did miserably academically. Did very well in what was it? Human behavior. An A+. We didn't have grades *per se*. But it was an A++ because of drama. Anything involving talking to people and understanding organizational behavior, did very well. Hadn't taken any accounting. Hadn't taken any math even though I loved those things. But all of a sudden I'm there, needing to do all these things. Did miserably!

Fortunately I got a summer internship at Citibank, and I said, Well, you'd better take a break here, buddy. And I stayed in Citibank as opposed to trying to come back and do my second year.

DONIN: Great.

WASHINGTON: Yes. I was lucky.

DONIN: So it opened the door for you.

WASHINGTON: It did. It definitely opened. But one of the questions about being an insider and an outsider, my interview at Citibank was walking in, having lunch in the executive dining hall. And the person who was interviewing me saying he was the class of, I think, '69 or something like that. So that opened my eyes immediately to what it meant to be part of the Dartmouth family.

DONIN: Uh-huh.

WASHINGTON: I had no idea, you know.

DONIN: Those were the days that that worked. You could get a job based on going to the same college.

WASHINGTON: But I also had a traumatic experience with that. A young lady, who worked at 399 Park Avenue, who had recently graduated from Tuck School, beautiful office. Glass desk. She was in the front part of the bank. I was in the back part in operations on Wall Street.

We were... I had come up and I met her in the office and she was bemoaning to me, she was saying how her classmates right now had all passed her up the corporate ladder. And then it made sense to me, only because the clients—she had to see clients and she had to get funds and control funds. What reason would people have to give millions of dollars to her, as opposed to someone who looked like their son? But it became very clear about the ceiling that women faced, the ceiling that people of color faced. So in one sense, I became disenchanted with banking.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

WASHINGTON: But it was logical. I said, well, yes, you know.

DONIN: So have you maintained a sense of community with Dartmouth since you graduated? Or has it changed at all?

WASHINGTON: It changed. I was in.... Well, '78 I decided, I'll go back to something I had learned in third, fourth, and fifth grade. I enlisted in the military. I had missed the Vietnam War, but that worried me, I said, because if I get drafted—which was a possibility; I think I was in the last draft—I'll be a mine-chaser because I had no skills in the military. So I'll do two years in the military, I'll learn something so that in the event that I have to serve, I'll have a skill.

Went down to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, signed up. They said, “Well, you have a degree. You can’t just sign up for two years. You have to be an officer.” I said, “Oh, well, okay.” Took the test. I said, Well, I’ll try to be a pilot. No aptitude. Never been in the cockpit. Knew nothing about flying. But did very well academically.

So I was offered two jobs: a weatherman, no excitement, or program manager. So I said, well, that sounded interesting. I’ll try that. Got to work with the Israeli Air Force selling F-16s. Very educational, very good. It showed me again the power of a Dartmouth degree because I was doing presentations at the Pentagon, doing things I had never thought, you know, I would ever do. And I’m sure that was because of the education I had, being in Spain, being in Africa, and also understanding the dynamics of government.

DONIN: What happened after that?

WASHINGTON: I resigned my commission after two years because I understood very clearly that selling F-16s to places like Spain and other developing nations wasn’t necessarily the best thing for the world.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

WASHINGTON: Had I become a pilot, I might have made a career of it, you know. It was a family. It gave me a chance to extend adventures. But understanding what I was doing, I said I didn’t need to do that.

DONIN: So you were saying how your, over the years, how your Dartmouth community changed.

WASHINGTON: I said the Air Force to explain that all of a sudden I ended up in Fairborn, Ohio. I ended up in Fairborn, Ohio, and I was working at Wright State University with quadriplegics. The dean of Wright State Medical School was a Dartmouth alumnus. Well, he understood I was working with a young man called Jeff Hausch, who had worked with Dr. — oh, what was his name? — Petrovski, who was working with computers and quadriplegics.

He invited me to his mansion to help interview Dartmouth students. So all of a sudden, from obscurity, I was pulled back into a Dartmouth family in a very bizarre way, because the other people doing the interviewing were all Dartmouth because he was the dean

of the med school. His group of students were Dartmouth. So I was pulled back into the family. I had forgotten about it in a sense because I never really depended on a family once I left New York. And started interviewing students. And that was like in 1987 *per se*. And have been doing that off and on since '87.

DONIN: Oh, so you're a—what do they call it? An alumni—

WASHINGTON: Interviewer.

DONIN: Interviewer.

WASHINGTON: Yes.

DONIN: Oh, terrific. Yes.

WASHINGTON: So, yes, I'm always telling people, go to college. And if you can't go to a Dartmouth, go somewhere and do everything you can do.

DONIN: Mm-hmm.

WASHINGTON: And if you go to Dartmouth, travel.

DONIN: Oh, right.

WASHINGTON: Don't just stay on campus.

DONIN: Do you think Dartmouth's location impacted for you personally your experience at all? You know, being isolated the way you were up there in the mountains.

WASHINGTON: Definitely. It was good. I mean canoeing. I wouldn't try to canoe on the East River. [Laughter] So that was good. Oh, I didn't mention I joined the figure-skating club. I worked with the McGeans who were Olympic champions.

DONIN: Yes.

WASHINGTON: And I would come to New York and go to Rockefeller Center. And I remember even getting applause because of the little edges I could hold. I couldn't jump, but I could hold an edge.

DONIN: Yes.

- WASHINGTON: So those experiences were definitely Dartmouth.
- DONIN: Yes. So you learned to sort of be outdoorsy a little bit doing the canoing and the—
- WASHINGTON: Outdoorsy. I wasn't brave enough to do skiing, and I regret that. I should have done cross-country at least. But I remember going Saturdays in the mornings to Thayer Hall in freshman year, and you see guys who are all "Yeah! We're going out skiing!" And I remember seeing them at dinner with casts on their legs. [Laughter] So, you know, I said I wasn't going to do that.
- DONIN: I'm with you. So let's see here. Can you sum up for us how being immersed in this Dartmouth family, this Dartmouth community, changed you over those four years? Or for you more than four years because you were there at Tuck for about a year.
- WASHINGTON: It made me sensitive. It made me a global person. I became sensitive to the issues of the world. For me as a person of color, it made me a lot more knowledgeable about why people of color suffer the way they do in this country, which is important. It also prevented me from doing a lot of damage because I'd been put in positions where I could make decisions to expunge places of people of color if they don't fit to a certain standard. But because of my growing up in the South Bronx, while I see that it may not be up to the certain standard, I understand why. So then my solution to that would be different. And I'm happy that that's happened because I know there's a lot of damage I could have done to my career that I haven't done. And then I think that's very important.
- DONIN: Mm-hmm.
- WASHINGTON: And Dartmouth's education's been very important to me.
- DONIN: Great. I think we're done unless there's anything else you wanted to say. I saw you brought notes, but you've covered everything?
- WASHINGTON: We've talked about it all.
- DONIN: Oh, perfect. Okay. Then I'm going to turn off the recording, Hal.
- WASHINGTON: Okay. Thank you.
- DONIN: Thank you.

**[End of Interview]**