

Dennis M. Young '69  
Dartmouth College Oral History Program  
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World  
September 7, 2013

WILLIAMS: This is Shan Williams. I'm doing the interviews for the Dartmouth Black History oral history program, and I'm here with Dennis Young, and we're gonna talk about his experience at Dartmouth as an undergraduate and then his experience a little bit afterwards.

So just to start off, could you tell us about your life before coming to Dartmouth?

YOUNG: Well, I came to Dartmouth in September of 1965. I'm a Class of '69. I lived and went to school in Dallas, Texas, Lincoln High School from 1961 to 1965. It was an all-black high school, but the significance of that high school was that most of our teachers there had advanced degrees. They were not allowed to teach in the colleges and universities in Dallas because of segregation. Most of them had master's degrees and some even had PhDs. Because of segregation they were teaching high school,—

WILLIAMS: Wow.

YOUNG: —which gave us a distinct advantage in terms of our academic preparation.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm. So, then, what made you choose Dartmouth?

YOUNG: I think back in '62 some representatives from Dartmouth came to Lincoln High School, recruiting students. I subsequently learned that this recruitment was a program that Richard Joseph had started at Dartmouth. But, yes, two Dartmouth students came to the high school, to Lincoln High School, and gave my sophomore class a presentation on Dartmouth College.

WILLIAMS: So, then, once you came to Dartmouth, can you talk about kind of the experience coming to Dartmouth, maybe some of your first thoughts and then how you kind of integrated into the Dartmouth community a little bit?

YOUNG: Well, I first came to Hanover on the train from Dallas through Chicago. I got off at White River Junction. Met some Dartmouth students on the train from Minnesota and North Dakota. I lived in Lord Hall with two other roommates. My first significant experiences were just the impact that the Upper Valley had on me. It was the type of academic setting that I wanted. I was looking for an academic setting similar to a monastery. I didn't want to go to a big city school. Hanover and the Upper Valley -- the pastoral setting worked for me. Baker Library, the upper Connecticut Valley and the academic atmosphere of the college just worked for me and my particular mindset. So for me, it was where I wanted to be and what I wanted to do.

WILLIAMS: Had you seen the campus before you arrived?

YOUNG: I saw still photos of the campus. The recruiters showed my high school class still photos of Dartmouth and Amherst and Williams. Those were the other two college campuses that I liked because of their rural and pastoral type setting. Yes, mm-hm.

WILLIAMS: Right, right. Absolutely. Was the winter a bit of a shock at all? [Chuckles.]

YOUNG: Yeah, I didn't know anything about winter. [Laughter.] I didn't see pictures of winter.

WILLIAMS: [Laughs.] They don't show you those. [Laughs.]

YOUNG: Yeah, winter came just harshly and drastically.

WILLIAMS: [Laughs.] And didn't end.

YOUNG: Well, it was why I left, the East Coast after I graduated. I did not want to go to graduate school on the East Coast because of the winters.

WILLIAMS: [Laughs.] Oh, absolutely. I'm a native Floridian, so it was also a little bit of a shock to me. [Laughs.] You know, they told me. I figured, at least, *Okay, well, it's cold. I understand.* I couldn't have understood what they meant. Like, I had no conception of what it would be like. [Laughs.]

- YOUNG: I'm looking forward to a retirement place in Sarasota.
- WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah. Right by Garvey [Clarke].
- YOUNG: Yeah. Yes, Garvey.
- WILLIAMS: Mm-hm. I think he lives maybe ten minutes south of me, so—I live in St. Petersburg.
- YOUNG: I was with Garvey last week.
- WILLIAMS: Oh, really? How wonderful!
- YOUNG: Yeah, we went to St. Petersburg, too.
- WILLIAMS: Oh, really? Yeah, that's my city. [Laughs.]
- YOUNG: Alright.
- WILLIAMS: Well, I wanted to ask a little bit about maybe how your upbringing and your early years contributed to your sense of community and belonging at Dartmouth.
- YOUNG: Well, I guess my upbringing was somewhat similar to most kids who grew up in the South. I grew up in the 1960's, era of civil rights. While I was in high school, some significant events occurred. One of them being the March on Washington in 1963. Then later on that year, the JFK assassination, which many of us witnessed as high school students because we walked to downtown Dallas to watch President Kennedy come through.
- WILLIAMS: Oh, right.
- YOUNG: That had a significant impact on me. To watch a sitting president get assassinated right before your eyes. So, it sorta left a bad taste in my mouth with the South that probably still lingers today. So, my sense of community, based upon being a black American in a Southern city that just killed a president, left me not wanting to be a part of the South anymore. So, I wanted to get out of Texas and the South as quickly as I could, and that's why I went to Hanover.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm.

YOUNG: And I haven't really been back to the South, to Dallas since, because the assassination left me with a bitter taste. Some of the things that local people said right after he was assassinated were very hard for me as a 16 year old to swallow. My sense of community evolved from the fact that I grew up in a high school and a community that was mostly black professionals: doctors, lawyers, plumbers, postmen, carpenters, who all lived in one part of the city before they were allowed to live in other parts of the city. Segregation meant that all the educated black professionals lived in one area – South Dallas where I lived.

I had a paper route, a morning paper route - The Dallas Morning News. I delivered newspapers to these educated black professionals every morning for five years. I never missed a day. I had many discussions with these professionals on the weekends and Sundays when I collected payment from them. So I had a pretty good sense of what a black professional was and how they got through it in terms of the colleges and universities that they went to. And I believe, because of that experience, that community experience, I had a number of what I would call community mentors who were educated, and who looked out for me and the smarter kids in our high school. And at that time, growing up, the smarter kids prevailed and were the most respected and looked up to.

Today it's the athletes, hip-hoppers and the gang-bangers who everyone wants to emulate, but when I was growing up, it was the smarter kids and the professors and the doctors and the lawyers who everyone wanted to emulate. And that's what I wanted to be, and that's why I came to Hanover, to get an academic foundation in doing that.

And when I arrived in Hanover, I just wanted to be part of an academic community. I loved Baker Library. I just took-a-liking to the physical structure of the library. I met a few black students from Chicago and Texas. We began to share stories we read from the New York Times and discuss current events. This period of time was right in the middle of the civil rights movement – the 1960's. We would discuss

current events and get together on the Green, off the Green, in the library, in our rooms to discuss these events.

And in the summers — my first summer after my freshman year (1966), I went to New York City, and I worked with a youth project in New York City. At the end of the summer, I went down to Atlanta and worked for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

WILLIAMS: Wow, yeah.

YOUNG: And that's where I met some of the representatives of the movement — Stokely Carmichael, Ron Karenga, Marion Berry, Julian Bond. Some of whom became friends. When we got back that sophomore year, I think that's when we started thinking about the—it may have been before the summer—we started thinking about putting together some type of organization. A group of us got together and formed the African-American Society. And I think that was the spring of '66, before I went down to Atlanta. Yeah. I have the specific dates at home. I could correct that and give it to you. (Bob Bennett, Ron Neal, Al Sloan and I started planning what became the African American Society in my room - 206 Lord Hall - in the Spring Quarter of 1966.)

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Absolutely. That'd be wonderful.

YOUNG: I did have the original minutes of the first few meetings and everything, but I think I gave them to one of the Afro-Am presidents, and they said they were going to archive them.

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

YOUNG: And I haven't seen them since.

WILLIAMS: Since?

YOUNG: Right.

WILLIAMS: Oh, no. Oh, no. [Laughs.]

YOUNG: So that was the sense of community that I came from and the community that I went to? Because during that period of

time there was so much going on in the civil rights movement, there was a lot for us to discuss.

WILLIAMS: Right.

YOUNG: And that's what we ended up doing, you know? I changed majors from engineering to political science—

WILLIAMS: Oh, wow.

YOUNG: —because of my interest in what was going on during the time.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm. It was a very politically charged time.

YOUNG: Right. Mm-hm.

WILLIAMS: That makes a lot of sense.

So, then, if you could just, you know, maybe for clarification, kind of talk about what community really means to you and maybe how that played into what you—If you're describing your Dartmouth experience, how you would describe community within Dartmouth, if that makes any sense. It's kind of a broad question. [Chuckles.]

YOUNG: Yeah. I guess community to me in terms of an educational, eleemosynary institution—I was looking for an academic community. I mean, not a social community, and I even think at the time, not even a cultural community, unless academics was the culture. I came to a place—I mean, I wanted to go to a monastery because I wanted to do four years of just working on me and learning.

WILLIAMS: Right.

YOUNG: So Dartmouth provided that—Dartmouth provided the academic community for me to spend time exploring the world, which I was able to do through classrooms, Baker Library, travel abroad. And I took advantage of all those things. So that's the community to me, the academic community.

It just so happened that during that particular time, the civil rights movement was going on. There were academic courses of study that my group and some of the other young black scholars who were there in the mid 1960's got involved in. We took courses in political science, international relations. We studied the role the civil rights movement played in national and international politics.

WILLIAMS: Absolutely.

YOUNG: We studied the Russian and French Revolution and compared those revolutions to current history and national politics. The issues of the day were interesting to us because of the civil rights struggle. We formed our own little study group... We didn't call it a 'study group' at that time, but we studied most every night in the bottom of Baker Library, where the murals are. Four or five of us studied together. We sat at that first big table as you come into Baker on the Parkhurst side. You go down in the basement where all big study tables are beneath the Orozco murals. The murals were an inspiration. That first table on the right was our table.

We would meet downstairs in Baker. We studied about eight hours a day- four hours in the afternoon, four hours at night. Some of us would study longer. I worked at the Periodicals desk in Baker library. I could go in and out when others couldn't. We were at that study table regularly. We would read, study, and argue about history and politics.

WILLIAMS: So this is aside from your work or this was what you were doing in class?

YOUNG: These were classes.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

YOUNG: And many of us took similar types of classes. We took the same history and politics classes. We would read and debate the issues down there. But we wouldn't just read the assignment that the professor gave us; we would read ahead, and we would read the supplemental readings, and we would discuss those.

And our objective was to get to class the next day, where it would be three or four of us in a class, or two or three of us in a class, and we would try to corner the professor, especially Professor Potholm and Professor Sterling. [Laughter.] We tried to corner the professor, get him boxed in. That's what we tried to do in class. There were maybe six, seven of us at the table studying and everyone in Baker knew that it was our table. We'd come in sometimes, and there'd be some other students there, some white students there, and we'd sort of look at 'em funny and look at 'em funny, and they'd say, "Okay." [Claps hands.] And they'd go to another table.

WILLIAMS: [Laughs.]

YOUNG: We loved to study and debate history and politics. It was interesting today listening to undergraduates talk about how the current community treats black students today in 2013. Some abrasive white students have even questioned the black students' right to be there, their academic credentials. And I look at that behavior, and I guess we were guilty of that too, because we were some very well prepared black men. We used to challenge other students in class. For example, when one of the white students made a comment in class that showed he didn't do the work, we had a saying among us, and we'd tease the unprepared white student with comments like: "Oh, he must be a legacy admit."

WILLIAMS: Oh, no! Interesting.

YOUNG: Implying simply that he was not prepared that day or not as good as we were academically.

WILLIAMS: Interesting. Uh-huh.

YOUNG: So we teased the frat boys and some of the white students commenting like, "You must be a legacy admit. Your daddy must have gone here. My daddy didn't go here. That's why I study."

WILLIAMS: [Laughs.]

YOUNG: And so I'm looking at how that's reversed now—

WILLIAMS: Huh! Yeah.

YOUNG: —and how we used it defensively because we were proud of our scholarship. We were in a little group and we were on the Dean's List.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm.

YOUNG: And everybody in the group would challenge each other — the scholar dozens — “Did you write the book in international politics?” “Did you write the book in world history?” “How much (what score) did you get in this or that course.” And that's what we looked at. That's what impressed our group.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

YOUNG: There was one guy — freshman when we were sophomores. I won't mention his name, but he graduated in three years, with our class because he was smart and he studied. He frequently participated in our group debates. Members of that study cartel started the African-American Society. We also published this little magazine called *Blackout*. We published and distributed works of poetry, art, articles and stories - not just written by Dartmouth students, but black students attending the other Ivy League schools.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm.

YOUNG: We looked at ourselves as our own little academic community. We told others who wanted to participate in that study group, “Well, yeah, you can come, but” — don't come in here unless you've read [Frantz] Fanon.”

WILLIAMS: Ah. Interesting.

YOUNG: “Don't come in here unless you've read *The Wretched of the Earth*. Because if you can't defend your opinion, you don't understand our purpose. —or “Don't come if you haven't read [Albert] Camus or Nietzsche.” Beause you need some kind of philosophical foundation “to contribute and discuss these issues with us.”

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

- YOUNG: And so that was the community that I was a part of.
- WILLIAMS: Mm-hm. So would you say that community changed over time in any way?
- YOUNG: I think the college became more political over the years. After we started the African-American Society in the Spring Quarter of 1966, I continued to participate in the activities of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee on college campuses in the northeast. SNCC's northeast planning group organized a college tour for Stokely Carmichael in 1967. Stokely spoke at several Ivy League colleges. We invited Stokely Carmichael to Hanover.
- WILLIAMS: Right.
- YOUNG: He spoke in Webster Hall. What is now the Rauner Archives. After his address to the college, he came to my room in Lord Hall, talked to students until past midnight and slept on my couch.
- WILLIAMS: Mm-hm. Oh, wow!
- YOUNG: We stayed up all night, talking,—
- WILLIAMS: That's so cool.
- YOUNG: —the way political activists usually hang out.
- WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.
- YOUNG: Dartmouth invited George Wallace to campus when he was running for president. A small group of black students, incensed by his political and personal atrocities made sure that he wasn't going to speak on our campus?
- WILLIAMS: Right. I've heard of this, mm-hm.
- YOUNG: We did it. I got called to the dean's office and was verbally reprimanded.
- WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

YOUNG: And what impressed me so much about the Wallace event was that after the black students wouldn't allow him to speak in...

WILLIAMS: Webster Hall?

YOUNG: Webster Hall, yeah. And that's where Wallace was trying to speak. We shouted him down. We wouldn't let him speak. And then after he left Webster Hall and got into his limo, the white students just ran him out of town.

WILLIAMS: Really!

YOUNG: I was impressed with my fellow students.

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

YOUNG: So that's how I think the academic community changed. It became more political with the times.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm. So, then, did you find that you fit into that community, or, you know, were there ways in which you felt maybe—

YOUNG: Fit into what?

WILLIAMS: This academic community that was growing over time.

YOUNG: Oh, it was mine.

WILLIAMS: [Chuckles.] Oh, it was yours?

YOUNG: There was no question about that. A couple of the guys, black students, and a couple of white students that were a part of these study hall or study groups that we had that would discuss things. We all felt that, we were — how can I put it delicately — intellectually, at the top of our class, intellectually at the top of our age group.

WILLIAMS: Right.

YOUNG: And that's the way I felt: Intellectually I was at the top of my age group, not just from Dallas but also in Hanover.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

YOUNG: So being at the top of my age group intellectually, it always meant that I was challenging somebody, sometimes in a fun way but oftentimes you say—I mean, “You’re here in this perfect academic community. *Do* something with it. Don’t come up here just because your daddy was here,” you know. And we’d do that a lot. We’d argue with some white kid whose daddy was there, and he didn’t know nothin’ because he didn’t read!

WILLIAMS: Right, right.

YOUNG: You know? And we did read all the time, and we said, “When you read it, you come back and you can discuss it with us. You cannot talk to us about the civil rights movement if you don’t know anything about what happened in 1947 in Harlem,” you know?

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm.

YOUNG: “If you don’t know about this riot or that person,” you know, “When you come back, then we’ll discuss it with you. Now you just be a legacy admit and go drink beer.” And that’s the way we would handle that.

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh. Interesting. Yeah.

YOUNG: So in terms of whether or not—fitting into the community? John Sloan Dickey, who was the president at the time, told me something—because he lived right across from Lord Hall, and I’d see him walking his dog in the evenings. And he was open, and I’d go up and talk to John Sloan Dickey as he walked his dog. He said, “Dennis, Dartmouth is yours. This is *your* school. You can make it or you can change it, and that’s what we expect of the undergraduate students. We expect this to be a living institution. This is *your* time. You determine what it’s going to be.” And we took John Sloan Dickey’s words to heart.

WILLIAMS: Right.

YOUNG: I mean, it wasn’t a matter of whether I was coming to a place that was going to accept *me*; Dartmouth was *mine*. And so it

was for [chuckles] mostly everybody else that was there during the late 1960's. The way I viewed Dartmouth in the late 1960's and the way some of the other black students viewed it, we were here because we were *overly* prepared academically.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

YOUNG: And we challenged those who weren't.

WILLIAMS: Mmm.

YOUNG: Black *and* white.

WILLIAMS: Mhmm. Int'resting. Okay.

So, then, I guess maybe I might shift a little bit and talk sort about... You're talking about how you've kind of taken ownership, you know, of Dartmouth. Did you find that there were ways in which that was a challenge or a struggle? I wanted to focus a little bit about kind of insider and outsider relationships to the Dartmouth community, 'cause I think that's something that students struggle with a lot, you know, right now. So I didn't know if maybe you could speak to—if that was a little bit of your experience and how you kind of overcame that, if you felt that at all.

YOUNG: Well...insider/outsider. I mean, I guess what you're trying to say is: Did we feel that the color of our skin made a difference?

WILLIAMS: Mmm.

YOUNG: I would say we felt that we were different because of the color of our skin, but we weren't different academically, and so therefore we were academic insiders. Now, socially we'd go down to Holyoke or Boston or other places to meet women. None of us went to college to be social.

WILLIAMS: Right.

YOUNG: Insider/outsider— the cultural side of the black-white relationships have always been separate. Dartmouth to us was a microcosm. We founded the African-American Society

as a philosophical organization – a forum for the expression of ideas -- where professors and students, black and white were invited to speak and debate the great ideas of the day. The African American Society was not started as organization for insiders. It was not just for black students.

WILLIAMS: Right, right.

YOUNG: The African American Society was entirely different. We tried to deal with the diaspora, with national and international politics, not just the civil rights movement in the U.S. but the freedom movements in Africa and South America. I don't think we considered ourselves outsiders when it came to fraternities and partying and all like that, which wasn't why we were there. We considered ourselves insiders academically. The fraternities and party guys who wasted their academic gifts weren't prepared to compete with us in class— *they* were the outsiders—

WILLIAMS: Right, Yeah.

YOUNG: —academically. And this is an academic institution.

WILLIAMS: Institution, okay. Mm-hm.

YOUNG: So our mindset was focused on the academic institution. It wasn't focused on "What's gonna happen Friday or Saturday night?"

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

YOUNG: It was OK for the in-crowd to go and have their party at the fraternities. Most Saturday afternoons I'd probably be in Baker, at least until dinner time. And back in Baker on Sunday afternoons.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm.

YOUNG: So it wasn't that.

WILLIAMS: Right.

YOUNG: So the insider-outsider problem that they have now is in my opinion based upon a mindset that seeks acceptance

socially and culturally. Today (2012), it seems Dartmouth is moving more towards a social institution. For me, it was an academic monastery.

WILLIAMS: Right.

YOUNG: It was an academic institution. And it was my academic institution. That's where I belonged. And the group that I studied with,— it was our time, and that's what we were trying to accomplish.

WILLIAMS: Right. Yeah.

YOUNG: I think all of us finished on the Dean's List and several finished *cum laude or better*.

WILLIAMS: Oh, wow, yeah.

YOUNG: And that was our objective. We all admired Richard Joseph, Class of 1965, not because he was Rhodes Scholar, but because he finished *summa cum laude*(?).

WILLIAMS: Wow.

YOUNG: That was our objective. And so the insider-outsider thing going on now, in my opinion, has evolved into a situation where many are trying to be socially a part of—

WILLIAMS: Mmm. Yeah.

YOUNG: —an academic institution.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

So, then, after you left the college, would you say that your relationship as an alumni has changed over time, or how is that kind of different than your experience as an undergrad?

YOUNG: Once we got more black students in Hanover it appears that they have perhaps viewed social inclusion as more of a priority. As an alum, I've heard about these social issues on campus and how the campus focus has changed. I interact with a few Dartmouth alums, mostly black alums. I participate in a few of Dartmouth's cultural events. In

Hanover, we seldom participated in social events with white students outside the College anyway.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm.

YOUNG: So as an alum, I've just become more aware of how the institution has changed, and I don't think it's changed the way in which I interact with the alums. I've been on admission panels a few times and interviewed various types of students we were seeking admission. I've seen how the entering student has changed. But I don't think they're as academically focused as we were. And the times are different now. You guys don't have the political pressures we had in the mid '60s. So I think it's a little bit harder for you to conflate academics with life itself — It's a little harder for you to connect academically with the social world.

WILLIAMS: Right.

YOUNG: In my time, it wasn't.

WILLIAMS: Right.

YOUNG: The world and academics were the same.

WILLIAMS: So, then, do you think the academic community that you're describing includes alumni, as far as Dartmouth is concerned?

YOUNG: At Dartmouth?

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm.

YOUNG: Again, it's like what John Sloan Dickey said, "This is your school," "You participate as much or as little as you want." Yeah, the school would welcome alums with open arms if they wanted to participate, but they're not going to come over to your house and knock on the door and wait for you to come out and decide to participate.

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

YOUNG: And, I believe the school has always been that open when you push a little, you know?

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

YOUNG: We, as black students and black alums, can change the school as much as we put our effort into it. The school has always been—that's why I wanted to go to a liberal arts school with a long tradition of academic excellence. That's the tradition. And even when we started the African-American Society, it was to bring into the school a different point of view: the civil rights movement and the liberation movements in Africa. Global change - all the countries being liberated and all the issues of freedom, liberation democracy.

WILLIAMS: Right, right.

YOUNG: And we brought all of those issues into the African-American Society for debate and discussion, so the College and the Upper Valley could see change in action. We brought activists speakers and doers to Hanover like Stokely Carmichael, Douglas Turner Ward, Alvin Ailey.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

YOUNG: —so that the College and the Upper Valley could see and hear some of the people implemented change, things that many of the professors were not seeing and teaching in class. Some of the professors would come to the African-American Society first house on the side street near what is now Rauner, where Webster Hall was. It was a small three-story house the College gave to the African American Society during my senior year. That was the first African American Society house before Cutter Hall. We would schedule Sunday afternoon teas,—

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm. Oh, okay, mm-hm.

YOUNG: —where we'd invite professors and other speakers to join us and talk about current events, national and global politics, black art and culture – and other interesting subjects?

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm.

YOUNG: Oftentimes we'd get an alum who's doing interesting work to come Hanover to speak and mingle and at a Sunday

afternoon tea at the African-American house. The speaker was more often white than black. In my opinion, that is the role – facilitator -- that the college is always willing to play.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

YOUNG: That's how the legacy and tradition continues. In my opinion, it is an iterative process.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

So I guess we have—I think, if I'm checking the time, we might have maybe seven or so—

YOUNG: Mm-hm.

WILLIAMS: —oh, we've got eight or so minutes. We can talk a little bit more. I wanted to maybe engage your point about kind of the alumni being active as much as they, you know, would like or would not like, and kind of ask: What do you think the role of, I guess, the alumni for Dartmouth College should be to the community?

YOUNG: Which community?

WILLIAMS: I guess maybe the undergraduate population or this academic community that you're describing a little bit.

YOUNG: Well, I don't know if the school has a program where it periodically invites alums to come and talk to students, undergraduates. My oldest went to Cornell. I know Cornell has a program where interesting alums are periodically invited to come into a class or setting or a fraternity or something to talk about their experiences after college. Dartmouth may have that kind of regular program. But that is the role that I think alums can play, like what you're doing now, to come into the African-American house on a weekend or a Thursday night or whatever, or to lunch, and have and discuss some of these issues. In that way they could see the path that some alumni have taken. And alums could better understand some of the issues undergrads may be going through now.

WILLIAMS: Right.

YOUNG: That role is a role that I think the alums could and would play. Contact with the undergraduates. There's not enough interaction between black alumni and black undergraduates, based upon the issues and problems that I hear the undergraduates discuss. Some of the issues, I find difficult to understand.

WILLIAMS: [Chuckles.]

YOUNG: Why would that be a problem? Why are you having a problem with some legacy admit questioning your academic skills? That's backwards. I don't understand it. Why would you have trouble with someone from Shaker Heights questioning your ability to get into Dartmouth and handle the academics? I mean, that's—to me—that's something new. That's a new one on me.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm.

YOUNG: I guess when I was an undergraduate here in the late 1960's, legacy admits were frat boys who had it made and felt they did not need to study.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm.

YOUNG: And they'd do the best they could not do anything. There no question about who had academic energy.

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

YOUNG: And so it's hard for me to understand some of the problems that they have in terms of undergraduates. So I think that's what alumni could do, is just to get back to the undergraduates and talk to them about, "Look, change your focus here. This is an academic institution. Master it. And you'll feel better about yourself. And nobody will be able to tell you who you are or what you can do."

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

YOUNG: And I think those should be the priorities of the black undergraduate. In my opinion those should be the priorities of the African-American Society. Those were the priorities

when we planned the start of the organization in my room. We wrote the first bylaws in my room in 206 Lord Hall. Those bylaws focused on academics as “Job 1.” They’ve changed now.

WILLIAMS: Right.

YOUNG: I mean, just between you and I, the African American Society was never a religious institution. That was not its purpose. We were not into promoting any religion -- Islam or Christianity. The African American Society was an intellectual forum for everybody. Religion turns off a lot of students.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

YOUNG: I think a later class (the 1970’s) forced a religious focus on the African American Society in Cutter Hall. That was not our original purpose, mission our objective. That’s not what we were about. But, the AAS, like the College, is evolving. If that’s the kind of institution you guys want, to quote John Sloan Dickey, “It’s your school.” That’s why I think alumni should participate more, to let them... So that the history of the AAS and its academic tradition remains a priority,—

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

YOUNG: —rather than divisive religious issues.

WILLIAMS: Absolutely. So then I guess maybe we’ll finish off, ‘cause it seems like we’re kind of going in that direction. Could you talk a little bit about what the keys to your success—if you felt successful at Dartmouth, what were the keys to that?

YOUNG: What Dartmouth allowed me to do was to spend four years pretty much in and around Baker Library and take advantage of all of the opportunities. Being on campus, attending class and lectures, debating and learning from some of the great minds of the day.

I mean, my brief conversations with John Sloan Dickey walkin’ his dog across campus were just invaluable. Professor Richard Sterling. I was fortunate enough to be one of his research fellows on *Macropolitics: International*

*Relations in a Global Society*. I was one of three students that compiled the appendices for the book. We compiled charts on vital statistics for every country in the world – charts on per capita income, caloric intake, GNP, life expectancy, etc. and all that. My trips to the U.N. to research, identify and compile the information set me on a path of scholarship that continues to this day. Working on Sterling's book, working and living in East Africa, my experiences with SNCC, the National Urban League and many civil rights organizations and leaders were Dartmouth-enabled experiences.

Those experiences contributed to my relative success: being able to see the world through these traditional eyes and understand it from my own historical experiences. And that's what institutions like Dartmouth offer. These experiences contributed to my relative success. Being able to be here and absorb the experience, I was able to obtain a great gift -- something that nobody can take away from me.

WILLIAMS: Wonderful.

YOUNG: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Well, I think that's a good spot to stop.

YOUNG: Okay. Alright.

WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah, we're perfect with time as well. Well, thank you very much. I wanted to thank you.

YOUNG: What's your name again?

WILLIAMS: Shan Williams.

YOUNG: *Shan* Williams.

WILLIAMS: Shan, mm-hm, like a boy's name.

**[End of interview.]**