

Oliver O. "Tripp" Miller, '66
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Black Lives
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Transcribed by Eric Bae '24

BAE: Great. So, my name is Eric Bae. I'm currently in Sanborn in Hanover, New Hampshire, and I'm doing a zoom interview with Mr. Oliver "Tripp" Miller, who's currently in the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Today is Thursday, October 26th, 2023, and this is an interview for the Dartmouth Black Lives Oral History Project.

Hi, Tripp. Thank you so much for joining me today. I've really been looking forward to our interview for a long while now, and I'm grateful that you made the time for it. So, let's jump right in. Do you want to start by telling me about your parents and where you grew up?

O. MILLER: I've lived in a lot of different places because my mother was married three times, and the second time she was married — the first husband was three years and the second husband was three years, and my stepfather, which is the longest time she was married, was maybe about ten years. But she was born in — I think she was born in New Jersey, but she at one point moved to Harlem [NY] because she was adopted. And as I showed you before, she became a swimming star, because she had a kind of a second parent who was Jewish, who lived in Queens [NY] and Flushing [NY], who sort of adopted my mother and decided to teach her how to swim and make a racer out of her. And she was very successful. So, at 15, my mother had two titles, national AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] titles. One was in the breaststroke and the other was in the freestyle. And as I did, I sent you a photo of her on the front of the *Amsterdam News* because it was unusual to have a black swimmer who had those titles.

Of course, in that day and age, the swimming universities would not reach out to recruit a Black swimmer. So, she didn't have that opportunity. But she started off at Hunter College [New York, NY] and she spent a year at Hunter College. And I think she decided that if she was really going to do well in college, she couldn't stay at home

because she wouldn't get an opportunity to devote her time to really studying. So, she decided to enroll in Tuskegee Institute, which is now called Tuskegee University. And while she was at Tuskegee during the war, like a lot of women, she volunteered to work on the Army Air Force base for a lot of the — which was where the Black pilots were. And that's how she met Oliver. And he was called "Double O" because he was the second, and it was two O's in his name. And I became "Triple O" and "Tripp" for short. And in 1944 they moved to Michigan. Um, I'm trying to remember what city. Oh, Battle Creek!

J. MILLER: Battle Creek.

O. MILLER: Battle Creek in Michigan. She had a degree, and he didn't. And he had no interest in, you know, going to get a degree, 'cause he wanted to be a truck driver. And that disappointed my mother, so after three and a half years of marriage, she divorced him and went back to New York City with me. And I was 3. I think at first she lived with her mother and then found an apartment of her own. No, actually, she stayed with her mother because she decided to get a master's degree in physical education at NYU [New York University], and she needed some place to park me during the daytime. So, after she got a master's degree, she moved to Wilmington, Delaware, which at that time had segregated schools. And even though, during that time, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decree, the Board of Ed decree was, you know, was agreed on the Supreme Court, the schools didn't immediately change being segregated. And she taught in a combined YW-YMCA, which in Wilmington, Delaware was segregated. And I attended a segregated school. She decided to move from there and be at Hampton Institute [VA].

So I spent a year at Hampton Institute, and quite frankly, I was afraid of going to the South because that was the year that Emmett Till occurred [1955], and it was in all the papers and everything, and I thought that the South was a very dangerous place to live, especially since my mother was the type to maybe not want to follow all the rules, you know. There were white fountains and colored fountains, white bathrooms and colored bathrooms. And if

you wanted to go to the movies, if you're Black, you'd buy a ticket in the front, from the front person. You know, front, not office, but, you know, in the front. And then you'd have to go around to the back and walk up a stairway like it was a fire escape and sit in the balcony. And after one year at Hampton Institute, she got a better offer to go to NCC in Durham, which is now called New York, I mean, North Carolina Central University. And she was there for two years. And that's where I entered elementary school in the fifth grade and saw Jeannette for the first time. But we didn't become boyfriend and girlfriend until the sixth grade.

And by then my mother didn't want me to go to segregated schools any longer. So, after the sixth grade, she moved me to Boston [MA] and put me in Boston Latin School. And Boston Latin School, if you lived in Boston, you had to take a test to get into Boston Latin School. But since I had all A's, I got into Boston Latin School without having to take a test. And Boston Latin School, you had to take Latin for six years. But they also taught Greek, and I don't know any high schools nowadays that would teach Greek. [Laughter]

BAE: Yeah, absolutely.

O. MILLER: Boston Latin School was founded in 1635, a year before Harvard [University, MA] was founded in 1636. So, I stayed in Boston Latin School for three years and my grades were good, but I was always pulling pranks. And they had a system of misdemeanor marks. If you did something bad and if you did a certain number, got a certain number of misdemeanor marks, you would get a censure. And at some point, if you had two censures, they would expel you. And at the point when I had three censures, my mother decided that I wasn't going to be there very long. So, she went to a place where it focused on putting Black children into private schools. And there was a private school called Barlow that was looking for Black students. And so, it was in Armenia, New York, which is about two hours north of New York City. So, there I found myself in a prep school, and there was only one other Black in the prep school, and there were sixty students. And my smallest class was four students, and my largest class was twelve. So, you can imagine that

there's no way you didn't do your homework because there was no place to hide.

BAE: [Laughter] Yeah.

O. MILLER: The Headmaster was from a family of headmasters. In fact, his brother was headmaster at Choate [Choate Rosemary Hall, CT], and he had been an interrogator in Germany, after the World War II, of German officers. But he also had a speech defect when he was growing up, and since his family owned an oil business, they could afford to send him to Europe, to the kind of school where, you know, the Saudi Arabian princes sent their children. It was called Le Rosey [Institut Le Rosey, Rolle, Switzerland], R-O-S-E-Y, which still exists. And he learned to speak a lot of languages to overcome his speech defects. I think it was just stuttering. And like a lot of Americans, he went into World War II, but I don't think he actually was in a battle or anything. I think he was in some administrative position, which is why he was interrogator of German officers after World War II. And he was just an amazing headmaster who was very strict and had an idea of what students needed before going to college, so we didn't have a lot of downtime. After class, everybody had to choose an activity, either sports or dance or something like that, and, mostly, males chose soccer and basketball, or some other sport. And I chose soccer for the three years I was there.

Since the school was very small, we also had to – I thought I wanted to major in languages in college, so I took three years of German, two years of French, and then, since I already had three years of Latin, I ended up with four years of Latin, three years of French, uh, no, three years of German, and two years of French before I entered my first year of college, which is unusual. It was Hamilton College, because I'd been in a small boarding school, and I only applied to very small colleges like Middlebury. And Hamilton was a very good college, except for each... How should I say? For each discipline, there were very few professors, and so I wanted to major in Government, and there were only four government professors, and I didn't like two of them. And so, I decided to transfer, and I was going to transfer to either Yale or Princeton. And I met a very close friend of mine was

dating a guy from Dartmouth. And when he found out I wanted to transfer, he persuaded me to consider Dartmouth. And at that time, Dartmouth would only accept five students as transfers. And he sort of paved the way for me. He'd spent a lot of time in the Admissions Officer, Office, rather, and talked about me being a good prospect to come to Dartmouth. And that's—

J. MILLER: Was it Richard?

O. MILLER: No, that was Stan. His name was Stanford Roman ['64], and he was very active in the student body, and then later on, he went to med-school at Dartmouth and then went to med-school residency at a lot of different places. He went to med-school at Columbia in New York, and he eventually became a trustee at Dartmouth.

But in any case, I should step back, because, since I transferred from Hamilton, I didn't understand the rush system, the fraternity system at Hamilton. I was a member of the fraternity of Psi U[psi] at Hamilton because you rushed in your freshman year, which is one year before you rushed at Dartmouth. And Dartmouth you rushed in your sophomore year. So, I didn't know that being Black was supposed to only consider Jewish fraternities.

BAE: Interesting.

O. MILLER: So, I just walked in. I walked into any fraternity that I was interested in, and Psi U was supposed to take me automatically, but they didn't want a Black student in their fraternity. So, when I went to the fraternity, rather than welcoming me with open arms and honoring the unspoken rule that they should have accepted me in Psi Upsilon, they put me in the corner of whatever rush was being done in the evening, and none of the brothers would talk to me at all.

BAE: Wow.

O. MILLER: So, I also rushed Bones Gate, which was a fraternity that had mostly southern members, and I liked the fraternity and I felt very comfortable with the brothers that I met. And they talked to me a lot and made me feel comfortable. But there were two members that didn't want

to accept me, and they blackballed me — just on basis of two members. And one of the members of Bones Gate is still one of my closest friends, because we were in the same dormitory and he also went to B-School [Business School] at Stanford [University], and we're still very close friends, but I also —

BAE: Sorry, what's his name?

O. MILLER: John Rollins ['66], R-O-L-L-I-N-S, and he's very active at Dartmouth. In fact, he's the president of our class right now. And I've never been much for becoming active in taking leader positions, leadership positions, in anything. Not at Dartmouth or Stanford, because at Barlow — B-A-R-L-O-W, which is the prep school in Amenia, New York, I had been head of the Student Council, and that was so political [laughter], that I didn't want to get involved in politics in college or grad school, and I really don't go back to many reunions at Dartmouth. I've only been to Dartmouth reunion once.

BAE: Was it the 50-year reunion?

O. MILLER: Yeah, and at Stanford, I've never been to an on-campus reunion, but some of us at Stanford who used to party together, mostly the Ivy League students from Dartmouth, Yale and Princeton, we decided to kick in a hundred — well, there were a lot of Stanford undergraduates. It was sort of a clique, and we all decided to kick in a hundred dollars and commit to meeting every year. And so, we have had gatherings every year, but Jeanette and I don't go unless it's a place that we're interested in. And, well, they've had two in the Hamptons, but one of the first ones I went to that was not in the Hamptons was one in Washington, D.C., and that's because, well, that's because the host of that gathering in our class had been one of the primary bundlers from [Barack] Obama's campaign in 2008. So, he planned a very interesting gathering for us. Cory Booker was a luncheon speaker, and we had a private tour of the diplomatic reception rooms of the State Department, which was very interesting. And we had an evening in the Capitol building where we had cocktails in the Mansfield, the Mike Mansfield part of the Capitol building. And that was

cocktails. We had dinner in the L.B.J. [Lyndon Baines Johnson] chamber in the Capitol building. Go on.

BAE: Oh, no worries. A lot of awesome stuff you've covered. I want to circle back to your fraternity experience and—

O. MILLER: To Dartmouth.

BAE: Yeah, and in one second, but before that, a couple of questions. So, you said that one of the reasons you ended up transferring to Dartmouth, you said you were considering Yale and Princeton instead was because of this friend's boyfriend, Stanford Roman. Who is this person to you? Why was he so, uh—

O. MILLER: I still stay in contact with him.

BAE: And so, what stuck out to him still about you and why did you decide to follow his lead?

O. MILLER: Well, he worked hard at trying to make me consider Dartmouth, and then when I interviewed Dartmouth, you know, they have you sit in a class of one of the best professors in order to—and there was a professor of poli-sci [political science] named [Vincent] Starzinger. And I sat in his class during my interview at Dartmouth, and the guy was incredible. So that helped me decide to go to Dartmouth. It was really not necessarily my friend, but that one on campus class session I sat in on. But oddly enough, I didn't, you know. I told them I would probably major in poli-sci, which is why they had me sit in his class. But I also, oddly enough, did not major in poli-sci. I went to an introductory course in philosophy, and I was so intrigued by philosophy. And it was a professor who taught epistemology, which is Kant, Hegel, and Spinoza, some of the more difficult philosophers to understand. And I was just fascinated by these philosophers. So, I majored in philosophy.

BAE: That makes sense. And to go back to your opening year at Dartmouth, what was it like coming to Dartmouth your freshman fall? Were you intimidated? Were you nervous?

O. MILLER: No. I had a lot of fun because the fraternity was a lot of fun. But we were all concerned that after I came to Dartmouth, and they realized that I had been blackballed, um.

- BAE: And really quickly, can you define what blackballed means for the record?
- O. MILLER: If somebody in the fraternity says they don't want to accept you, and it doesn't take more than one or two members to say, we don't want that person. It's sort of like, you know, the thing that has been happening in the Republican side [laughter] in Congress, and it's one or two members that don't want you in there. And the other fraternity I was blackballed in was called Tabard.
- BAE: Tabard's still around.
- O. MILLER: And somebody thought it was newsworthy, so they told the *Daily D* about this, and the *Daily D* interviewed me. So, I was in about three or four issues of featured topic in the *Daily D*. And because of that, we thought, our fraternity thought, that we wouldn't get a good rush class. And by the way, let me step back. The president of our fraternity at that time decided that they would take two Blacks and there's one Black they'd already taken as a football player, that they already had decided that they were going to take. So rather than just take one, they liked me enough to take two.
- BAE: And this was Chi Heorot? Chi Phi?
- O. MILLER: Chi Phi.
- And the president of the House at that time was Bill Neukom or William Neukom ['64], N-E-U-K-O-M, who eventually became the chief legal counsel for Microsoft and Bill Gates. And so, he became very prominent. He had a very prominent business career. And he was decided that they would take a risk to take two Blacks in. And oddly enough, during the following rush class, everybody wanted to be members of Chi Phi. We were very popular and got some of the best rushing class on campus. So, it didn't work out the way we thought. It was just the opposite.
- BAE: And so, what was the *Daily D* writing about you?
- O. MILLER: The whole process of me being blackballed. They interviewed me a couple of times. You know, they asked me how I felt, and did I feel spurned and depressed and

rejected and, you know, the steps I went through and what happened.

J. MILLER: It's probably in the archives, 1963 or '64.

O. MILLER: It's probably— that was in '64. So that would be, as Jeanette said, it's probably, the issues are probably in the archive of the *Daily D*.

BAE: I'm definitely going to take a look at that, and I'll let you know when I do. Is there is there anything you just want to briefly add about that, or do you feel like it'll all be there?

O. MILLER: Uh, only I was relieved when we got such a great rush class, I thought I was hurting the class. I didn't know, I didn't follow Bill Neukom's career and where he went to graduate school. And years later I got an issue of *Fortune* Magazine and he's walking down the steps from the Justice Department, where they had just inked a deal, inked a settlement to settle the, uh. What do you call it? The antitrust case. And even though he didn't argue anything, by that time, he was managing 600 attorneys around the globe. And obviously they wanted him to become a trustee at Dartmouth. So, I'm sure he, over the years, he gave a lot of money to Dartmouth. But he also, since he went to Stanford Law School, he also gave a lot of money to Stanford. And on Stanford right now, there's a very large part of the law campus that has this, it was called the William Neukom Law Building [also Dartmouth's Neukom Institute].

BAE: Very, very cool.

O. MILLER: In fact, my class was one of the wealthiest and most successful classes that Stanford B-School had ever had. And that's primarily because a lot of the members of my class came from wealthy families, and they were also very entrepreneurial. And, unlike me, a lot of them wanted to start their own businesses. Me, I just went into the corporate world.

BAE: Got it. Really quick, just to pivot back to your time at Greek life. I have to ask — it seems like you had a great time at Dartmouth. You really enjoyed it.

O. MILLER: I did. Probably too much, because I partied a lot.

BAE: [Laughter] That's awesome. So, did you mostly hang out with your brothers at Chi Phi? Was that your main social group?

O. MILLER: Uh, no, because I liked a lot of other people on campus. And in fact, as a rule, after your sophomore year, you're supposed to spend your junior and senior year living in the [fraternity] house. I was one of the people, one of the Chi Phi members didn't want to live in the house, and I roomed with another classmate and brother who I'm still very close to. And his name is Wally Bushman ['66]. He lives in Maine, and we talk to each other at least once every two months. And he and I decided to room together in Topliff.

BAE: I lived in Topliff!

O. MILLER: You did? [Laughter]

BAE: Yeah.

O. MILLER: And he and I were very close friends, and he didn't want to live in the house. So, he had a lot of friends that were not... You know, a lot of my friends were, some of my friends were classmates who majored in philosophy. And one reason, the other reason I wanted to major in philosophy, is — and I took the courses that I took, which were very difficult — is I took courses that I knew that I couldn't follow up on my own after I graduated. And at Stanford I took the same rule. I could have majored in marketing, which is an easy course to take. You don't have to be a genius to major in marketing. So, I majored in finance, which is very difficult for me because I knew I couldn't learn a lot about finance after I graduated.

BAE: Tripp, where did this very academic drive come from? I know your mother was an extremely high achiever, from the sounds of it, and made sure she prioritized your education, but part of that has to come from you, right? How would you describe your very academic nature?

O. MILLER: Well. I have to admit that I partied so much at Dartmouth in my first year, that I didn't get great grades, and, since I had a scholarship, they warned me that I had to achieve a certain average, or they would take the scholarship away. And that kind of gave me a lot of motivations to

start studying very hard, especially in philosophy. You know how your major is. It isn't very difficult for you because it's something you want to do. But there were other courses that I took where I had to, like economics, where I had to learn to really pay attention to. And I took, I studied music, which I wasn't very good at, and I got a lousy grade in because I didn't spend a lot of time going into — what you're supposed to do is, there was a vinyl for every, for all the major composers, and you were supposed to go in several times a week and listen to these composers.

Which is odd because now, Jeanette and I wake up every morning listening to WQXR, which is the only classical station left in the City [NY, NY], and we used to buy subscriptions for New York Philharmonic, the American Ballet and operas. And a very high percentage of our CDs are opera CDs even if we haven't, you know, seen very famous operas. But even though we were required to take, in our senior year at Barlow, we were supposed to be required to take one music course and one art course, I fell in love with opera because our dorm master had been from Oberlin [Oberlin College, OH]. Even though he didn't want to finish a career in music, he played a lot of music and also had us participate in Gilbert and Sullivan performances. And I participated in *Mikado* and *Trial by Jury*. But he used to play operas at very high decibels. And so, I got to know *Lohengrin* very well. And we have a couple of Wagner operas, but Wagner is not one of my favorite operas, composers.

But Jeanette had studied piano until she went to college. And so, for us together, being very interested in music, classical music came very easy. But growing up Black at a certain time, we're very much into R&B. And in fact, most of the music 45s at Dartmouth for my fraternity house were Black R&B performers. Remember, now, all these guys are white.

BAE: Interesting.

O. MILLER: And Mary Wells, Mary Wells was a favorite number of 45s on our jukebox, and probably followed by the Four Tops and groups like that, and probably the only white

group that was very popular on our jukebox was the Rolling Stones. [Laughter]

But Mary Wells and the Four Tops like that. The bands that we band that we would invite to perform during our big weekends was the Five Satins. The favorite song was "In the Still of the Night," and probably that's before your period. And they were a very famous Black group, and they were on our jukebox as well, and we would get together and sing every word of their most famous song, which was "In the Still of the Night." And this group was just incredible.

But Jeanette and I listened to a lot of music; classical, R&B, Cuban, Cuban jazz, Puerto Rican music. And we listen to a lot of different types of music, but we also like classical music. And when you grow up during a certain period, you also see famous performers, like, while I was at Stanford, I used to go up to Haight-Ashbury [San Francisco, CA] very often and see a lot of stars who were famous at that time. And probably twice I saw Janis Joplin. And she came to — I don't know if you know Janis Joplin. But Jefferson Airplane and groups like that, and the great thing is, when we went to Stanford in the fall, they would have a big bonfire like the Dartmouth bonfire, and we got to see for free the Grateful Dead.

BAE: Oh, that's awesome. I love the Grateful Dead.

O. MILLER: But everybody was — everybody at that time was interested in Haight-Ashbury, so it was easy to love that psychedelic music.

BAE: Speaking of that, of that period, from what I read, I mean, you did attend Dartmouth at this really fascinating cultural and political period both at Dartmouth and in the US. Right? So that you have this new wave of music out. The civil rights movement is in full swing. And the Vietnam War is ongoing. Do you have recollections about how those very political movements were affecting your time at Dartmouth?

O. MILLER: Well, the college made sure that we got to see some of the major political figures. So, George Wallace, the famous segregationist, was invited to speak at Dartmouth, and so was Malcolm X. And I was very — I

didn't like Malcolm X because I thought he was very radical. But sitting in the auditorium listening to him talk, I was very impressed with Malcolm X. And George Wallace was really funny. He said, "I'm not a racist! Some Blacks come to our social gatherings, and we go to their social gatherings," which having lived in the South, I wasn't impressed, but I was really impressed with Malcolm X.

BAE: Can you tell me more about that? I mean, that was a monumental part of Dartmouth's history. What was it like being there and what was the campus like?

O. MILLER: Well, we weren't having protests or anything like that. We were just exposed —

J. MILLER: Too few of you.

O. MILLER: Yeah, we were just exposed to major political, you know, figures. And Nelson [A.] Rockefeller, who was about to run for president and was a Dartmouth graduate, he used to come to campus also. And I don't remember going to hear any of him speak, but I was really interested in hearing George Wallace speak, which I listened to him on the radio in my dorm. But I did go to see Malcolm X, and I sat in the audience, and I was very impressed with Malcolm X.

BAE: Was the audience packed?

O. MILLER: Yes. No open seats.

BAE: No open seats.

And so, I was looking through some of our archives to see what the admissions numbers were like around your year and, I mean, the year that you transferred in, there were less than fifteen Black students, almost less than ten.

O. MILLER: There were twelve of us. And we knew each other very well. Only two of us were in Chi Phi and the other ten were in Jewish fraternities.

BAE: Okay. Do you know which fraternity?

O. MILLER: Um, I can't remember.

- BAE: Okay.
- O. MILLER: But, um, needless to say, we all got along very well. And at that time, except for those two fraternities, the student body, I wouldn't say, was prejudiced. And so, I didn't feel like I was in a bad place. In fact, I used to go to other fraternities when they had, you know, big weekends. SAE [Sigma Alpha Epsilon] was another southern fraternity, but one of my best friends who was at Dartmouth and also went to Stanford B-School was an SAE.
- BAE: What was his name?
- O. MILLER: Um, I can't remember right now.
- BAE: No worries.
- O. MILLER: But what you should know is that out of the class of 270 entering Stanford B-School in 1968, Dartmouth had the largest contingent. Twenty-two Dartmouth graduates decided to go to Stanford B school.
- J. MILLER: And only one of them was Black, and it was you.
- O. MILLER: And only one of them, you know. And because I'd gone to Dartmouth. I fell in very quickly with the Ivy League contingent that partied, you know. We used to have some wild parties at Stanford School, you know, like jumping off the roof into a pool.
- BAE: Oh, you'll have tell me more about that.
- J. MILLER: [Laughter]
- O. MILLER: And one of the things that, if someone was about to get married, we would have a, uh— what do you call it? The night that you, the men—
- J. MILLER: A bachelor party.
- O. MILLER: Bachelor parties that were really incredible. And a couple of times, since topless nightclubs were very popular in San Francisco, we would have someone topless come to our parties, but they would come with their parents.
[Laughter]
- So, they were chaperons, so to speak.
- BAE: Oh, that's too funny.

But you said that, you know, you didn't feel like the campus — at the time that you were there — was very prejudiced. Um, so was the race of your classmates something that you were conscious about or thinking pretty often about?

O. MILLER: No. The only thing we're conscious about is there weren't many Black female students, like at Smith or any of the other colleges that we used to go to get dates. But we all knew each other. And who were the Black women at the other at each college that we would do road trips to.

BAE: Tell me more about that.

O. MILLER: By accident, I found out that Jeannette was going to college two hours from me. She was going to Elmira [Elmira College, NY] while I was going to Hamilton. And just like I met this guy who wanted me to go to Dartmouth, I was sitting on the bus going somewhere, and I asked this young lady, "where are you from?" And she said, "I'm from Durham." And I said, "do you know Jeannette Walker?" And she said, "yes." And I said, well, "where's she going to college?" And she told me Elmira College. And I quickly realized it was only two hours away. And what happened is colleges used to extend, you know, it was all male or all women. We used to exchange what we called pig books, which is, you know, sexist. And so, I would get the Elmira College women who are just enrolled as freshmen, and I had no problem finding Jeanette in this picture. And so, I called her, and she hadn't heard from me in six years. And she screamed, which is a, you know, a girl's way of telling everybody that she was talking to a potential date.

[Laughter] Excuse me for saying that. And I was very close friends with someone at Hamilton, who was from a white, a very wealthy white family in Elmira, and he was going down there very frequently. And so, I used to ride down with him every two or three weeks or so to date Jeanette. So, getting a ride from Hamilton to Elmira was no problem. And of course, I didn't stay in a hotel, I stayed at his house. And I probably could not, being Black, could not, you know, stay in a hotel in Elmira. In fact, we couldn't, when we partied with him, we couldn't even go to the —

- J. MILLER: To certain bars.
- O. MILLER: To the bar to get drinks. He would leave us at the table, and said, let me get your beer for you. And once a bunch of us went to a bar in Elmira and the owner of the bar came up and said, "I can't serve you," and he kicked us out of the bar. 'Cause Jeanette and I were part of a group of six. But the best bars for partying in were Black.
- J. MILLER: And so that's where we would go.
- O. MILLER: And that's where we used to go, because on Sunday, the Black residents after church would go to these bars where the most incredible bands were playing. And that's what a lot of the white kids in town used to like to do — go listen to. Just like we at Dartmouth preferred Black bands, they also preferred Black bands. So, you would find a lot of white kids in Black bands, you know, on Sunday.
- BAE: Wow. Something you don't hear very often in these retellings.
- O. MILLER: No. And let me step back. When I lived in Durham, and my mother wanted to return to visit her relatives on weekends, we couldn't register at regular hotels going up north. So, there was something called the Green Book, and it would list the best houses that you could go to that would, you know, offer boarding for Black people traveling from the south to the north.
- J. MILLER: There's a book, I mean, not a book, but a movie called "The Green Book," which tells the whole story of it. Can't remember the name of the guy who stars in it.
- BAE: I'll write that down.
- O. MILLER: But let me step back and talk about Jeanette's mother.
- BAE: Yeah, please!
- O. MILLER: Jeanette's mother was from a, uh — was she from an interracial? Somewhere in Jeanette's mother's background, there was an interracial marriage, so a lot of the Blacks at that time in the South looked white. And some of them moved north to quote unquote, "pass" and get away from segregation. And Jeanette's mother was

blond, and she looked totally white. And at some point for her education, she went north to live with her sister in Brooklyn who was passing.

J. MILLER: Her aunt.

O. MILLER: Was it her aunt?

J. MILLER: It was her aunt.

O. MILLER: It was her aunt who was married to an Italian Jew.

BAE: Wow.

O. MILLER: And Jeanette's mother was really, very smart. And she graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School at the age of fifteen. And around that time, her mother in the South became very sick, so she moved back. She stopped passing and moved back south to take care of her mother. But Jeanette's mother could do certain things that other Blacks in Durham, North Carolina, couldn't do. So, if her mother wanted to buy a hat, she could go to a hat store in Durham, downtown, and try on a hat. Blacks were not allowed — if they wanted a hat — they weren't allowed to try on a hat if they went to a store that sold hats. But her mother was a blonde and could pass if she wanted to. But she wanted to. She never went back to passing in the north.

BAE: You know, I think for my generation, it's really difficult for us to conceptualize exactly what segregation was like. Do you think you could tell me a little bit more about your social experiences in Durham and how you experienced segregation or the people around you experienced it?

O. MILLER: Well, what's odd in segregation in the South, Blacks could live very close to whites. The line between homes in some areas were very close. There would be white homes on one side of the street —

J. MILLER: On one side of the railroad tracks.

O. MILLER: On one side of the railroad tracks and Black homes on the other side. I was always very uncomfortable living there because we had to always sit on the back of the bus, and that wasn't very comfortable. And, as I said, I always thought at some time my mother, who had

actually protested in Harlem when there was a store where Blacks could buy things, but you couldn't sit at the counter and, you know, eat food. And so, my mother was always very forthright about not liking the rules. And I thought as a child I thought sometime my mother might do something wrong and get lynched. [Laughter] Excuse me for saying that, but as a kid, you know, that's what you think of.

BAE: Yeah, and I mean, I'm sure it's terrifying as a child to have those thoughts.

O. MILLER: Yeah, it is.

J. MILLER: I think the one thing about Durham that maybe sort of changed the idea of how Blacks live in segregated society was the fact that there's certain cities in the South that are unique. Durham was one, Atlanta [GA] was one. And that's because there was a college, and also business, one of the largest and still the largest Black-owned life insurance company — the North Carolina Life Insurance Company — was based, North Carolina Mutual, was based in Durham.

O. MILLER: And so, there was a large middle-class of Blacks.

J. MILLER: Right. We had our own library, we had our own hospital, we had our own doctors. And so, it was like a closed in community but made up of middle-class and upper middle-class people. I would think that the Blacks who felt segregation the most were those who were less privileged and lived — and these were the ones who, interestingly, lived closer to white communities. And those white communities actually were made up of poor whites, poor whites. So, it was an interesting community to grow up in in terms of segregation. You felt it in the sense that you knew as, not as a child, but certainly as a teenager and a high school student looking forward to going to college, am I going to rate? Am I going to fit in if I want to leave this community? And I think that's something Tripp's mother knew; that she had to take her child out of that environment and get him into an environment where it would be a lot easier for him to progress as she wanted to and as he wanted to academically.

O. MILLER: And Jeanette's family was much more middle-class than mine, because I was living with my mother, and she wasn't making a lot of money teaching physical education for girls on a college campus. But I was accepted by her [Jeanette's] family because my mother was working at a college.

BAE: I imagine that, perhaps it's not the biggest culture shock, but then moving up to New England or even the northern part of New York, did you find that the backgrounds of the students at those schools were dramatically different from yours? Was there a cultural difference?

O. MILLER: I felt Boston was very racist, because the largest groups, other than Jewish, in the city were Italians and the Irish. And the Italians and Irish were very racist. So, if you're Black, you didn't want to go into certain parts of Boston. Literally, you didn't walk in certain parts. And at that time, each high school used to wear the school jacket. And so, obviously, I bought a Boston Latin School jacket because I was at the best high school in the city. If I had that jacket on, and being Black, it wasn't — I would not be able to, you know, leave that section of town without getting beat up.

BAE: Wow.

O. MILLER: And in fact, the percentage of students — mind you now, Boston Latin School was very difficult to get into. The percentage of students who were in Boston Latin School were Jewish, and from families, I would say, very upscale Irish families, and the same thing for Italians. [But] particularly Jewish because it was considered a feeder school for Harvard and MIT. So, an awful high percentage of the students would go on to Harvard and MIT.

BAE: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And that's actually something that, you know, I've heard a lot, which is that it feels like New York and Boston are a lot more racist than some of the cities in the South. But how do you find that living in New York now? Was New York was a little more different back then?

O. MILLER: Well, because I went to prep school and the way I dress, I don't feel that as much, though I feel there's a little bit of

racism. For example, we live in a co-op, and when Jeanette and I decided that we needed to, when she went back to finish her PhD, and we needed to move out of a one bathroom, one bedroom rental, we found out the co-ops were the better choice for us rather than the two-bedroom rental. Usually, Blacks were not well accepted in co-ops.

For example, one co-op we looked at, we made an offer. And we made an offer, and the agent came back and said, uh, that apartment is no longer on the market. Well, we knew that the owner didn't want to bring a Black couple into the building. And there was another building where we didn't feel very comfortable, you know, applying to buy, though we could have afforded it. So that's how we felt. There are a lot of co-ops in the city that still won't accept certain kinds of people like, you know, famous rock entertainers. In fact, [Richard] Nixon, when he left office, wanted to get in certain co-ops, and because he had left the presidency in disgrace, these co-ops wouldn't accept him, so he had to buy a building, what we call a Brownstone, to live in.

But we're in this building because when we were looking for a co-op, all the prices for co-ops in the city were depressed. It was a recession for co-ops, and this was a new building when we were looking. And only 60% of the apartment buildings the apartments had been sold. And the developer, who was a very wealthy Jewish, mostly commercial building developer, wanted to sell the apartments as quickly as possible. And so, we didn't have any problem getting into this building. Plus, I got the CEO of my company, and I'd also worked on the Jimmy Carter campaign, which had a lot of very prominent people who worked on the Robert Kennedy campaign, and I could have one of them write a referral for me. So, we didn't have any problem getting accepted in this building. And so, we were the first Blacks in this building. But since then, Blacks have bought co-ops and apartments in this building. This building does not discriminate.

BAE: That's great to hear. To circle —

O. MILLER: Go on.

- BAE: No, no, you were saying?
- O. MILLER: I said, but there are still buildings in the Fifth Avenue and Park Avenue that don't want Blacks. Or maybe some buildings don't even want Jews.
- BAE: Yeah, I've heard about that a little bit when my sister was looking for apartments. But to circle back a little bit to Dartmouth before I hear about your travels. Um, last couple of questions about Dartmouth, because you mentioned the professors were a big reason that you chose to study at Dartmouth. What was your relationship like with your professors? Do you recall?
- O. MILLER: I love my professors. They were great. In fact, the professor who taught the introductory course at Dartmouth, the introductory course to philosophy. He asked a question, and I raised my hand very quickly, but he didn't call on me. Uh, well, no. I raised my hand very quickly and gave him an answer, but he didn't say it was the right answer. He started listening to other students in the course. And then after I graduated, I was walking across the [Dartmouth] Green with him, and he said, "do you remember the answer you gave in that course? It was the right answer." That's how intimate the relationship. I don't know if it is now, because Dartmouth is much bigger, but that's how much, how intimate the relationship was with professors. And I think if I'm right, Dartmouth doesn't have any courses where it's instructors, all the courses are taught by professors. And I took a couple of courses at Stanford—you didn't have to just take B-School courses. I could take some courses in the undergraduate school and the two courses I took, there'd be a professor, and then the rest of the time, I would have instructors, you know, twice a week teaching. So, I never thought Stanford undergraduate School was as good as Dartmouth undergraduate school. I felt very close to the professors at Dartmouth. I like them very much.
- BAE: Did you have any role models who were professors or were there other students who were role models to you?
- O. MILLER: Yeah. There were other students that were role models. One who lived in Topliff. He's extremely bright. And he

said that he didn't think you had to be very bright to get into Harvard. And he was not only a philosophy major, but he was doing a dual major. He was majoring in math. And I don't know if you know, but some of the best philosophers are also mathematicians. This guy was bright off the charts, and we were in Topliff, and I really liked the guy. We got along very well. I wasn't as smart as he was, but I got along very well with him. I'm just thinking, I can think of the student now in SAE. Ervin was his last name. E-R-V-I-N.

BAE: Sweet. Thank you.

O. MILLER: And as I said he went to Stanford like a bunch of us did, and we still stayed in touch.

BAE: So, you know, before I ask you about your travels and, you know, your return to New York. I'm a senior here at Dartmouth, and I'm realizing that I'm actually a lot closer to graduating than I'd like to be in my head. When you were in your senior year, what were your reflections like of your time at Dartmouth? What was going through your mind as you were wrapping up your time at Dartmouth?

O. MILLER: I really didn't want to leave. I was offered a scholarship at Tuck [Business School], a scholarship at Wharton [Business School of the University of Pennsylvania], but because Jeanette was going to start her PhD in biochemistry at Northwestern [University], I got, I had a scholarship from there. Stanford didn't offer me any scholarship, but I wanted to go west and see what the West was like. And I thought Stanford was going to be like Berkeley, because that was the period when Berkeley had a lot of protests. But I quickly realized that when I got to Stanford, it wasn't like that, that anybody who came from an important political family or a wealthy family west of the Mississippi wanted to enroll at Stanford. And a lot of the students had Mercedes and Porsches and things like that. And the first time I wanted to go grocery shopping; I realized that I needed a car because there were no sidewalks. [Laughter] So the first car I bought was a \$400 car, which was an Oldsmobile 88. And if you put your foot down on the pedal too quickly, it was like being in a spaceship. It would really take off.

- BAE: That's pretty awesome.
- O. MILLER: But I couldn't afford a Porsche or Mercedes. So, at Stanford, I didn't feel as, uh. If it hadn't been for the fact that I fell into the Ivy League contingent, I wouldn't have felt as comfortable being at Stanford as I did at Dartmouth.
- BAE: But one of the last questions about your time [at Dartmouth], because you said you played soccer in Boston Latin School, did you continue any extracurricular interests at Dartmouth? [Dartmouth] Outing Club?
- O. MILLER: At Hamilton, I played on the basketball team, but I wasn't very good, so I sat on the bench the whole time because there were guys who're six foot eight. And I was six foot two, and they could dribble better than I could. So, when I went to Dartmouth, I just played intramural sports most of the time, intramural basketball, whereas my roommate, Wally Bushman was on the wrestling team and had played football.
- BAE: I see. A slight difference, right?
- O. MILLER: And when I got to Stanford, I realized that it would be difficult for me to play soccer in any way because I was out of breath after only playing fifteen minutes. And then I realized why our soccer coach at Barlow School would make us run two miles before practice. You know, because you needed to have stamina to play soccer.
- BAE: Yeah, that makes sense. Just as a random question. I'm really involved in the Outing Club here. Do you have any recollection of what the Outing Club was like in the 60s? Was it active?
- O. MILLER: Yeah, but I didn't participate at all, because my mother, after I reached a certain age, used to be the waterfront instructor at different camps. And so, she parked me at another camp during the summer. And I spent so much time hiking and everything, I didn't need to do it at Dartmouth. I used to hike up the tallest mountains in the East Coast, Mount Washington, both up and down. Mount Marcy in upstate New York. And I'd done — I forgot what it's called, what you call it when you canoe,

and you have to put the canoe on your head to move from lake to lake.

BAE: Portage!

O. MILLER: Portage, right. So, I'd done all those things and so outing was not anything new to me.

BAE: Gotcha.

O. MILLER: My last year at the camp I went to was called the Explorers' Group. And so, every other week we would leave our tents and go someplace and spend a week, you know, doing outings. So, you know, doing at Dartmouth was, you know. I spent so many times in sleeping bags and cooking food over a fire that there was nothing that intrigued me about it at all.

BAE: That's actually kind of rare to hear. I feel like you don't hear about that from that many people. Because you lived in the South and then in a pretty urban place like Boston, it's kind of surprising to hear that you had that much outdoor experience coming in.

O. MILLER: I loved portaging. That was a lot of fun. You know, finding a tree when you wanted to relax that was just the right height to put, to rest your canoe against.

BAE: That's awesome. Were there other Black students who did this or were the students mostly white or Italian?

O. MILLER: Oh, my mother used to send me mostly to camps where there weren't any Blacks.

BAE: Fascinating.

O. MILLER: I usually was the only Black at these camps.

BAE: Wow. So, I think now's a good time to pivot. Tripp, one of the first things that I heard about you, before I even reached out to you, was that you and Jeanette are extensively traveled. You guys travel all over the world when you get the chance. And right out of Dartmouth, right after you married, you spent time in Basel, right? [Marriage occurred two semesters before graduation from Stanford.]

O. MILLER: Yeah, but the way we got to Basel is, when I was at Stanford B school, J.R. Geigy A.G. wanted to find a student who had studied German. And so, when they went through — at that time it was a book, it wasn't online. When they went through the book of students who were graduating, I was the only one in my class who had studied German. And Jeannette at Northwestern, when she was getting her PhD at Northwestern, German was the language that she had chosen. But I interrupted her PhD when I proposed to her, and she didn't finish it. She finished her dissertation. She was in a program that allowed her to also leave with a master's degree. She wrote her dissertation during my last year at Stanford, my second year. And when we went to Basel, she had a reference letter from her professor who happened to have lived in Basel. So, she had a job offer within five days of moving to Basel.

BAE: Wow.

O. MILLER: Roche. And I was working as a financial analyst with J.R. Geigy A.G. and the Corporate Development Group, and they were involved in a one-year study to look for another company to merge with and we were being partly managed by McKinsey. And so, I was part of that group. But I was very junior because most of the group had been older executives in other companies in different places around the world and knew more about the chemical industry than I did. And they wanted me primarily because there was more financial information about companies available in the US. And they wanted me to provide a lot of financial information on a lot of industries and a lot of other companies. And that's primarily what I did. But the people I was working with could look at a company, like Hirsch or Byer or BSF, and break down what they did and understand where they were getting their money from and what percentage of their, how should I say, profits were coming, revenues were coming from different parts of the company.

Now, this is something you want to know. The building I worked in was across the street from what was called the Deutsche Bohnhoff, or the German railway station. And that station was connected to a railway that ran all the way from Hamburg in the north and ended up in Basel.

And a lot of the German companies provided the raw materials for the specialty chemical companies in Basel like Roche and Geigy, which became Ciba-Geigy. But the building I worked in was very interesting because the senior executives — I've worked in a building where the chairman was, the president was, and all the senior executives worked because they didn't like to be in a more modern high-rise building. They wanted to be in a building that was old and maybe was built in the beginning of the 20th century. But it was across the street from the German railway station, and underneath the German railway station was a tunnel that connected directly to this old building. And I.G. Farben, [which] was a group of chemical companies that the Nazis put together, they provided Zyklon B to drop in the showers for Jews in concentration camps, but they also ran companies where Jews were the slave labor. And the company I worked for used to provide — Geigy used to provide during the war — their building as an off-site meeting place for I.G. Farben — Farben is the word for dyes. And these companies were the first to divide aniline dyes as opposed to natural dyes, which is I.G. Farben. Senior executives occasionally would want off-site meetings. You know, I don't know what they discussed. Obviously, they probably discussed how things were going with their slave laborers in their factories and how much Zyklon B they were making or whatever, and my company used to provide the building. I found out six months after I was there that my company used to provide that building as an off-site —

J. MILLER: For Nazis.

O. MILLER: For the Nazi executives of these companies. But, which is also interesting, is the Swiss used to — and Basel, of course, was the German part of Switzerland — the Swiss used to allow Nazis to come across the border and grab Jews that they wanted to have and take them back into Germany. Basel has a very important museum called the Kunst Museum. The most important part of the Kunst Museum is made up of art bought by the major industrial families from Jews that didn't want the Nazis to get their art collections. And while I was living there, because

we're [inaudible] Black and not a threat to anybody there...

[inaudible] the anti-Semitic feeling in Basel. I'm sure that's changed a little bit now, but occasionally conversations would come up and they say, "Isn't that a Jewish part of town?" Or "Isn't that a Jewish store?" But most of the people, when they go to Basel and go into the museum, they don't know that Basel's art collection is Hans Holbein, Frederick Holder, and then for the next 200 years, the major part of the collection are expressionist parts like Kandinsky and people like that. And all that art was purchased by the very wealthy industrial families of Basel from Jews who wanted to get rid of their, [who wanted] money for their art that didn't want the Nazis to have their art. So, there's a very dark side at that time to Basel.

BAE: So, what was your reaction six months in when you found out about your building and about some of the darker elements of Basel?

O. MILLER: Well, I learned, one thing we learned in Europe was that there was much discrimination among the Europeans. For example, in Belgium the Flemish discriminate against the French and vice versa. And the Italians of Northern Italy discriminates against the Southern Italians. So, we actually thought the US was pretty good. [Laughter] Why, so we had no problem coming back to the US because we were privy to all the discrimination going on in Europe. And most Americans who travel to Europe don't know that about Europeans and don't think about that.

BAE: Yeah, absolutely. And that leads me directly to this next question, which is, you know, how did all of your travels over the years influence how you view your life in the US, whether it's your college life or even just, you know, your life after college?

O. MILLER: Well, we know the US is a good, great place to live, and we know that New York is a great place to live. And occasionally, whenever I wanted to interview for a job away from New York, Jeanette would say, "No, we're staying in New York City."

J. MILLER: Mhm.

O. MILLER: And by going to other places, we got to appreciate how great the US is. You know, if you go to China and you see how the Uyghurs are treated and how the government, you know. Uh, how should I say suppress? [suppresses] dissent. You know, probably about one of the best countries in Europe is Germany because they feel guilty about the Holocaust. And when we traveled to Germany for the first time, we realized how liberal the Germans are. We went to a restaurant once, and that's when this waiter found out that we were Americans, he told us how much he liked American soldiers. And we thought the restaurant was going to be very expensive for lunch. But when we got the bill, we realized that he had given us a discount. [Laughter] He hadn't charged us for what he should have charged us.

BAE: Wow.

O. MILLER: And so, we just found Germany to be a great place. And we shouldn't have. We still think the French are kind of like, stuffy.

J. MILLER: And Paris is wonderful, but the French as, you know, overall, because we drove through France and—

O. MILLER: Spent a lot of time in France. In fact — go on.

J. MILLER: Provincial, is the best word I can think of it. And it's really hard for people who live in New York City to be around provincial people for a long time. So, we'd like to be... I don't know, where there's some sort of stimulation.

O. MILLER: The country that we've spent the most time in was — ah, that's a scam call. We spent the most time in is Italy. After that, I would say France, because we were across the border from, you know, in the Alsace. And we used to spend a lot of time going to two- and three-star restaurants, and we also traveled across France. So, we've been in a lot of places in France. The other country we spent a lot of time in is Spain because Jeanette used to collaborate with [unintelligible].

J. MILLER: And we like China.

O. MILLER: And we enjoy China, which is why we spent a second time there. They cook—

J. MILLER: India.

O. MILLER: [They] cook Chinese food, I mean French food, as well as they cook Chinese food. And when we were on the Viking River cruise, I turned to one of the tour leaders and I said, "Why do you occasionally serve French food?" He said, "Well, there are some people that don't like eating Chinese food all the time." I kind of laughed. I said, "You come to China and don't wanna eat Chinese food?" And they used to be on the boat. The Chinese, the food preparation of the Chinese food was off the charts.

BAE: Wow. So, just for—

O. MILLER: In fact, we went once to an upscale Chinese resort called Guilin, and it's on the Lee River. And you have all these hills that you see in Chinese scrolls. And we stayed in a very upscale hotel called Shangri-La. And the food we were offered a dinnertime was both French and Chinese.

BAE: Wow. And they're dramatically different, right? I'm not hallucinating that.

O. MILLER: Yeah.

BAE: Just for me, so that, when I turn this into an exhibit later, do you think you can give me, like, a quick timeline of where you were after you graduated from Dartmouth to, I guess, the present day? Because you guys seem to have jumped around. You went to grad school, traveled. Would you be able to do that?

O. MILLER: Well, we're able to travel a lot because we don't have children to worry about and take care of. And secondly, because we worked in Europe and New York very well, we just automatically want to return a lot. And only later did we go to places like China, Romania, and Russia, and India. And because Jeanette's sister was married to a PhD mechanical engineer from Bombay or Mumbai, he arranged for us to have a tour of India, which was managed by an Indian Travel Agency in Edison, New Jersey, which was spectacular. You know, it's better than going with American Express or anything like that. And we wanted to see the ruins of Western Turkey. American Express said they wouldn't go unless they had at least twelve people, and there was one place that we wanted

to go which wasn't on their itinerary. So, there was a Turkish travel agency on Madison Avenue [NY], and we went to them, and they had a real appreciation of where we should go. And so, we were [on the] first day night, we stayed in a Hilton in Izmir. And when we came downstairs, there was a car and it had a driver, and one semi-employed archeologist to take us around. So, it was really a great trip. And so, the western the ruins of western Turkey were off the chart.

J. MILLER: We've traveled a lot. I said we've traveled a lot, but we've never been to South America. We never been to Africa. Except we've been to Morocco, northern Africa.

O. MILLER: Northern Africa.

J. MILLER: But we've been in the Middle East. We'd never been to Israel, but we've been to Doha and Dubai. And actually, those were fantastic trips.

O. MILLER: Dubai because it was a resting place on the way to Jaipur and we had a 15-day tour of Mughal Rajasthan, and we just wanted to go to Rajasthan because we know that had been the heart of the Mughal Empire. Which is spectacular, it is spectacular.

J. MILLER: And Tokyo is fun.

O. MILLER: She'd gone to Symposium, but—

J. MILLER: But we've never been together. He went to Tokyo on business once. I went to Tokyo to give a lecture, and—

O. MILLER: And they thought that Jeanette was Asian, so they would sometimes speak to her in Japanese, come up and speak to her in Japanese.

BAE: Oh. That's funny. Do you, and it's okay if you guys agree, do you all have a favorite place that you've traveled to and why?

J. MILLER: [Laughter] We used to have a favorite place. I've been told now that it will no longer be our favorite place. It was really mine. We'd been going to a small island in the Caribbean called Virgin Gorda every year since 1972, except for this year.

O. MILLER: It's a very special place because it's so small. No big hotels, you know, skyscraper hotels or anything like that. And we started off renting. We went there first with Little Dix [Rosewood Little Dix Bay Resort], you know, which is a very upscale, expensive place or resort to go to. And when we were with Little Dix, we found out that we could rent cottages on the island, and so we started renting cottages. And slowly but surely, we moved up to renting homes and then renting really, really upscale homes that were not expensive. Less expensive than staying at Little Dix. And we didn't mind, you know, cooking our own meals. You know, two or three times in the two-week period. And it also got us interacting with the locals, which we wouldn't have been able to do as much if we'd stayed in expensive hotels. Resort hotels. And so, when we go back there, people are so familiar with seeing us that we can have conversations with them. And it's really fun to go someplace where people, the locals, would talk to you.

BAE: So, you know, of all these cities you visited, you find yourselves back in the Big Apple, in Manhattan. How did you end up choosing New York City to settle down in?

O. MILLER: When we came back from Basel, Jeanette wanted to continue working in, uh, what do you call it? Biopharma—

J. MILLER: Psychopharmacology.

O. MILLER: Psychopharmacology. And she interviewed at Rockefeller Institute. And then NYU, was it School of Medicine? She loved the work that was being done at NYU School of Medicine, so that's where she ended up, because there was a group there that was doing really groundbreaking work. And eventually, the leader of the lab discovered that Jeanette was a much better scientist than some of his PhD scientist, so he urged her to go back to finish her PhD, and she got full remission while she was working. So, she didn't have to give up her salary.

BAE: That's incredible.

J. MILLER: But I think the main reason is that I think we've been back to Boston, and of course knew San Francisco very well. There was no place in the South at that time that I want to live. Maybe if I think about it today, maybe Atlanta would

have been a place to give a look. But Boston seemed to us to be a small town and so did San Francisco.

O. MILLER: And if you aren't — there's so many colleges and universities there, that if you aren't part of the college or into the college or university social class, it's not a very interesting place to live. And we felt that San Francisco was also very small and parochial. And we went back before, you know, Silicon Valley had emerged. And at Palo Alto, where I lived, all homes had big high hedges around them, and we didn't think we'd have a great social life there either. New York just seemed like the best place.

BAE: What about New York social life seemed more appealing or seemed different?

O. MILLER: Well, I always tease Jeannette and I said, "You know, you should have been born Jewish," because, I don't know if you know that NYU is called NY-Jew.

BAE: I heard that one growing up. Yeah.

O. MILLER: And a lot of the people that she worked with were Jewish. And when she was at Elmira College, she used to babysit for a Jewish family, and one of her closest friends from Chicago's Jewish. So, Jeanette is, she likes — actually, there are a lot of things that she relates to that are Jewish. And she felt, that's one of the reasons she felt comfortable here.

J. MILLER: In New York is a, well, it's not just the Jewish population here. It's the population of many types of people.

O. MILLER: Multicultural.

J. MILLER: I went to get groceries this morning. I must have passed three different groups of people speaking a different language other than English. And they were walking their dogs. They're not tourists, they live here. And that's, you know, that's kind of the point. You get this, this, this vibe. And at our age now, we don't socialize nearly like we did, you know, ten years ago. Whatever. But you just, you feel it. It's a vibe that's just there without having to necessarily participate.

O. MILLER: And our most important social group is the oldest rug and textile collecting society in the US, which was founded in 1932. It's called Haji Baba. And we've done a lot of things with Haji Baba. Monthly lectures on Zoom or in person. And we also had a major exhibition at the New York Historical Society in 2007 and 2008 or 2008 and 2009, and the president of the society was retiring that year. And because I'm the only member that had an MBA, for some reason, they decided that I would be a great president of the society. And I said, no, I didn't want to manage a bunch of older, very wealthy people. That wasn't part of anything I wanted to do with my retirement. But I decided that I would want to become program director. And program director is someone who identifies, evaluates, and schedules lectures for the monthly meetings, and it was an opportunity for me to know who were the top curators and scholars in rug and textile societies.

J. MILLER: In the US.

O. MILLER: In the US and also overseas. And so that was a, and still is, a major part of our social life and a fun part of our social life.

BAE: You mentioned this over the phone, I remember, and the story involves Jeanette. Do you mind telling me again how it is you got into rugs and textiles?

O. MILLER: Jeannette did. Years ago, places like Macy's and W.J. Sloan's, which doesn't exist anymore, they didn't just sell rugs. They sold antique rugs as well. Which Macy's doesn't anymore. And one day, Jeannette was shopping for something else and entered the rug department and saw this fabulous rug. Which, it took a while for us to realize how valuable it is. It's a Persian rug called gūm, and it's a beige rug with silk highlights. And around the border are cats, a kind of wild cat chasing deer to eat. And it's a fabulous rug. Then we started going to this dealer who has fabulous rugs, and we were collecting going to Sotheby's auctions and collecting out of print catalogs and books on rugs and carpets.

So, it was like something we had studied before we started going to this carpet and rug dealer's place, and

after buying about five rugs and carpets from this guy, he realized that we had good taste, but we'd had to educate ourselves. It wasn't intuitive, and he said, "You know, you should join Haji Baba." And we didn't know Haji Baba existed. And so, we went on the website for Haji Baba and asked to join. And they weren't checking their website a lot, you know, because they were very academic and not a business. And finally, after a couple of months, they responded and invited us to join the club. And the club, years ago, didn't have women. They never had Blacks. And so, some of the women in the club really wanted someone who wasn't like the rest of the members to join the club. And so, we fell in with the club and learned a lot by going to the lectures and thought it was fun.

And after a while when we started to buy things, and Jeanette has a better eye than I do, living eight blocks from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I used to — after we bought something — I would go to the library, the Watson library, and use their computers to identify and learn more about something that we had bought. So, we have books, multiple books, on everything in our collection. So, it's an education as well. And being retired now, I don't just look at the pictures anymore. I go back and actually read these books. [Laughter] And in the beginning, I just used to look at pictures. I didn't have time to really study. But it's a lot of fun. And since I was program director for three years, we had learned a lot. And Jeanette was the secretary and assistant treasurer for the club. So, at one point we were running the club out of our apartment.

BAE: Oh, what is it about traveling and about these rugs? You know, it seems like you guys have a keen eye for multiculturalism. What is it about that that appeals to you guys?

O. MILLER: Well, none of them stand out in their own. Each rug borrows designs from other kinds of rugs. Or the weavers go back, let's say, go to the top copy museum, and copy things that they've seen in the museum. Or they travel to other places. For example, when the Mughals took over Persia, in India, a lot of the weavers used to go to Rajasthan to help the Mughals design rugs. And so, you

would have Persian artisans designing rugs for the Mughals and weaving rugs for the Mughals. And so, then there's so many cross-cultural influences. As I said, no design stands on its own. It has a history which is fascinating. And then there are dealers who don't sell their favorite textiles or rugs. They keep them for themselves. And we have things from the personal collections of dealers, famous dealers and collectors, and they're the finest pieces and they're very rare.

BAE: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense.

O. MILLER: And about half the things we own. You know. And it turns out that, I told you, we have a Susanin that Jeanette bought from the Uzbeki textile dealer in Istanbul, and because she had been secretary of Haji Baba and sent all the meeting notices out, he thought he kind of knew her. So, we walked into his shop, and he treated Jeanette like family and sold us something that was extremely rare, and we didn't realize until about ten years later, it was extremely rare, the Suzani that we have. And I think you probably know that Suzani are something that young girls start weaving at the age of twelve and it's part of their dowry.

BAE: Or, you know, that's traditionally how it went. So those usually don't leave homes. Those don't leave the house. Pretty incredible that you have one.

O. MILLER: Well, when the Soviet Republics fell apart, a lot of these people wanted dollars. And the guy who runs this dealership came from a very wealthy Turkish family. And he went up to Uzbekistan and places like that and just bought these things at a garden, a basement. You know, he's buying mostly Turkish, I mean, Uzbeki weavings that were all silk, like the silk robes that the men have. And he has a huge collection of those things that people buy from him. And so, he has a lot of Suzanis that he bought at bargain basement prices.

BAE: So, you know, the class that I'm doing this interview for, it centers on what I would call really American questions about race and race relations. And like I said earlier, you guys have traveled so much. I can't help but ask, how

does this change the way or influence the way you view race in the US?

O. MILLER: Well, I'll tell you that one thing about race that I don't think a lot of people, white people, understand, that, and being Black, we've encountered a lot of Black people that are smarter — and only have a high school degree — that are smarter than a lot of white people that have college degrees. And so that's one reason that, you know, we're really proud to be Black, even though we have five degrees between us. And when we meet somebody, we don't brag about all the degrees that we have.

But my stepfather, the third marriage that my mother in, used to read the *New York Times* every day, and I could come home on weekends and discuss what a lot of white people are not qualified to discuss or have no interest in discussing. But he only had a high school degree. But he's West Indian, which is one reason why, you know— Stan Roman is from the Caribbean, but he's... I can't remember what island he came from.

J. MILLER: You're thinking about Richard.

O. MILLER: But one person in my head who was at Dartmouth when I was there came from Trinidad, Richard Joseph, and he graduated from Boys High School in Brooklyn when Boys High School was a very good high school, and at Dartmouth he went on to get exceptionally good grades, and he became a Rhodes Scholar. But I've always — that's why when we go to this island in the Caribbean, we meet a lot of Blacks or islanders that are really bright. The one thing that's interesting about the island, the British and the Dutch used to grow cotton there. And when the cotton market collapsed, they left the island to the Blacks. [Laughter] And the Blacks were very entrepreneurial, and, over the years, they are busy now selling building plots to wealthy Europeans and wealthy Americans. That's a 360-degree cycle, isn't it? [Laughter]

BAE: Absolutely.

O. MILLER: These Americans and Europeans need services. So, they own all the services on the island like rental cars. Um, what else, Jeannette? Food services.

- J. MILLER: Restaurants, bars.
- O. MILLER: All the restaurants and bars. So, they're very entrepreneurial.
- BAE: Yeah, it goes against a lot of the stereotypes that are really common about Black people and people who aren't white in the US. And you guys got to see that firsthand, which is which is awesome.
- O. MILLER: Which is why we can easily talk to a lot of the Black people on that island.
- BAE: Yeah. It makes a lot of sense. These are all of the questions that I've prepared today. And thank you so much again for doing this interview. Is there anything that you want to add or are there any questions you wanted me to ask that we didn't get a chance to cover?
- O. MILLER: Well. Not really. You, oh! I told you about the Chinese salad bowl that we have.
- BAE: Oh, yeah. You did.
- O. MILLER: One time I walked into Christie's and they were having an auction of Thomas Jefferson's china, and Christie's main exhibition and auction site was a half a block from where I worked at McGraw Hill. So, I'd often wander in there to look at things, and I saw this bowl that they were using as an example of something in Thomas Jefferson's collection that they were selling. And I knew the woman who was the head of the rug and carpet auctions, and I sent her a picture of this. And she showed it to the Asian collection specialist, and she told me that, in fact, the guy who sold it to us said it was 1790, and she said, "No, this is 1780, and we know the four kilns that it might have been created in."
- Oh, I didn't tell you about my career. After I had come back and worked in different places, McKinsey can't offer someone a job who they were working with. And so, about two or three years after I left McKinsey, the managing director of the European Operations had moved back to New York and invited me to interview at McKinsey. So, I went and worked at McKinsey for maybe almost two years. But I didn't like living away from home a lot, and they offered me an engagement starting in

January at a company up in Buffalo. And I said, geez, I'm never going to be able to get home from Buffalo on weekends! [Laughter] So I left McKinsey. Also, McKinsey wasn't very nice to Blacks, and I felt that a lot of the partners didn't, you know, want me to work with them. In fact, I was on one engagement where the partner said he didn't want me to work on the engagement because I didn't have the technical skills. And by the time we finished — it was called Operation Improvement — by the time we finished the engagement, I had identified one third of the operating savings. So, when it was his turn to do a review of me, he said he has good technical skills, but he has no interpersonal skills.

BAE: My God.

O. MILLER: Yeah. [Laughter] So it wasn't a place I was comfortable working in and you know.

BAE: Yeah, it's a great code for I don't like him because of his skin color.

O. MILLER: Right.

J. MILLER: What was your last question? As your segue. What was your last question?

BAE: Oh, I mean was I was just asking if there's anything you guys wanted to add or anything that I didn't cover.

O. MILLER: Yeah.

J. MILLER: Now, it's probably best not to discuss politics?

O. MILLER: Now, in my generation—

BAE: Oh no, please, you can!

O. MILLER: In my generation, because of my age, there weren't a lot of Black — now there are a lot of competent Black persons and women at all these top jobs and CEOs and top partners at different places. But when I was coming along, there wasn't that opportunity, and I ended at one point being director of acquisitions for McGraw-Hill. And I led the team that acquired the first major PC magazine. And it returned more than sixteen times what we paid for it in the first five years of its operation. And they made me the first, at the age of 35, they made me the youngest VP

the corporation ever had. But they assigned me to work for a division that wasn't priority for the organization. And I didn't feel that it was going to go anywhere, even though I was doing evaluations of major media companies. So, I went to the CEO and said, "I want to quit this position." And he was really pissed because he thought he was doing me a favor. And I said, at that time, the advertising salespeople at *Businessweek*, were making about three times what I was making.

BAE: Wow.

O. MILLER: So, I decided to become a salesperson, an advertising salesperson at *Businessweek*. And within a year, I was working three times, earning three times what I was making as an executive, a VP executive, at a division that the corporation wanted to get rid of. And I liked doing that very much because it was people to people skills. And if you had been doing planning work, you knew how to work with people over whom you didn't have any control. You couldn't tell somebody you have to do this, or you have to do that. And so, I learned very quickly how to work with people and not tell them what they had to do. And the same thing in sales, you can't go into someone and say, you got to do this.

So. Yeah. I adjusted to it, to sales, like a fish to water. At first, Jeanette didn't want to do a lot of entertaining. And Jeanette, because she was an academic, didn't think that she was very good at entertaining. And after a while, she was so good, that after we took someone out to dinner or something, they'd call me the next day and say, "Wow, you have a great wife!" [Laughter] And she took, she had taken to entertaining like a fish to water, even though she was an academic. So, we worked very well together.

BAE: Wow, you guys closed deals together. That's pretty incredible.

O. MILLER: But after realizing— And by the way, one of the reasons I was successful is that the individuals making buying decisions in the ad agencies were often Jewish women, and they appreciated having a Black calling on them because a lot of the white salespeople calling on them they couldn't relate to. And I would take them, since we

were foodies, I would take them to the best restaurants in New York City. And I also would invite them to do things, because they didn't want to go out and play golf, I used to take them to the Philharmonic and American Ballet Theater and the opera, which they loved.

BAE: That's something I really appreciate growing up in the family that I did. Tripp, I know I told you, but I don't think Jeannette knows. So, my mother's Jewish and from Uzbekistan, and I grew up in a Russian speaking household. So, man, I think Russian and Jewish hospitality or Uzbek and Jewish hospitality are so, so different from very American ideas of how you entertain someone. It's great to see that you guys appreciate that too. That makes me really happy.

J. MILLER: [Laughter]

BAE: But we're also big foodies. So, any of those restaurant recommendations that you have, I'm all ears.

O. MILLER: I didn't realize that there were Jews in Uzbekistan.

BAE: Yeah, there used to be about 150,000 in Bukhara and in Tashkent and in Astrakhan. But once the Soviet Union dissolved, they pretty much all fled, either to New York, like my mother did, or to Israel.

J. MILLER: Mhm. She made the right decision to come to New York.

BAE: Yeah, I think we see that right now, especially.

O. MILLER: Mhm. I don't think a lot of American students that are pro-Palestine — there's nothing wrong with being pro-Palestinian. We are. But we also know that before World War II, Americans wouldn't allow Jews to move to the US. And that story of that boat, that ship that came over and refused to have those Jews enter the US. And as I told you when I first talked to you, I don't think that a lot of young students know how, for how many centuries, Jews were discriminated against or the subject of pogroms in Europe.

BAE: Very true.

O. MILLER: So, there's no reason why, after World War Two, a lot of Jews wanted to stay in Europe.

- BAE: Yeah. The situation in Central Asia was very interesting because, for one thing, Central Asia was sort of untouched by a lot of those European pogroms. It was mostly Turkish or Muslim emirs who were ruling. But the Soviets themselves were not huge fans of Jews. So, most of the waves of emigration actually came directly from [the time of] Soviet officials or from before that, the tsars. It's fascinating.
- J. MILLER: Mhm.
- O. MILLER: Listen, I'm going to let you run because I'm sure you have something, something else to do. But it's really interesting. And I think I touched on all the high points of my early life and college and professional career that you might be interested in. But as I said, December will be our 56th anniversary. And I think that's because appreciate a lot of the same things. We're compatible on so many different scales. You know, being foodies, liking R&B, Latin music and classical music.
- J. MILLER: And art.
- O. MILLER: And art.
- BAE: Yeah I see. Is that a Japanese style wheelbarrow in the background?
- O. MILLER: It's a six-panel gold-leafed Japanese screen which we got at an auction.
- J. MILLER: You can see that?
- O. MILLER: Yeah, yeah.
- BAE: Yeah, in the camera.
- O. MILLER: But we also have a lot of Japanese woodblock prints. In fact, when Jeanette was in symposium in Tokyo and Kyoto, she went to Nara on the bullet train.
- J. MILLER: Yeah, I went to Nara on the bullet train.
- O. MILLER: To Nara. And she saw a really great woodblock print. And since then, you know, there wasn't a digital age and the way you communicated was by fax, she came back to her hotel and faxed me information about the woodblock print and said, "Should I buy it?" And I said, yes. And she got

back on the train and back to Nara and bought it. But it's a fabulous print by one of the most famous 1950, 1930— And, you know, 1930 was the age of making woodblock prints, so we have a few. But we also love that screen.

BAE: It looks beautiful.

O. MILLER: And one thing that we keep in a box is a scroll with a lady that's actually fantastic, but we realized we should keep in the box because, with weather and everything, it would eventually kind of like — It wasn't the—

J. MILLER: In the heat.

O. MILLER: In the heat and the winter, it wasn't the best thing to have it exposed. So, we don't have that up at all. We have it, put it back in a box, and I think that's the way Japanese treat their scrolls. They only bring 'em out periodically.

BAE: Well, thank you guys so much for this opportunity to interview. Do you guys have any questions? Is there anything I can answer for you?

O. MILLER: No.

J. MILLER: Um, no.

BAE: I'll stop the recording.