

Ricki Fairley '78
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Black Lives
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Transcribed by Kourtney Bobb '25

BOBB: My name is Kourtney Bobb and I'm here at the Shabazz Center for Intellectual Inquiry on the campus of Dartmouth College, in Hanover, New Hampshire. I am currently doing an interview with Miss Ricki Fairley, class of '78 at Dartmouth, who is in her home office in Annapolis, Maryland. Today is October 27, 2022 and this is an interview for the Dartmouth Black Lives Oral History Project.

Hi Miss Fairley, thank you for joining me today.

FAIRLEY: How are you Kourtney? It's so good to meet you.

BOBB: Thank you. I am well, it's even better to meet you!

So first, I'd like to learn a little bit about your childhood. Can you please tell me the state and when you were born?

FAIRLEY: I was born on June 17, 1956, in Washington, D.C. and we lived in, D.C. for few years. I really grew up in Silver Spring, Maryland.

BOBB: Nice, thank you. Can you tell me the names of your parents and a little bit about them?

FAIRLEY: Sure, my dad is Richard Fairley, he's class of '55, Dartmouth. My mom is Wilma Fairley, [now] Wilma Holmes. She's been remarried since my dad died. They were both educators, my dad actually ends up getting a PhD in education. Actually, both of my parents went to Stanford to get their Masters in Education when I was in seventh grade and my dad went on to get a PhD but he worked for the government, and the department of education, and was a civil rights leader. My mom was a first grade teacher for part of my childhood and then she became actually the head of the first kind of D&I [Diversity and Inclusion] department in our school system and in the country when I was in high school. Then she became a principal for thirty years.

BOBB: Wow, that's amazing.

FAIRLEY: She was an elementary school principal.

BOBB: Awesome. What was it like growing up in Silver Spring, Maryland?

FAIRLEY: I had like the ideal childhood. I had a Cosby [Show] childhood. My parents both worked. I have one sister, she's four years younger than

me. I can only have good things to say about my childhood. It was a storybook childhood.

I didn't realize kind of that we were [a]middle class black family. I know we lived in the suburbs, we had moved out of the city, and I had a lot of things. I pretty much [had] everything I wanted, but I didn't really realize that until I went to Dartmouth, and I was around people who didn't have what I had. And my first boyfriend at Dartmouth, was from the south side of Chicago, was a basketball player, and kind of made his way through... you know growing up playing basketball. I remember going to his house at some break at some point thinking, oh my gosh, I have so much more.

I didn't realize it until... probably I was one of my few friends at Dartmouth that actually had an allowance from my parents, and I didn't realize what middle-class was, until I went to Hanover. I grew up around people that were like me.

I went to all white schools. I was pretty much always the only Black in my class. In my high school, I was the only Black in my high school for most of years. I went to private to Catholic school, but I didn't really know anything different. My parents put me in a lot of Black activities, and we went to a Black church and sort of to get that side of my cultural upbringing, but I didn't really know any different.

BOBB: Thank you for sharing. That's very interesting to hear. So, I know that your family has quite the legacy at Dartmouth. I know that your dad is an Alum here, as well as your two daughters, and of course yourself. Can you tell me a little bit about why you decided to attend Dartmouth?

FAIRLEY: Well, I actually had been talking about going to Brown [University]. My dad had a rule that he only... he said, "If you want me to pay for college... you can go wherever you want, but if you want me to pay for it, you have seven choices." So, I knew I had to go to an Ivy League school.

I had been at Dartmouth a lot over the years with my dad, we probably started going to Hanover to Winter Carnival when I was about eleven or twelve. That was like our thing, me and my dad.

I applied everywhere and I pretty much got in everywhere. I almost went to Brown and I'm not sure what persuaded me not to go to Brown, to go to Dartmouth, but probably my dad. And I think I had this familiarity with Dartmouth. My junior year in high school, we came to Hanover and we stayed for three weeks and that's when they started BADA [Black Alumni of Dartmouth Association].

BOBB: Okay, wow!

FAIRLEY: So, I was the babysitter for all the alums' kids. My father basically locked me in the Hanover Inn and said, "Do not leave this hotel. There are boys out there and they're all gonna be all over you! Don't even think about going out there!"

So this is before co-education. My dad actually voted against co-education. "This is a man's school." When I said I wanted to go to Dartmouth he was like, "What? This is a man's school, this is for boys."

Anyway, I think that I started to talk to the boys in Hanover... yeah, I don't know, maybe I was sixteen. So I think that was like, what really got me attached to Dartmouth. I was there for three weeks! On the campus, hanging out, you know, interacting with students. My connection and familiarity with Dartmouth was much greater than any other school I had been to.

BOBB: Wow, that is amazing insight. I'd love to hear more about it. So, can we talk a little bit about your experience at Dartmouth. I know you said that you grew up middle class, you went to predominantly or all white schools and you were often the only Black student there. You got most of your you said, "cultural upbringing" from being in church and being around family. What was it like coming to a school that wasn't very diverse? Did you feel that it was very similar to your experiences [growing up in all white academic environments]? Did it change you in any ways? Also, what was it like being one of the first classes to experience Dartmouth in its entirety after co-education? You can answer that, however, you feel [laughter].

FAIRLEY: Okay, so that was a lot of questions. Let me speak first to just sort of the cultural difference. Frankly, I had never been in a class with a boy. I went to an all girls high school. I had never worn clothes to school, I had worn uniforms my whole life and so I had an 8 o'clock class. I'd be like, it's 7:30 in the morning, like, oh my God, like I have to figure out what to wear because there's gonna be boys in the class!" My English five class was at 8:00 in the morning and I would have to really think about [what to wear] and I was the only girl. The only Black and the only one [girl] in the class. So I was more worried about, oh my God, like I have to figure out what I'm gonna like...wearing uniforms and bobby socks and saddal shoes your whole life... All of a sudden you can wear jeans, you have choices. Like, oh my gosh, you have to think about what you look like. Like you have to comb your hair... I never had to deal with that before.

So that was probably more of a transition than anything. But frankly, I was around more black people in school at Dartmouth than I was in high school because I went to all white, all girl school. I had way more diversity in Hanover.

I have never had a Black teacher until Professor [William W.] Cook and Professor Ray[mond] Hall and 'till I had black professors... until I

came to Hanover. We had a Black Dean family, the Cottrell family, we had a lot of Black families on the campus so we had a lot of Blacks in leadership that I had never seen in school before, because I went to all White Catholic schools. So, I think I probably had like [the] reverse [experience] than most people because I had diversity in Hanover. What a concept, right?

BOBB: Yes!

FAIRLEY: Being the third class of girls where the senior class was still all males...Again, I had come from this environment where I was with all girls so just to have any men around me was a thing. I don't I know what the ratio was. We go back and forth about [it]. Some people say 15 to 1, 10 to 1, 8 to 1, but there were a lot more men than women. And so just getting used to, just being around men in general was a thing for me because I had been in an all girls school.

But I don't think it ever really phased me. I think that, maybe freshmen year the senior class was still all male so they would kind of look at you still like "Who are you?"... and then Friday you were a girl!

I learned pretty quickly that I didn't really think I could go into a frat house. It was [the] Animal House [movie]... I never set foot into a frat until Amanda ['07] went to Dartmouth.

BOBB: Okay. Amanda is your daughter, right?

FAIRLEY: Amanda, my '07... my daughter that's an '07. Then I was hanging out in the frats with her, you know [laughter]! But... I never really went to frats.

I had such a great time. We had an all-Black cheerleading squad for the Basketball team and we were hot.

BOBB: You said you were really hot?

FAIRLEY: We were totally hot. We were totally hot and, and I danced in BUTA [Black Underground Theatre and Arts] and, I don't know... I had a very Black experience at Dartmouth with my Dartmouth friends. My two roommates are still my besties.

BOBB: And their names are?

FAIRLEY: Victoria Stewart ['78]... she actually lives very close to me in Virginia and Jan-Michele Lemon Kearney ['78]. She actually is an attorney in Cincinnati. She owns the black Newspaper there and is actually like the chief city council person there. Yeah, they're my besties. They are my friends for life.

FAIRLEY: We were the first group of people to live in Channing Cox [dormitory]. They kind of built Channing Cox... they don't really say it, but for

women. And the first bathrooms we had were bathtubs. We had bathtubs! Not showers, because girls wanted bathtubs. Isn't that crazy? Our apartment was 304... the girls in 304... and they called our apartment "The Brick House".

BOBB: [laughter]

FAIRLEY: We had the best time. Our other roommate, Andrea actually passed at forty-five. She had a rare cancer so our fourth person...

We had such a great time. I mean, we had such a great time. I have the best memories of Dartmouth and, you know, doing road trips with the Basketball team. On Thursdays, we used to all go out... the AAm [The Afro-American Society] [building] was our home. The AAm was our haven. We were in the AAm all the time and we'd all kind of gather on Thursday and say, "Okay, should we have a party this weekend?"

BOBB: [laughter]

FAIRLEY: "It is midterms... well, let's have a party anyway!" Or "You know we shouldn't be having a party this weekend, we should be..." you know... and then but also in the AAm, only men could live there. The corner rooms were like the thing to do. So if you were like a baller, you lived in the corner room.

BOBB: [laughter]

FAIRLEY: The AAm was like, where we went and and in the [AAm] library, we basically had every paper, every exam. I mean, the plagiarism rules would not be...would not work in our favor... because we all had all the tests, all the papers. So if you really needed help with something, we helped each other out. We would be there Thursday night, studying together. "Okay, who took the the organic final? Who took the whatever midterm? "Who took the whatever?" and and we had all the resources and helped each other out.

Like I struggled with Calculus, I struggled with Math 3 and I had like my little math routine that got me through, but you know but you never had to like worry about grades because you had a support system that was amazing.

All the upperclassman helped us. I had a big brother. His name was Rick Jones. He was a '76 and he's my brother to this day. But I mean...he took care of me. "Rick, I need help". And he was like, "Okay, we gotta get you a tutor.. we gotta get you whatever...like here's what you need."And so, we had just an incredible connection with each other. And I don't see that... I didn't see that [in] the same [way] for even Amanda and Haley ['14] through their experience.

They found resources, but our connection of sort of the Black students at Dartmouth were connected. But, guess what? We only had one frat, Alphas. That had just started so we didn't have them in all these divisions.

People will tell you, I'm the one that like talks badly about the Greek system at Dartmouth because I felt like it divided the community. We had one Community. We were all one. Yeah, we had like the athletes and the whatever and the cheerleaders, but still, the AAm was our home and we were all united. You know what I mean? Academically, spiritually. We had the Gospel Choir, you know. And different people say they were the founder of the Gospel Choir but, it all happened in the 70s. We had BUTA that was really strong, but we also had a great network of grown-ups. We had [Professor] Errol Hill. Do you know Errol Hill?

BOBB: Oh, I do not.

FAIRLEY: He was a music professor that ran the drama department. Oh my gosh, I can't even think of the music professor's name... but The Cottrell family, Dean Cottrell. We had a Black woman Dean, and her husband was the coach of the basketball team. We had another Black Basketball coach. We have Dean Trainum who was, what do you call it? [He was] the chaplain of the college.

So, we had all these wonderful Black families on campus. I mean, I babysat for the Cottrells, probably every other week. I would go to their house, and they would feed me fried chicken, mac and cheese, and greens and I baby sat for their kids. So, we had a Black community that was like, Camelot. Like Camelot... I don't think my kids had that same level of leadership in place at the college to keep everybody together. But there was always somebody you could call, there was always a Black mom that you could call if you needed help or something on campus.

FAIRLEY: Grace Hill is still there, you should go visit her! I don't know if she's on your list, but [she's] Errol Hill's wife. I just saw her at the BADA reunion in May [BADA @ 50]. She moved to a senior citizen [home], but if you ask somebody where she lives, she'll go... and she's a force. She was a force on campus. Their family was a force. I think they had three kids that went to Dartmouth...definitely two: Da'aga [Hill '79], and her brother...Yeah, she should be interviewed as part of this thing.

BOBB: [laughter] Okay, I'll write her name down right now.

FAIRLEY: She has incredible stories of her husband's work and her role on the campus.

BOBB: Okay, so to continue, I know you mentioned a lot of your involvement with BUTA, the all Black cheerleading team, Black Praxis [magazine],

as well as the AAm. Can you speak a little bit more about what it was like being in those organizations kind of like at the prime time where there are really emerging and you had kind of peak unity in a way. I know you said that your daughters Hayley and Amanda didn't quite have the same...Hayley and Amanda, correct?

FAIRLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

BOBB: They didn't have the same kind of experience that you did, in terms of unity. What was it like being in that moment?

FAIRLEY: Well, you know, we didn't know it was that moment. It was our life; it was our normal. I can look back on it now and compare it to my daughters and compared to now, but we didn't know we're in a moment. We just knew we were in the space that was like Camelot. So, we didn't know we were... I know we were starting a lot of things for the first time or starting like, you know, that's when BADA started, and BUTA started but we didn't really know we were making a moment. Does that make sense?

We were just doing our thing. We even owned the radio station between midnight and 2:00 a.m. and I'm Walter Calendar ['78] was the DJ. He's in my class. Have you ever heard of him, Walter Calendar?

BOBB: I have!

FAIRLEY: We owned the radio station between midnight and 2 a.m., so we would all just stay up to listen to Walter Calendar and our music. But we didn't know we were a thing. We were just doing our thing. Clearly you know, we were doing so a lot of first because women were new. We were just living our lives, living our best lives.

BOBB: I love that. Okay, so thank you for sharing about those experiences. So right now, what I would like to do is get a little bit more insight about what it was like outside of the black community. Did you find yourself in spaces that were not necessarily Black-life centered? If so, how did you navigate them?

FAIRLEY: So, I would say the place that I went out of the Black community was in my major. But, then I had Professor Cook! Who was like my mentor and my advisor. Have you heard of Bill [William] Cook?

BOBB: I have not heard of Bill Cook actually. Can you tell me what your major was?

FAIRLEY: English.

FAIRLEY: Bill Cook was a force in English Department he ran it. He just died a few years ago. He had like one of those curly mustaches and a bald

head. He was just this prophetic, amazing, poetic professor. And so, I just like loved him.

I really became an English major because I loved Sanborn House. That was my study place, because every day at 4:00 [p.m.] they served tea and Pepperidge farm cookies. So, I would go there every day at 4:00 after class and get my cookies and sit in the big cushy chair and study because that was my happy place... that became my happy place. And I really think, well, this is really comfortable. And really, which one day Professor Cook walked in said, "What's your major?" and I said, "So I think I'm pre-med... my father told me I should be pre-med... but I really don't like the sight of blood...but I'm taking all the classes!" He's like, "Why don't you major in English?" and I'm like, "Why not?" you know, I love to read. I love to write and so even though I did pre-med, I came out thinking, I don't really want to be a doctor. That was what my father wanted me to be!

But yeah I was an English major. I can talk more about that. In my English classes, I was often the only Black, but I had Professor Cook, so many of them or at least part of the conversations... I don't know that I was in any other white spaces, to be honest with you Kourtney. I mean, there was the all Black cheerleader team. We were around the basketball team where there was a lot of white people, but we were all Black. So, I don't know that I operated outside of the Black community. It was interesting because, having come from this White school and being around all White people in general, I think I just naturally gravitated to the Black people at Dartmouth. Does that make sense?

BOBB: Yes.

FAIRLEY: So that was my comfort zone. It was my comfort zone.

BOBB: Wow, I'm interested in the differences between your upbringing and your very White school experience and how that was challenged once you got to Dartmouth. I typically hear the reverse of that, so I think that's very interesting to hear.

FAIRLEY: I know, I don't know. I was quite often the only Black in class, the only woman in class. I think that made me outspoken. I never really had a problem with being outspoken, but I think the one thing about going to an all girl's school is that you you're told you're a badass from birth and they make you a badass. Do you know what I mean, like they make you be outspoken and all the girl power stuff.

I think Dartmouth strengthened that because I had to defend myself a lot, especially with maybe not so nice white men, right? But It Made Me Stronger. It didn't waver me, I saw it as a challenge and I stood up to it. It made me made me get stronger and be more outspoken and be more of an advocate for myself and it It didn't intimidate me. Do you know what I mean? Like and if it did, I would call my dad and my dad

was like "What's wrong with you? You know better than that and you stand up to those white people!" He was activist. So, I think that it helped me become like the person that I am that, I don't take no for an answer. I don't say no. No is never the answer, its always how. I learned that from my dad. It made me, go head to head with a lot of people that wanted to argue with me and I didn't let It rain on my parade. That's possibly because of my dad my parents, how they brought me up. I was not intimidated in those environments. I think maybe some of my black peers were, because they hadn't gone to White schools. I think having gone to a White high school, I had to learn that already and [to] stand up for myself.

BOBB: Wow that is very, very amazing to hear. So that actually brings me to what I want to talk about next. I'm trying to navigate how I want to ask you these questions because you just touched the nail right on the head about where I want to go next.

So you speak about your dad being an activist, how you learned not to take no for an answer but rather to say, like, "how"... something along those lines.

FAIRLEY: Yep, yep.

BOBB: One thing that we're learning about in class right now... well we read a book called, *Upending The Ivory Tower* by Stefan M. Bradley and basically, it kind of takes us through the various social movements happening on the campuses of Ivy League schools, across various periods of time. In the chapter about Dartmouth, it spoke a lot about how Dartmouth was not as... the book referred to as radical as other schools like at Columbia or at Cornell where they had like guns on the front lines and they were really going face-to-face. Whereas at Dartmouth there was a different approach that was not necessarily as... with those same tactics, but was still just as effective if not more. So, I want to know a little bit more about how your experience being on campus and not taking "no" for an answer and kind of making things happen played a role in creating things like the AAm or rather the things you did to facilitate the changes that you thought were necessary on campus? Were there problems prominent at the time that you guys felt very strongly about that, you felt empowered to go after?

FAIRLEY: So we had... have you heard of the report?

BOBB: Vaguely...

FAIRLEY: Have you heard of Judy Redding ['76]?

BOBB: Yes, I heard of that [report], actually!

FAIRLEY: Yes. She was like the ringleader of activism and she created this report for the college about racism at the college and she basically was the

leader of a sit-in it on The [Dartmouth] Green. She basically helped us along in terms of leading this charge about how The Dartmouth [Newspaper] was racist.

Now, you know, little naive Ricki, I didn't really see the racism. I mean, I was so oblivious to [it] because I had gone to White schools. I had grown up in this family of activism, but I've sort of jumped on the bandwagon, but Judy was the leader. And it was interesting that a black woman, a '76 took that role and basically said okay you guys were doing this now show up on the green at 4:00 [p.m.] we're all going to wear black and march or whatever. I was more of a follower in that than a leader and she was so strong and powerful. Look up the Redding report. It's in the library.

BOBB: I absolutely will, I already wrote it down. [I'm] absolutely going to look for it.

FAIRLEY: You should interview her, she's a badass, she's a phenomenal, phenomenal badass.

BOBB: That is awesome. Okay, thank you so much for sharing about that. Is there anything that you would have changed about your experience at Dartmouth?

FAIRLEY: I wish I could have stayed longer.

BOBB: Aww.

FAIRLEY: When my kids went, oh my God, I had such FOMO [fear of missing out].

BOBB: Oh, really?

FAIRLEY: Oh my gosh. I had such FOMO. I think both [of my daughters], when I took both of them, I stayed for two weeks in Hanover. When I took them to school. They gave me restrictions. I was only allowed to visit once a term.

When Amanda was there, my dad was still alive. He died after her junior year, right before her senior year, but he was there. She'll tell you... all the time. She would call me, "Mom..." because he lived in Maryland. So, he would take this like a 6:00 a.m. flight and he would get to Hanover 9:00 [a.m] and show up at her dorm knocking on the door at 9:00, but he would take all of her friends to Lou's.

BOBB: Oh, that's awesome!

FAIRLEY: But she would call me like, "Mom..." and he would call her like from the airport from Manchester [,New Hampshire]. So she would know he was coming, and she would be like, "Mom... poppa's coming again, he's on

his way here, Mom. I'm like, "Well where are you?" "Well, I'm not in my room." "Okay. Well, you better go to your room fast!"

But my kids were like, can you please only come once a term, and I cheated them quite a few times. I had such FOMO. I wanted to do it again. I mean, I don't know that I would change anything except for... you know what, if I could change anything, I would probably build more relationships with White people who are now very wealthy powerful alums like Jeff Immelt ['78], and like... head of GE [General Electric]. A lot of my classmates have done very well for themselves, and I know them now. I began to know them as adults. But, I would've spent more time doing that on campus. But again, I think I was so happy to be around Black people! That's why [that was where] I put my energy.

BOBB: Got it, thank you. Now, I'd like to hear about your career right now. I know you are the CEO and Co-founder of Touch the Black Breast Cancer Alliance. Can you tell me a little bit about or actually a lot about your organization's mission and why you decided to get involved in your Capacity?

FAIRLEY: Sure. I was diagnosed with Triple negative Breast Cancer and you probably don't know what that is. It's a subtype of Breast cancer but it's the highest mortality rate, the most aggressive, and it affects Black women at three times the rate of white women. I had stage 3A so I did... and I really got diagnosed... Haley was actually in China for the summer after freshman year and so I kind of put off my mammogram because she was going to be home for a week before she had to go back to Hanover and we were gonna do all the doc appointments.

So, I put off my mammogram and my doctor's appointment 'till she came home. So we're rushing around going doing all this stuff and we went to the doctor together and my doctor found a lump.

Had I been doing self exams, I probably would have found it, but I wasn't. I said to my doctors, "Well I'm taking my kid back to school. Can I wait, and come back to you in a few weeks?" " No, no, no. We think this is serious. Go get tested". So, I got a mammogram, I got a sonogram, I had a biopsy and then we got on a plane to go to Hanover. And so I packed her all up, you know, went to Walmart. Actually, I don't know if we... yeah we did have Walmart... when Hayley was there, we didn't when Amanda was there. I was leaving Hanover, going through the Boston airport to go on a three-week business trip to California and my doctor called me as I was walking through security and said, "Ricky, yes, you do have Breast Cancer" and I said, "Well, are you sure it was me? You sure the data is right?" " Yeah, it was you." I said, "Well you know what, I have to give a speech to 300 people tomorrow and I haven't written it yet. I'm about to get on the plane to the West Coast. Can I call you back?"

And I totally like poof... let it go. So I got to California, I wrote my speech. I did my speech and then I went to LA and then three days went by my doctor called me back and said, "Ricky, not only do you have Breast Cancer, but you have Triple Negative Breast Cancer". I said, "Well that doesn't sounds so bad. Triple Negative, how bad is that?" and then I went to Dr. Google and it said, "You're gonna die. You're gonna die. You're gonna die fast. We have no drugs for you." So, I got on a plane and went home to Atlanta.

So, then I went into this whirlwind of Breast Cancer and I had a double mastectomy, I did a lot of aggressive chemo, I did radiation and then my doctor said, "Okay, you're good."

And then that I had to go back for a checkup and almost a year to the day of my diagnosis, they found five spots on my chest wall and my doctor said, "okay, you're now metastatic, you have two years to live, get your affairs in order. We don't have any drugs for you." and I said, "Well, I can't really die right now." Haley is a sophomore at Dartmouth. I was the breadwinner for our family and the rainmaker for my company, I have to work. I have to pay for my kid to go to school, so I need.... there's gotta be some drugs or something, I have to work this out. So, I went back to Dr. Google and I found the Triple Negative Breast Cancer Foundation, which I'm still on the board of... and it gave me a doctor that basically put me on some experimental drugs. She was probably one of about five doctors at the time that were actually doing research on Triple Negative Breast Cancer.

BOBB: And what was her name?

FAIRLEY: Her name is Ruth O' Reagan.

BOBB: Okay.

FAIRLEY: She's phenomenal. She was at Emory at the time. She is no longer there, I think she is at Michigan. But, she put me on some experimental drugs and I did a lot more chemo and I didn't die. It's been eleven years.

BOBB: God is good.

FAIRLEY: God is good.

So I know that God left me here for this, to do this work. So my first goal was to make it to to make it 2014 to get Haley graduated. I was sitting there you know, Shonda Rhimes [91] was actually the graduation speaker. Her words of wisdom to everybody was, "Do the right thing. You know what, the right thing is. Do the right thing." And so, I think that was kind of resonating in my head. And then God just said, "Okay, you need to be an advocate for black women. You made it here, I got you here". So I've been an advocate ever since, I've been

on the board of the Triple Negative Breast Cancer [Foundation] ever since, and I started doing a lot of advocacy work while keeping my day job.

Also, when I had cancer, I divorced my "Wusband" [ex-husband] of thirty years, I quit my business partners, I sold my big house in the suburbs, I started my own business between my third and fourth rounds of chemo, I made all the Radio Ads for the Obama campaign — the second one —and I moved to the beach which is where I live now on the Chesapeake Bay, kind of where I grew up.

I wouldn't recommend doing those things when you're sick, but I did. I figured out that I had to not only get the cancers out of my body, but I had to get all the cancers out of my life, and I totally changed my life and start a new one.

And so, I just have been doing advocacy as I was sort of running my own company, my marketing company and, and then a few years ago, a few years went by and there was a study done at the University of Georgia about 2017, 2018, that identified that Black women get Triple Negative Breast Cancer at three times the rate of white women, but no one could explain it. Well, I said, "What's up with that? Why is that happening?" Oh, and then I started looking around at all the data that was available and Black women have a 41% higher mortality, rate than White women of Breast Cancer. We have a 39% higher recurrence rate of Breast Cancer, Black women, under thirty, get Breast Cancer, at four times, the rate of white women, Black women under thirty-five, get Breast Cancer at twice, the rate and die at three times the rate of White women, well before they would have their first mammogram at age forty. Under fifty [Black women] who get Breast cancer, die at twice the rate. And so I'm like, "What's up with this? Like what?" And then I went back and looked in history to see. "Okay, so the drugs that we're all taking that are standard of care, were they tested on black bodies?" And they were not.

Then I said, "Okay, what's happening now?" , "Right now, we only have a three percent participation in clinical research, for the new drugs being developed. I think black women have a different disease." So, I went to this big Breast Cancer conference. This was the year before covid. It was called the San Antonio Breast Cancer conference. And it's like where 14,000 people come from all over the world to talk about Breast Cancer. It's like the biggest myth.

I tried to meet with all the Pharma companies to basically say. "Okay, there's this thing out here, it's called Black Breast Cancer" and I labeled it, and I called it Black Breast Cancer for the first time and nobody sort of thought about that. I said, "Black Breast Cancer is a different disease, we have a different disease. It's Unique. It's different, its distinctive and we're dying. So, what are you going to do about it? Like somebody needs to pay attention to this!" I sort of forced these

conversations with pharmaceutical companies and really kind of the Breast Cancer ecosystem that, "Hello! Black Breast Cancer is a thing. How are we going to fix it?" That's when I started my foundation, to basically address Black Breast Cancer as a distinct disease state. And my mission is to eradicate it, that simple. Really the best way to eradicate it is to advance the science and get more Black women into clinical research, so we can develop drugs that work on our bodies. So that's why I'm working on.

BOBB: That is absolutely amazing work. And thank you for sharing your story, but also all of the important facts and knowledge to, help us all become more educated. That was amazing, thank you.

So just to kind of continue off of that, you're very involved in the community, you're very passionate about your work, but you also kind of bring these passions and involvement still to like the Black Alumni Network of Dartmouth today. Can you speak to me about your involvement, with BADA and why you choose to be so heavily involved, even though you don't necessarily have to? Why do you do it?

FAIRLEY: [laughter]

FAIRLEY: Let me go back to one thing. So, I recently started a movement called, "When We Trial". Go to whenwetrials.org, we have a bunch of videos, and if you go to our YouTube channel, you'll see we have a suite of videos, like a playlist of "When We Trial" to get more black women into clinical trials. So, that's a whole other major project I'm doing.

I've been on the road for since really the beginning of May since before BADA. BADA was like one of my stops because I actually did a speech at BADA and in Hanover after graduation and reunions, but I'm trying to help Black women understand the research, how it works, and that they have to advocate for themselves. A lot of that work is in there.

I think I was the president of BADA for... you can look at the data, probably nine or ten years.

BOBB: Okay, nice.

FAIRLEY: I think I was definitely the president when Amanda was there. I think I was done by the time Haley came, but I did alumni Council. You know, I love Dartmouth. I would do anything for Dartmouth and when I was the president of BADA, my dad was still alive and my dad was like, well, "you better go to work girl!" You know, he was one of the founders. I think, when I first started being President, nobody would do the job. We had like our reunion coming or whatever... We were trying to do and every two years... And so my dad's like, "Go fix this! What's wrong with you? I'm too old!" so all my... So when my dad went to Dartmouth, there were twelve [black students]. Three in each class. So they're all kind of my Godfather's. We just lost my Godfather Gene

Booth ['57] like a month ago, but we're still going so Garvey...Garvey Clarke ['57], is still there.

Are you talking to Garvey?

BOBB: I have to check, one of my classmates might be, actually.

FAIRLEY: '57, you gotta talk to Garvey. Okay, I got to call him... he had Covid I think... I got to call him.

BOBB: Oh, no!

FAIRLEY: Anyway, I was always surrounded by these men that were, like, bossing me around and their kids and stuff and like, Wendy Clarke ['72] Garvey's daughter. My dad basically made me have guilt, to do this work. But I did. I was president of BADA and I loved doing that. It's a great passion to have.

I've pretty much always had a Dartmouth intern working for me since I could afford to pay somebody...Most of my career. If you talk to other alums they're like, "Yeah I was your intern!" and like "I was your intern!" So... I worked at Coke from for a bit and I always had an intern. I've always had an intern pretty much from the moment I could like hire people and really, I would go to Hanover again, find an intern and then the interns began to hire each other. Like, I would be like, "Go get me my next intern!" The kids would hear like, "Oh, she does internships, so go call her!"

So, it kept me connected, to have a Dartmouth student working for me, which I love still. I have one now! Natan Santos ['20], you don't know him, he graduated two years ago.

BOBB: Okay.

FAIRLEY: He was a '20. He graduated in the height of covid. God bless him. But yeah, like he does my Instagram. So I've always had this connection but, I also wanted to influence the college and help kids. We've had Mentoring programs, We've done all kinds of stuff over the years.

When I was on Alumni Council, I was the head of the chair of the Student Life committee just because I want to stay connected to kids. BADA, we try to do a lot of stuff with BADA, and I just try to keep it alive. And then finally, I said, okay, somebody younger needs to do this. So we kind of put Todd Cranford ['85] in this job, and then Leah [Last name '] and then, Ellis [last name ']... was Ellis after Leah? I don't know... but then, I've always said involved because I had some influence in getting the next president in.

BOBB: Nice!

FAIRLEY: They're like, "Okay, who's going to do this job right?" And then when it came time to do the 50th, I mean, oh my gosh, probably two years ago...

BOBB: It was amazing.

FAIRLEY: Were you there? Did you see it?

BOBB: I had the time of my life! It was amazing.

FAIRLEY: Me too! I had such a ball. We had so much fun. But, Tee Lotson '82 is one of my besties, forever.

BOBB: Yes, I remember her!

FAIRLEY: So, my dad lived in my house so oftentimes in the middle of the night, I'll hear this noise... that noise when you hit the computer and the key makes a noise... that's my dad talking.

BOBB: [laughter]

FAIRLEY: He woke me up. One day at 4:00 in the morning and says like, "you're going to do this, right?" "Okay...I'm going to do this." So, you know, I'm calling everybody saying, "Okay, I'm going to chair the reunion". Okay. And then then I called Tee and I said, "Tee, we're chairing the reunion". And she's like, "Okay!" Then then for a minute, I was going to be the CEO and she was going to be the president, and then after about three months, she was like, "Okay, we're co-chairing the reunions because I'm not gonna be your CEO."

Thank God for her, because she did so much work. We just wanted it to be like a special time. We wanted to get numbers. We wanted hundreds of alums to come back, and we are so happy, that so many people came. So, we really worked on it for two years. We worked really hard for a year about planting seeds and calling people and trying to put the agenda together and starting committees and getting people working. We had a great program committee, and we just did it and it was amazing. I thought so. I think people had a good time, but I really did it for my dad...and my daughter.

FAIRLEY: My daughters couldn't even come!

My niece got married that weekend. So my niece set her wedding date probably in December before and she never called me because I would've said, "No, you cannot get married on Memorial Day weekend!" But, my daughters and my granddaughters were all in the wedding, so they couldn't even come.

We were trying to figure out how we were gonna fly up here, and come back to the wedding, but it was impossible. They were really sad that they missed it because it was so much fun.

I did it for my dad and I had such a blessing to have Tee by my side, through the whole process. We really had an incredible committee. Everybody on our team... it was just the ultimate teamwork. "Everybody, okay here's your job..." Everybody did their job with excellence and like we had weekly meetings on Tuesday nights. Tuesday night we would all be nodding our heads, fall asleep. But you know, my hashtag is #GSD. Get shit done.

BOBB: Yes, I love it!

FAIRLEY: My other hashtag is #DIS. Do iconic shit. And so, I tried to bring that into what we did and everybody, everybody, everybody just did amazing work to make it make it special.

I'm so grateful to everybody that we worked with and I don't even say any names right now because I'll forget somebody, but everybody that said, "I'm signing up to help" brought it, they just brought it and we all had this great... only a Dartmouth camaraderie that you can have from Dartmouth to bring this together and I thought it was pretty magical. We had a magical team working on it to make this magical thing happen.

BOBB: That sounds so amazing. It was amazing. When I was there, I had never experienced a BADA reunion to that level of amazingness. Especially, as a student. It was amazing to be there. So, thank you for that.

FAIRLEY: I'm so Glad. I don't know if I want to do it again...

BOBB: What did you say?

FAIRLEY: I don't know that I want to do it again any time soon!

BOBB: Oh no! I hope we do!

FAIRLEY: I know, I'm gonna miss the women. I'm gonna miss the women's event in November. I have a Breast Cancer thing to do that weekend. But, it was great. And alumni relations... phenomenal! They gave us all the support that we could have asked for and more. So the college really stepped up and said, "Okay, what do you need? And when do you need it? And how can we support you? And they gave us a team of people just to get shit done.

BOBB: That's really great to hear.

FAIRLEY: Yeah.

FAIRLEY: Awesome, I love that. I love your hashtags. I'm writing them down, I'm going to put them on my wall!

FAIRLEY: I know there up there... where are they?

BOBB: Oh, that's so cool!

BOBB: Okay. Well, is there anything special or any last comments you would like to add?

FAIRLEY: We have this family Legacy that I treasure and everybody teases me about it but I don't really care. But so our family is the third black family with three generations.

BOBB: Wow.

FAIRLEY: If you look back, we have the Wilkinson family. So Amy Wilkson ['78] was my classmate, she was the third of her family. She didn't have any kids. The first family was actually in the 1800s, so we're like the third. I treasure that legacy. I treasure all the legacies that we are all creating all my alum's families are creating but, I really want to have the fourth generation. So my granddaughters all have the t-shirts with their classes on it. 2039, 2041, 2043.

BOBB: Wow!

FAIRLEY: And, it's so funny because I talked to their paternal grandfather all the time, and he went to Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin. I'm like, "Are you kidding? Like what... what really you really think that's a thing?" I actually had to go... I spoke at University of Wisconsin, a couple weeks ago and so I called him, "Alright, so I'm at your school and... it's okay... It's pretty cool here, but there's no comparison. My grandkids are not coming here."

Because they have like a family legacy there [too]... I know it's really crazy but all I care about is for us to have this fourth generation and My granddaughter's go to Dartmouth at least one of them.

BOBB: That's so beautiful.

FAIRLEY: I want to create this legacy and I encourage everybody to send your kids to Dartmouth. I gotta write a letter today for my friend Mark Carlson ['92] his son is applying now. I try to help other families get their kids in and write letters and do whatever. Because you know, the White people are thriving on their Dartmouth legacies. I want the Black families to also. So, you know, so you gotta send your kids!

BOBB: I will! I have to!

FAIRLEY: I told my kids when they got married, "Start saving the money now. It's going to cost you a fortune, but you have to make it happen. I don't want to hear about it. I put both of you through school. So, I'm not paying for 'em. I'll buy the shoes, I'll take them to Paris, I'll do all the other grandmother stuff, because your job is to save for Dartmouth, so do your thing. So, set up the accounts, do what do you gotta do. Make it happen." And so, it's really special to me to have this Legacy and do what my dad set out [to do].

FAIRLEY: I have a great video tape of my dad, "The History Makers". My dad is a historiographer on thehistorymakers.com. They basically recorded... so really a couple years before he died... I have like three hours of tape of him interviewing his whole life, but they asked him, "Why did you go to Dartmouth?" And he said, "Because he said my mother made me."

And he was Basketball star, he could have gone to many schools. He was like a rock star basketball [player]. He was in ROTC, straight A student, got accepted to a lot of places, but he kind of put Tufts in his mind. I'm not sure why... because they didn't have a... they had a sucky basketball team. But he was going to Tufts and I guess he got accepted really fast or whatever to Tufts. And, he said to my grandmother, "Yeah, I'm going to Tufts" and she was like, "No, you're not." and he says, "Well, where am I gonna go?" and so she said, "Well, we haven't heard from Dartmouth yet. We can talk when you hear from Dartmouth." And so, when he got the letter from Dartmouth, she said, "Oh, you're going to Dartmouth." and he was like, "Okay."

FAIRLEY: My grandmother was actually the Vice Principal of their High School. You see there were two Black high schools, one was vocational, and one was academic. My grandmother was the vice principal there, so that's where both of my parents went to high school.

My grandmother, you know, she was kind of this education force, and her uncle was the superintendent of the Black schools in D.C. He came from a long line of education and her whole family. Went to ... where did they go to school? But anyway, they all went to college for like five generations. So she really influenced my dad to go to Dartmouth like, "You're going here." and literally my uncle who's two years older than my dad, came to visit my dad in, like, December... he came to Hanover to bring him home for Christmas and it was so cold! My dad didn't have a proper coat. So, my uncle got home and sold his car to buy my dad a coat to wear back for winter.

I have lots of stories from my mom about being in Hanover going to winter carnival. So, I want to continue the legacy and I encourage everyone to build their own.

BOBB: Very important and inspiring message you have there! Wow, thank you so much Miss Fairley. Today is October 27th, and that wraps up our

amazing interview with the amazing Ricki Fairley of the class of '78.