

Morris R. Whitaker '74
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Black Lives
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Transcribed by Addison Verot '25

VEROT: Hi, my name is Addison Verot, and I'm at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. The date is October 26, 2023 and I am with Morris Rocky Whitaker, who is also at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. And this is an interview for the Dartmouth Black Lives Project. So, thank you for meeting with me today.

WHITAKER: Oh yeah, my pleasure. Absolutely.

VEROT: I would like to just move through this sort of chronologically. Obviously, the conversation can go where it wants to go, but I have sort of an outline of questions I'd like to follow. And the first one is where and when were you born?

WHITAKER: I was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, June 24th, 1953. Sounds like eons ago.

VEROT: And you moved to New Jersey?

WHITAKER: Yeah, we moved during the Great Migration when a lot of African-Americans got out of the south and moved north for better opportunities around jobs. So I probably was about maybe three when we left. Mom [Catherine Whitaker], Dad [Moses Whitaker], my older brother [Moses Whitaker Jr.], myself, and we left Virginia when I was three and moved to Patterson, New Jersey, which is basically where I grew up, all through elementary school and high school.

VEROT: So when you think of home, it's New Jersey?

WHITAKER: Yeah, mostly, absolutely. Those were my formative years where I met most of my high school and developed my early friendships through middle school and high school and elementary school.

VEROT: Did you ever make trips back to Virginia?

WHITAKER: Yeah, we used to go all the time, because most of my family was still there when we left. All my aunts, uncles, grandparents. So I can remember as soon as school was over at the beginning of the summer, from the time I was probably nine or ten, my dad would pack us in the car. We'd drive to Virginia. I swear it was like two days after school was up, we'd drive to Virginia. He'd drop us off, we'd hang out with both set of grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, all of that. And I swear it was like two days before school would start, they'd come and get us, and we'd drive back to New Jersey. Two days later, we were back in school. So we spent the summers there for many years. It was a good thing.

VEROT: Would you stay with your grandparents when you went for the summer?

WHITAKER: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I'd stay with my mom's people who lived at that time out by Norfolk Airport [VA]. But at that time, there was nothing out there. A bunch of fields. The next closest house was probably a quarter of a mile away. It was just my brothers and I and my mom's people in that house. It was my great-grandmother, my grandmother, my aunt, my grandmother's sister, and my aunt's husband, who basically really was my grandfather. He acted as my grandfather. So, in that house out in the middle of nowhere in Norfolk, Virginia, they raised chickens, they raised cucumbers and lettuce and watermelons and cantaloupes and string beans. So I got a different kind of, you know, feeling, vibe when we went down south. It was not like being in the city at all. So we sort of grew up every summer with those experiences. My dad's people lived across the water in another city called Portsmouth [VA]. They were separated by a river, and I think it's the Chesapeake River, don't quote me on that. But mom's people lived on the Norfolk [VA] side, my dad's people lived on the Portsmouth side. So when we went to see them, it was a whole different thing, because my grandmother lived on a block where it was a whole lot of people, a lot of different kids, so we got to hang out with the kids on the block. My grandmother and her husband were entrepreneurs. They had a store, they owned a gas station, so we worked during the summer when we went to see them, and they had a little country store out in

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Suffolk, Virginia. Way out in the sticks somewhere with a dirt floor in the store. We worked out there, and then they had another business. They had a gas station, an SO Gas that turned to Exxon later on. But South Street SO --- how do I remember the name of that place? It was South Street SO, and they had their business for a long time. We worked at the gas station as well. It was cool. I got sort of both worlds, and my dad's dad and his people lived around the corner from his mom. They weren't married at the time, and so we got a chance to go hang out with my grandfather as well. It was a pretty cool experience growing up. We did that probably till we were about 13, 14, when we could start getting jobs on our own.

VEROT: So how many aunts and uncles and cousins would you have when you returned? Too many?

WHITAKER: On my mom's side, she didn't have a big family. She was the only child. So we had maybe three cousins that we sort of hung out with. My cousin Denise, and on my mom's side, we had a couple of cousins, but they were in New York, so we didn't get to see them that often. When we went to Virginia, it was basically my cousin Denise, who was the tattletale and told on us all the time. "The boys are throwing rocks at the cats. They're picking the watermelons." So she was like, alright. But on my dad's side, I had goo gobs of cousins, because his dad had Uncle Sammy, Uncle Wayman, Uncle Arthur, and they all had like three or four kids. We used to love to go to my Uncle Arthur's house. He was the baseball guy, played in the Negro League, as a matter of fact. When we would go to his house, he had three boys, three girls, and a little lot right outside their house so we would play baseball over in the lot. So that was the hangout spot. "Can we go to Uncle Arthur's house?" Because we knew that we could spend the night, hang out with Randy, his 40, and my cousins, and just be boys. It was pretty cool.

VEROT: That's so sweet. Actually, my dad, well, it was my great-grandfather's and then my grandfather's and it's my father's now, owns a farm in Canada where I'm from. And during the summers we would always go back and that's where all my cousins were. So, I feel like I understand a bit of that, like, I'd escape the real world for a bit, and you just get to run around and, like, chase dogs and ride dirt bikes. It's just different.

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WHITAKER: Do stuff we can never do in the city.

VEROT: Yeah, yeah. It's a good place, I feel like sometimes I didn't always want to go, but looking back, I'm very grateful.

WHITAKER: Right. It was a good thing.

VEROT: With a big field and no one watching me and just getting to explore like that.

WHITAKER: I look back at it too, and it was a really, really good thing because it grounded me with my family that I wouldn't have known if I hadn't kept going back for those summers. I got to meet my great-grandmother. My great-grandmother on my father's side lived in this little row house, what they call a shotgun house. She had a potbelly stove that heated the house, a coal-burning stove. She had a wood-burning stove, where she cooked on, and an outhouse in the back. She had no running water, she had a pump that we used to go out in the backyard and pump the water in a pail and bring it in the house. So I would have never experienced any of those things if my dad hadn't said, "No, you're going to the south. You're going to hang out with your family."

VEROT: On that topic, are there any, do you feel like, lessons or specific memories that stick out to you from that point in time that you feel like you've been able to return back to later down the road?

WHITAKER: Yeah, for my mom's people, they were grounded really well in the Baptist Church.

VEROT: I'm sorry, can you repeat that? The connection...

WHITAKER: Yes. Yeah, I was going to say that my mom's people, you got me?

VEROT: Yeah.

WHITAKER: They were grounded really well in the Baptist Church. So it was understood that we were going to go to church every Sunday. We were going to go to Bible studies on Wednesday night. We were

going to go back to the church on Sundays. When you're a little kid, you're like, ugh. But as I look back on it, it gave me a sense of something bigger than myself, something that helped me ground my own self in some kind of spiritual base, some kind of religious base, so that I just wouldn't be out there just acting crazy and not having any consciousness around other people or other things that weren't associated with me but were attached to me and that I would impact.

VEROT: I'm so sorry, could you repeat that?

WHITAKER: Okay, I don't even know what the heck I said.

VEROT: I'm so sorry [inaudible]. You said, I'm trying to see, it might be my... I don't know, I'm fine. I don't know if I should move or restart this. [Recording paused]. You were talking about being grounded in something bigger than yourself.

WHITAKER: Yeah, I'm saying that my mom's people were big participants in their Baptist Church. So they would, at the time we considered it dragging us around, to all these church meetings, church services, but as I look back at it, it was a good thing, because it helped me understand that the world was bigger than just me, that there was something spiritual out there that sort of helped guide you along your path in this life. And I took that in later on in life, and it helped me be able to weather the storm in situations where I maybe couldn't have, because I had something to lean on. Now, my dad's side, what I learned from them is really how to be an entrepreneur and make it work for yourself. They had stores and businesses the whole time I was growing up, so I got to see that. I got to see that Black folks could do other things besides work in the factory. They can have their own businesses. They can direct their own, point their own direction and make things happen for themselves. If I hadn't gone down those summers, I would have never seen that. I would have never been exposed to it. I would never have had the opportunity to talk to my grandmother about how she even started the business, why it was important to her. So those were good lessons to learn along the way.

VEROT: You moved and you did this every summer until you went to college?

WHITAKER: No, till I was about 14, 13 or 14. Soon as I could get a work permit, I went to work. Because asking my dad, Moses, for money, not when you can earn it yourself. Not when you can earn it yourself. So, my brother and I, he got his work permit a year before me, and he started working, doing some stuff. My first job, actually, I got a job before I got my work permit. One of the guys in the neighborhood came to me, a guy named James Lawson. We must have been 12. Mr. Jackson, I'm making this name up, owned a car wash about three blocks away. So he said, "Rocky, Rock, Mr. Jackson said we could work for him," "We can? Let me ask my mom." His mom said, "Okay, go down there." Mr. Jackson worked a mess out of us. We were salinizing cars, waxing cars, washing cars. At the end of the week, we got 20 bucks or something. But you know, when you're 12, 20 bucks is a lot of money.

VEROT: Yeah, that's a lot. That's going to get you a lot.

WHITAKER: But then when I got my work permit, we started working for, it was a program run through the city, Summer Youth Employment Program. So my first job, I worked at a playground, like a playground monitor. So my responsibility was to get there like at 10:30 because the playground opened at 11 till like three or something like that. And they used to have this box that they would lock down, and inside the box had all the playground equipment: bats, balls, basketballs, everything you would need to have some recreational activities in the playground. So it was my job to monitor the playground, make sure I got all the equipment back at the end of the day, lock it up, and be ready for the next day. So I did that, 14, 15, 2 years, 16 maybe, almost for 3 years I worked for the Summer Youth Employment Program until I'm on my way to college. And then when I came back from college, I worked with the city again. And this time I was the playground supervisor. So I had like five playgrounds under my supervision. Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey. But now I'm a freshman in college, home for the summer. So I did the playground job, really crazy. And you gotta do this when you're young. So I worked at a playground from 11 to 3, I would go home, take a nap, cause I picked up another job. A friend of mine

worked at this bakery at night baking rolls, so we would go in at 11 till 7 in the morning. I realized that is not the shift for me. So all summer I work from 11 to 3, would go home, eat, try to take a nap and then get up and be at work at 11 o'clock PM till seven in the morning. Go home, try to get something to eat, go to sleep, and go right back to working at 11 AM for the playground job. Had plenty of money in my pocket when I went back to school, but I was tired as I don't know what.

VEROT: Yeah, oh my god. That is definitely not what people think of when they think of summer vacation.

WHITAKER: No, no. It was either get the money or go back to school with a little less than I wanted.

VEROT: And so you have just one older brother?

WHITAKER: I have one older brother. I have a younger brother [Michael Whitaker]. My older brother is a year older than me. And I have a younger brother that's three years younger. But I have two older sisters [Saundra and Yvonne Whitaker] from my father's first marriage. I have a sister that's three years older and a sister that's four years older. The other good thing about that, going back for the summers, is I got to hang out with my sisters. Because my grandmother, my father's mother, raised them. She raised them. So when we would come back for the summers, I get to hang out with them. And then some summers, they would come to New Jersey and hang out with us. If that hadn't happened, I wouldn't have had that relationship with them that I still have to this day.

VEROT: You might have nothing to really say, but could you talk about your family dynamics, especially amongst your siblings? I'm 1 of 5, and I know that there's 3 of us in the middle and we refer to ourselves as the OGs, even though we're definitely not, just because we experienced the most moving around with my dad's work. And all this type of stuff. The older sister is much older. So like, yeah, could you talk about that?

WHITAKER: Yeah, well, growing up I always knew that I had two two sisters. It wasn't like anybody tried to hide that fact. So growing up I always

knew I had two sisters. I always knew that my dad had been married before, before he married my mom. I always knew that my grandmother, his mom, my dad's mom, was the caregiver for my sisters. But this is the interesting thing. When we would go back to Virginia and hang out, we would stay at my dad's mom's house, my grandmother's house, where my sisters lived. So we were always together when we would come over there. And then the other thing was, and I found this really cool, and I don't know if this happens a lot, but we would go over to my sister's mom's house – her husband and all of her sisters and brothers, and spend two or three days over there hanging out with them. Because she had three brothers over there, and all of the boys would get together. My two brothers and her brothers. We'd go play baseball, hang out, do all kinds of sport things. So I thought it was really cool that it was accepted like that. And that we could go over to their mom's house, Ms. Norma, that's what I call her, Ms. Norma, and hang out for a few days, and you know, it wasn't a thing, and go back to my grandma's house, and vice versa. And later on in life, her brothers and sisters wound up spending time with us. They would come to New Jersey and as they were, when they were in New Jersey, they'd come to our house and hang out, you know, if they were visiting and that kind of thing. And later on in life, I wound up running into one of her brothers in San Francisco when I lived out there, and he and I hung out. So it was really a good dynamic. Could have been kind of crazy and not good, but fortunately we had adults who, you know, my sister's mom and my dad and my mom who said, no, it's more important for everybody to know where they come from. And that, you know, we all just sort of make it happen.

VEROT: Do you know if there was any, because it sounds like your family, for the most part, stayed in Virginia, other than the one aunt that went to New York?

WHITAKER: Aunt Helen went to New York on my dad's side. She was the cool aunt. She was cool as I don't know what. We used to love to go over to Aunt Helen's house, cuz she lived in the Bronx like three blocks from Yankee Stadium. She would take us to the games. We could sit out in front of the block. She had all kinds of people that lived in that neighborhood. Puerto Ricans, Jews, I mean, all kinds of people. So we got to hang out with the kids that were on that

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block. We used to love to go over to New York to hang out with Aunt Helen. I had an uncle on my mom's side that moved to New Jersey before we did, and he was the uncle when we moved to New Jersey that we stayed with until we got our own place. So I had my uncle in New Jersey, I had Aunt Helen in New York, and I had one of my mom's uncles, her mother's brother lived in upstate New York somewhere and I, New Rochelle, something like that. So I think we went to see him maybe once or twice, Uncle Bill, maybe once or twice, but didn't have a lot of connects with him. So Aunt Helen and my uncle in Jersey went once, Uncle Luther in Jersey.

VEROT: Was their motivation to move similar to your family's? It was kind of just a part of the conversation that was happening?

WHITAKER: Yeah, economics. Yeah, get out of the south, economics, all the crazy racial stuff, all that stuff going on. Like, nah, we're going north.

VEROT: Do you know if your family back in Virginia, I also don't want to overstep, you're also allowed to not tell me things, but do you know if it was any point of contention at all, them moving away, separating the family geographically like that, or?

WHITAKER: I don't think so. Never heard anybody said, you know, that grandma was upset because uncle went to New York, you know, that kind of thing. Not at all. Didn't hear anything like that. Might have heard that, you know, they don't come home as often, come back to Virginia as often. But no, nothing contentious about or ill feelings about people moving away from the family.

VEROT: And you said you lived with your uncle when you first moved, how long? And at that point, it was just you and your older brother then, right?

WHITAKER: Yeah, it was just me and my older brother because my youngest brother was born in Jersey. And I don't remember a whole lot about that, because I was like three or four. But I do remember my earliest recollections is when my youngest brother was born, and he was having his first birthday, because there's pictures from that. I can remember we had moved by then, and we lived off of

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Hamilton Avenue, right by the train new trestle, and I remember, the reason I remember that, because the train would go by at night and shake our apartment. Shake our apartment. But I must have been four when I realized that, you know, we had our own place. We lived in New Jersey. I was about to go to kindergarten. My brother was already in kindergarten. My little brother had just turned one, and we were having a birthday party for him. I remember these hats we had on. So there's a picture of that that helps keep my memory kind of sharp around that.

VEROT: This apartment that you're speaking of right now in your early recollections, you moved from that apartment into a...? What was that situation?

WHITAKER: Yeah, this was a bottom apartment. Like you walked off of the sidewalk, walking down the sidewalk, you went down to get to our apartment. So it was like a basement apartment, and I want to say it was maybe, can't remember correctly, because my brother and I used to sleep on these pullout little beds, so it might have been like two bedrooms in that apartment. We were there, and there was five of us. Then we moved from there to 47 Carroll Street. Don't ask me how I remember these addresses. 47 Carroll Street.

VEROT: Do you remember the first address as well? Because it just cut...

WHITAKER: No, I just remember it's on Hamilton Avenue. I can't remember the exact address. Then we moved to like 47 Carroll Street. That was pretty cool. We lived on the third floor of a three-story apartment building walk-up. There were probably four apartments on each floor. There were a ton of kids on that block. A ton of kids, all over that block. There was a playground about three blocks down the street. The school I went to, School 10, was probably, I don't know, eight blocks away. So that was a whole different vibe, and I think we lived there till maybe, I don't know, 10, 11, and we moved from 47 Carroll Street. This is the thing, so while we were at Hamilton Avenue and 47 Carroll Street, my mom decided to go back to college. She had done maybe one year, my dad, they were both at Norfolk State together, and they both did maybe one year, and they got married and moved to Jersey. When she came to Jersey, my dad worked in the sheet metal factory, and my mom was a

domestic. She cleaned people's houses. I want to say, when we moved to Carroll Street she was going to college. I remember when she graduated. She graduated, my grandmother came, a bunch of people came. She got a job at, with the Board of Education, teaching high school. Our whole life changed because, now, I look back at it, it changed our economic status. You know, you're a kid, you don't realize that, but what I realized is that, all of a sudden we bought a new car, a little Pontiac Tempest. All the other cars we had, like my dad, I swear he bought those cars for like 25 dollars. I swear. And I don't know how those cars worked, because one time we had a car, and this is the honest to God truth, the floor in the back had rusted through and you could see, you could see the road. The top of the hole in the floor. I swear to goodness.

VEROT: That's crazy. Do you remember the type of cars? What kind?

WHITAKER: I don't know. Some big Buick. Something, I don't know. That thing was huge. I mean, I don't know what it was. And that's when we were on 47 Carroll Street. We moved, we moved to the Fifth Ave projects. But this is the thing about the Fifth Ave projects, it was the white people's projects. So it was like the uptown projects. We had a little piece of grass in front of our house. We had our own little unit, little backyard. I'm like, whoa, this is different. We sure did. But that shows you the power of education. Once you got a degree, got that job, work on a school system, everything changed for us. We moved off of Carroll Street, we bought a new car, we moved into the white people's projects. We just went, elevated up a couple of levels. And they had a ton of kids in that whole development. So a lot of those youngsters that I met there, we were in elementary school together. We wound up going to high school together. We wound up playing sports together. One guy in particular, Johnny Maik. John's dad was a music teacher, taught my brother how to play trombone. Johnny Maik and his brother, Desi [Maik], we were all on a baseball team together. And then later as we got to high school, John was in a band with me. Johnny Maik was in a band with me all through high school. And we're still friends to this day from living in the Fifth Ave projects.

VEROT: Could you spell his name by chance?

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WHITAKER: M-A-I-K, John Maik. He's down in, I think he's in St. Petersburg, Florida somewhere. Just sent me a card a couple of weeks ago when he heard that my dad passed, and my dad was the manager of the band. He was the one that loaded all the stuff in his car, took us around, made sure nobody took advantage of us. So, you know, that was pretty cool that he sent that letter.

VEROT: Sorry about that. That's a really sweet memory. I want to come back to the band, but I'm going to clarify a few things first. So your mother went back to school. Then was an educator, I'm sorry if you already mentioned this, but where did she teach exactly?

WHITAKER: She taught at my high school, Eastside High School, Patterson, New Jersey. You ever heard that movie *Lean on Me* with Morgan Freeman?

VEROT: Yes.

WHITAKER: That's the high school I went to. I went there before Crazy Joe showed up, and my mother taught at that high school. So I was at high school when she was there.

VEROT: Oh, what was that like?

WHITAKER: I thought it was pretty cool. I didn't have to take her class. Actually, I was in one of her classes. I was in one of her classes and she transferred me out of her class.

VEROT: What class?

WHITAKER: It was a biology class. She taught biology, chemistry, all the sciences, general sciences. She taught all that. My friends would be like, "Hey man, I have your mother for biology." I'd be like, "Just do your work, because she will smile at you and then call your mother and tell them that you are failing her class."

VEROT: What did your father do?

WHITAKER: My father worked, he started off in a sheet metal factory, cutting sheet metal and installing sheet metal units in houses as part of the

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HVAC system. And then, when we moved to Fifth Ave Projects, he got another job in Fairlawn, New Jersey, right across the river with a Swedish steel company called Sandvik. Over time he became the manager of their mailroom. So all the correspondence and mail that came in, he was the one responsible for sorting it and making sure it got to the right person, sending stuff back that didn't belong there. He was so good at it to the point that the president of the company came in and gave him a citation. Flew in from Sweden to give him a citation. He retired from there.

VEROT: Hard worker. And do you know what school your mother went to? Was she doing it online, in person?

WHITAKER: Oh, no, online? There was no such thing. You gotta go way back, kid. This is the 60s.

VEROT: Right, you're right.

WHITAKER: No cell phones, no internet, no fax machine, none of that stuff. So she actually went to class at William Patterson College. I think it's in Kilowatt, New Jersey, or Wayne, New Jersey, but it's William Patterson College. My dad worked two jobs to put her through. That was a couple of years we hardly ever saw Pop. Because he was working two jobs. He'd come home from one, take a quick break, get something to eat and go back to the next one. He put her through school. He did that for like two, two and a half years.

VEROT: Wow. And then I'm guessing she was really busy with school? So there was kind of a period you didn't see them much?

WHITAKER: Well, mom was still doing stuff with us, making sure we got out the house, ironed up, our clothes were ironed, and we went to church and all the other stuff. Just adding on to what you're already doing. So she wasn't working at the time. That was the thing I didn't realize. She wasn't working, because she was a full-time student. So that's why Pop had to pick up two jobs. I'm sure that was a conversation they had to have amongst themselves as to how that was going to work. We're little kids. We're oblivious. We don't know. We just go outside and play. But when you look back at it, and you have some perspective on it, and you have a chance, you're old

and you talk to your parents, you're like, whoa, that was a heck of a move.

VEROT: Yeah.

WHITAKER: That was a sacrifice.

VEROT: Another question along those lines is the activities you did? So you've mentioned band. I know you played football. Is there a way you can sort of walk me through your origin stories with all of those?

WHITAKER: Yeah. Well, this is the thing. Both of my parents were involved with us being in the Cub Scouts and the Boy Scouts. So they were Cub Scout leaders. My dad was a Boy Scout leader. We wound up playing a lot of baseball. He was a great coach. Actually, he taught us how to play. So when we went to try out for teams, my brother and I, we were always ahead of the other kids, because my dad had been teaching us how to play since we were, since I can remember. So I played a lot of baseball growing up, from the time I was nine all the way through high, just about through high school. Didn't really start with any music stuff until I got to high school. I wasn't in a band, was in a choir, a youth choir at church. My talent for singing actually was manifest really early. I remember when I was in kindergarten, and we had music class, and one of the teachers pulled me aside and said you have a talented voice, take this note home. I'm thinking she's giving me a note that's gonna get me in trouble. I'm like, no, I don't want to take a note home, but I gave it to my mom, and I didn't know what the note said. Obviously it was something around, "This kid has talent. You might want to pursue that, blah, blah, blah." But you know, we got five kids. There's no piano in the house. Not gonna pay for music lessons. Thank you, but we'll figure it out as we go. If it wasn't something that the school sponsored, where you can get a free instrument or that kind of stuff, it wasn't gonna happen. We just didn't have the resources to develop that part of me. So, you know, we just keep going, and then when we got to high school, my freshman year I was in boys' glee club. There was a guy in there named Robert Finney. Robert Finney and I went to, we were in kindergarten together, and the first time we reconnected was when we were in

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the ninth grade, but we still remembered each other. And I'm gonna tell you why I remember this guy, because we were in kindergarten, he had ringworm. One day we were in kindergarten, in the coat room, putting on our stuff, and I grabbed his hat and put it on my head. The teacher went ballistic. "No, no, don't put his hat on!" Too late. Sure enough, I got it and my brother got it. So we're walking around with these, giant caps on our head. Looked crazy. I never forgot it, and to this day, I give Bobby grief about that. So we're in boys' glee together, and there was a talent show. So we're gonna put us a little group, singing group together, and we're gonna be the Temptations or something. So the music teacher, Mr. Peretti, I remember his name, Mr. Peretti said, "Okay let's do a little group." We got like five guys who could sort of keep a note, and we went into this talent show in the ninth grade. We wound up winning the thing. Right? So after that, when we got to be sophomores — now freshman year, for some reason, the school Board of Education in Patterson decided that they were going to take one of the old high schools offline and send all of the ninth graders to this high school downtown. Every ninth grader was at this high school downtown. Well, they took it offline, it wasn't a high school anymore. That was a horrible idea, because now you got a bunch of ninth graders, a school full of just ninth graders who know nothing, who are running around like ninth graders. They only did that one year. I don't know why they did that. But then when we went to the big school, our sophomore year, we hooked up with a couple other guys, and we had a great music teacher named Bill Butler. This guy was great. He taught us really how to interpret music, how to appreciate music, and how to sing. So we had concert choir, boys' glee, I was in every music course he ever had. The guys that were in the singing group that we developed, that we formed, all of us was in that music group, in music class with Mr. Butler. So we started out in high school, sophomore and junior year, with this band. With this group called the Fantastic Gems. G-E-M-S like stones. Right. We were the Fantastic Gems. We won all the talent shows. We had a little band. We would go around doing these little snippets of shows and stuff. We had little gold shirts with white gloves. You know, we thought we were the Ten Paces. And we were pretty good. We got to go to the Apollo. We sang at the Apollo. We came in second. And you know who beat us? Stephanie Mills. I don't know if you know who that is. If you look her up, she is a world-renowned R&B

singer. Stephanie Mills. I think she was the one who played Dorothy in the Black version of Wizard of Oz that was on Broadway. But she beat us out. We came in second. Yeah, so my dad was the manager. We would do these shows for different clubs. We were the band for the night. So it was really cool. I learned about the music business from the time I was like 15 all the way through, actually through college, because we had a band in college up here. I didn't expect that it would continue, but guys came looking for me, knocking on my dorm room. "You Rock, Rocky Whitaker?" "Yeah." "I heard you could sing." "Okay. Let's start a group." "Bro, I got classes. I got to study." I'm not the brightest guy up here. Needless to say, there's nothing to do and nowhere to go, so you have time. We had a little band up here in Hanover called the Green Dream. The Green Dream probably had about 90 guys in the band. I'm exaggerating, but it was a ton of us, and it spurred from a music course that we had at Dartmouth. Music 7. It was called Music 7. We called it Pots and Pans. Music 7. I took that course twice. Music 7 was run by a guy named Robert Northern, who was a classically trained French horn player.

[Recording stopped. New recording resumed.]

WHITAKER:

I took that class twice. The professor in that class is a guy named Robert Northern. And we called him, what was the nickname we gave this guy.... Oh! Brother Ah, Brother Ah was the nickname we gave him. And the class was about musical awareness, and what he really wanted you to be aware of was the fact that all sounds in the universe can be musical, and how you can use all sounds to put together compositions of music. So he would have us create these different compositions with all these different musical instruments that he had in this class. So everybody had to come up with a musical composition with a name. So it was really, really cool. Had a good time in that class, learned a lot, and out of that class is how we formed the band the Green Dream. So it was Paul Unger, Alvin Harrison ['73], myself, a guy named Paul Robeson, Danny Coleman was in that band. It was about nine people in that band. We played around and on campus. We went up to Colby College a couple times, played up there. Some of the events I just can't remember. But the crazy part was four of the guys in that band were in the Class of '73, and when they graduated, they kept the

band together and went to Oakland, California and actually continued to play music. So my senior year — fall term I played football, winter term I went to San Diego UCSD on exchange [program]. Best thing I ever did. And then because I had gone that summer of my junior year, I was ahead in terms of my classes in order to graduate. I really only needed one class in the spring. So I went to the registrar's office, and they were like, "No, you have to take three." So I don't remember the other two courses I took, but I took an independent study with music professor Lucky Thompson, who took over after Brother Ah left, and he let me go to California. I joined up with the guys in the band. We actually made a record while I was there. Came back to graduate, handed him the record, got an A in the class. I needed that bad. A's are average boosters, whoop!

VEROT: What was that experience like recording? Did you actually book or rent out a studio? How did you get the funds for that?

WHITAKER: Yeah, oh yeah. Well, that wasn't the first time I had done some recording. We had done recording in high school. Let me go back. So the Fantastic Gems actually had an offer with a record company our senior, my junior year. My brother and the other guy was seniors in high school about to graduate. I still have a copy of that contract, and it was the worst. They would own everything, they would own us, it was horrible. But the other thing was our parents weren't gonna let us do that. One guy was going off to Howard to play, he had an athletic scholarship to play football. My brother was off to Norfolk State. We still had another year in school, and my parents were like, "No we're not doing that." We had actually gone in the studio and done a demo while I was in high school. So that was my first experience at recording, but when I got to college, here at Dartmouth, you know, Dartmouth has a couple of recording studios on campus, in the Hop [Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth], I think it is. So we did a little bit of recording down there, nothing really, you know, just thought to capture a couple of ideas and songs. When we went to California that spring, we actually went to a studio, recorded the whole thing, pressed it up, actually got to play it on the radio station. I heard it on the Oakland radio station before I left. The first time I ever heard my voice on the radio. It was great.

VEROT: I feel like you're talking about it like it's just, "Oh, yeah, then I was on the radio..." That's a big deal!

WHITAKER: Yup. So I went back to school, graduated, went home for about, maybe, no, actually I went home for about maybe two weeks, packing my stuff. Boom, back to Oakland. One of my best friends, Danny Coleman, lived in Oakland. I stayed with him and his family for about maybe a year while we were out there honing our craft. We played all around Oakland, San Francisco [CA], up and down from Sacramento [CA] all the way down to, we didn't get to L.A. [CA], but we did get to Modesto [CA]. So we played around in the region for about maybe a year, and then we had an opportunity with a group. You're not going to know these guys, way old-school '50s, called The Coasters. And if you look them up, The Coasters – Yakety Yak, Charlie Brown. I was a peewee when they were out, so I got a call, them looking for –

VEROT: What did you say? You were what when they were out?

WHITAKER: No, the name of the group was The Coasters, C-O-A-S-T-E-R-S. And we were playing in Oakland, and we got a call from their agent. I don't know how he found us. They needed a backup and somebody to open the show for Cornell Gunter and The Coasters, and it was in, where in Texas? Not San Antonio... Austin! Austin, Texas. So our crazy selves, we pack up all the stuff, alright, put it in the back of Alvin's pickup truck, cover it with a canvas thing, take off driving in Alvin's truck and Doc's convertible Bonneville. We take off, going to Austin. That was the road trip from hell. We got to somewhere outside of Phoenix [AZ], and a thermostat blows up on the truck. So now we have to stop at the hotel, the old Motel 6. We're all in two rooms, crowded up in two rooms, we don't have a lot of money. We get the truck fixed. We get back in the truck. We drive from Phoenix to like Ozona, Texas and something else happens with the truck. So now we don't have any money. We got a little bit of money, we're at a rest stop, sleeping at a rest stop while the truck's getting fixed. Right? It's at night, we're sleeping in the car at a rest stop. We're looking outside, on the ground are tarantulas crawling around on the ground. Ozona, Texas out in the middle of nowhere. We quick, fast, in a hurry got the truck fixed and got out of there. So we finally make it to Austin. Come to find out

they don't really have hotel rooms for us. They have some room in some, I don't know, warehouse where the band stays. We called it the Roach Arena, because when you turn the lights out, it's roaches everywhere. It was grimy.

VEROT: This sounds like a movie!

WHITAKER: It was crazy. Oh man, but we wind up staying. We did the gig, and after the gig was over, we wound up staying in Texas for like another two months. The guy that booked us at that gig said "Hey, man, I got some other gigs if you guys want to stay." So at that point, we had a little bit of money, you know, so we said, "Okay, we'll stay." Man, a year and a half later, we finally went back to California, to L.A. to do some recording. So a year and a half later, after traveling all around Texas – I've been almost every place in Texas. You name it, I've been there. Brownsville, Texas. Ozona, Texas. Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Lufkin. You name it, we've been there. We were in Arizona. We went up to Arkansas, parts of Arkansas, Louisiana. We played in Lake Charles [LA], we played in Baton Rouge [LA], so we did the whole thing in the Southeast. Then we said, "You know what? We gotta get out of here," and about a year and a half, almost two years later, we go back to L.A., hook up with a guy who used to be the producer for a group called The Moments. Look them up, you find them, too. They might be in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame by now. The Moments. And we go back to California, we do a couple demos. He likes the group, he shouts us around, we get a couple of hits from some record companies. Again the contract sucks, you know, we're like, "No, we're not doing that, man." And at this point we're like, you know what? We've been grinding this for about two, two and a half, three, four years now. We all looking at each other like, maybe we all ought to go get real jobs. So we sell the truck. We sell all our equipment. I go back to Jersey, other guy goes back to Jersey, Alvin goes to California, Doc goes to Ohio, Bac [Baxter Fullerton '73] stays in Texas, the other guy stays in Texas, Guy and Paul [Ungar '73] go back to Jersey. He winds up going to law school, becomes a contract lawyer, who has done work for me. I go back to Jersey. I wound up working in a preschool for about a year, and then I got a connect with a friend of mine who, actually, I ran into her mom, who says that Jane is looking for somebody to work with

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her in D.C. So I called Jane, she says, "Yeah, you'd be perfect for this job." I go to D.C. I get the job. It's working for the Department of Labor managing, I think it was the 16 City Employment Education Project, and I was responsible for five of those cities. I'll see if I can remember, Pittsburgh [PA], three cities in Montana, New York, Akron, Ohio and someplace else. I can't remember off the top of my head. So I did that for probably two or three years, but there's a whole story with moving to D.C. So I pack up my stuff in Jersey. I call my guy, who went to school with me in class of '75 behind me. Just got out of Georgetown Law School. He's got a place in D.C. "Ricky J. [Jones '75], I'm coming down." "Okay." "What's your address?" "I'm at so and so and so." "Alright, imma hangout you with you for a couple days." "Alright, that's good." I go to D.C., find Ricky J., he's got a one-bedroom like, I don't know, it's not even an apartment. What's those ones where you got the bedroom and the kitchen and all this, all these things together? So I move in with him, about three days later Lenny Branch calls, he just finished law school and I don't know where he was. "Hey, Ricky J., I'm coming D.C. You gotta, you got any room?" "Well, Rock's here." "Okay, good. I'm coming." He comes. Now there's three of us in his little one bedroom studio apartment. About a week later, Jeff Hunter calls. He just finished business school at University of North Carolina. "Hey, Ricky J. I'm coming to D.C. You got any spots?" "Well, Lenny and Rocky are here." "Okay, I'm coming." So he shows up. Now it's turned into Boys Town. Hey! So we must have stayed at Rick's place, I don't know, about three months before he kicked us out, and we all got apartments. So Lenny and I got a place together in D.C., and that's how we got to D.C., and I'm working with the Department of Labor. That project is about a two, two-year project. So it's really cool. Got me grounded into the business world, coming out of all this entertainment stuff. Fortunately, I did have one suit. And if you don't know D.C., D.C. is a suited town. It's a suited town. I used to have this joke about the guys with the five piece suit, including the briefcase that was part of it. It was a good run in D.C. I worked with Jane for about 2 years, then I wound up working with D.C. government, a woman named Audrey Rowe. Audrey Rowe was the commissioner of Social Services. Under her umbrella she had what they called the Department of Mental Health and Retardation at the time. They changed the name. She had women, infant and children. All the

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welfare stuff around women, infant and children. She had kids in the juvenile justice system that were in lockup. She also had Public Health underneath her. The good thing about that job, is I got to work in all those different administrations, so I learned how city government works and does not work. So that was a great experience for me. So she left, and I wound up working for a guy named Reed Tuckson, who was Commissioner of Health. So I worked with him for about a year and a half on the health promotion end of it. How to market, package, and sell health programs to the community. And at that time we had — the homeless population was blowing up. AIDS just came on as a major health impact, so I got to work in the health department and the AIDS campaign from the very beginning, when it started. So I learned so much about the whole AIDS epidemic and services and, you know, people were making stuff up to try to figure out how to service folks who had come down with the disease. Because there was no existing structures. There were no protocols. There was nothing. So I was fortunate I was at the ground level of the beginnings of all of that. So I learned all of those things, being in the Commission of Public Health. So that was a great experience at that time. They tried to get me to get into local D.C. politics and run for — I lived in Ward 7 — a Ward 7 council person, and I was like "Nuh uh." I'm not getting into politics. Being involved in D.C. government, I see all that stuff. I'm not doing it. I'm glad I never went over there, because I'm not the politician guy. But as my kids began to get older, they went to preschool in Georgetown. They're so funny. So they go to preschool in Georgetown. I go to pick them up. They're like, "Dad, we should live over here." I'm like, "Mm-mm. We're not living over here. Let me tell you why. As if. We cannot afford to buy a million-dollar house in Georgetown." You know, it's those kinds of things along the way where you have to educate your kids on how the world works. One time I picked them up, they were like, "Dad, let's go. Let's go get some ice cream and lunch." I said, "I don't have any money in my pocket." I had like maybe five bucks in my pocket. They said, "Just go to the machine." I said, "No, it doesn't work like that." That was a lesson we learned when they got home. I pulled out a sheet of paper. I said, "These are all the bills. This is how much money we have, right. Pick a bill." They start picking the bills, the money starts shrinking. I said, "We still have a few left. Do we have enough to pay all those bills?" "No." "Right. That's how this

works. Those will get paid next time. We need this amount of money so you can eat and keep the lights on." And I can see the wheels turning in their heads. When we moved to D.C., that was a good move for us. That was a good move for us. We stayed there maybe 15 years or so, 'till the kids got to middle school. I worked in D.C. government most of the time there, and right before I left I transitioned into working in public housing. Kenilworth Parkside Resident Management Corporation. There's a woman named Kimi Gray, K-I-M-I G-R-A-Y, when you get a chance to look her up. She was a big-time advocate for the needs of people in public housing. She started a corporation that went to HUD when Jack Kemp was the director of HUD. She made so much noise in D.C., they invited her to a White House presentation with [Ronald] Reagan and Jeff Kemp, Department HUD, and she sat at that table and gave them the blues about affordability of housing. About access to money to buy housing, for low income people to buy houses. She started that corporation and convinced HUD to sell the public housing properties to the residents who live there for \$1. Yes. But there was a caveat. The residents had to go through what they called, I don't know, I don't remember the official name of the training, but how to manage – it was financial management. It was also upkeep on property and maybe something else. It was three components to this workshop that you had to complete, get a certificate for, before you were eligible to buy your unit. We went all around the country setting up resident management corporations in different public housing properties around the country. Went to Chicago [IL], went to Charlotte [NC], and we went to Mississippi and New Orleans [LA], and met with all of those resident councils, the governing management bodies of all those public housing properties, and tried to convince them to form a council, a Resident Management Corporation, and look at buying that property from the government. I think only two or three of them did it. When you look back at it now, some of that property was prime real estate, and if they had held onto it, those people would be sitting pretty right now. But they didn't, they couldn't get by all the politics and internal struggles within their own public housing units to make it happen. I think only two, Kenilworth Parks in D.C. and I think one of the places in New Orleans did it. But that was a good job. And then after that we moved to Charlotte.

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VEROT: What was that? Wait, can you hear me?

WHITAKER: Yes.

VEROT: Okay. Sorry, you just froze. What about that line of work attracted you? Why did you stay there for the 15 years you were there?

WHITAKER: In D.C.?

VEROT: Yeah.

WHITAKER: Yeah. Well, I loved working with the city government with Audrey Rowe and Reed Tuckson, Dr. Tuckson, because they were stars. And they were committed to the community. So everything that was driven out of their offices impacted directly the people, the residents of D.C. That was the first time that I had ever seen city government people invite the community to come in and be part of the development process, in terms of programming, financial budgets, setting budgets. They had people from those communities at those meetings to give input about how they wanted their community impacted. So I learned a lot from there. You just don't go into a community and say "Here, we're going to do this." That's not what we want. That's not what we need. Can you listen to us for a while? And that's what they did. They turned it all around. They said, "Okay, you tell us. Come to the meeting, provide input. We want the input because we want to get it right." So I learned a lot from that, how to try and get it right. Those were good experiences for me and in the public housing thing with Kimmi Gray. I mean, she was on the ground with that. She was a leader from the ground, and she made that happen from the ground up. It wasn't an idea that came from the top down. It didn't come from the U.S. Government, it didn't come from HUD, it came from the community, the people who lived in that community. They said, "This is what we need. This is how you can help us." They said, "We're going to get this done with you or without you. We'll find a way to get it done," And they did. So it was a great experience for me. You know, in terms of my own personal development and development as a manager.

VEROT: Which you then obviously applied, because I know you founded two firms. Correct?

WHITAKER: No one. Well, it started with two, I let the first one go, and then I wound up with MC3 Sports Information and Entertainment. Yeah, you know, but along the way, man, it was a good adventure. We got to Charlotte. I worked for an agency that provided social service, foster care services for the county. I was manager of what they call that long-term foster care program for young people who are not going to get adopted. These are kids who are like 17, 18, who are going to age out of the system. So I had four, I think maybe four or five social workers that I was responsible for, that worked under me. We took one of our group homes offline and made it into a transitional living situation where the young people who are aging out could come in at 17, live there for a year, save their money, go to work, go to school, figure out how to transition out of social services into an independent living situation with some money in their pocket and some skills about how to survive. So, we provided independent living skills for them. How to get, keep, and hold a job. How to manage your money, how to keep a household, all of those kinds of things that people sort of take for granted or had somebody teach them. So when they left, they would be able to at least go and put a down payment on an apartment, you know, they already had a job, so they had a way to get started and maintain themselves if they stayed on track. I was really proud of that, of them. When I got to Charlotte, I wasn't involved in music that much. Alright. You look frozen to me now. Can you hear me? Am I frozen or you frozen?

[Recording paused].

All I did was equip them with the skills they needed to survive, the life skills they needed. How to get, keep, and hold a job. How to manage money, how to manage your apartment, how to take the bus and transportation services, so that when they walked out the door, at least they had a leg up. They had a little bit of money in their pocket, they had an apartment, had some money in the bank, had a job. So I'm really proud of that. We got a bunch of kids started. It'd be interesting to see where they are now, but that was a long time ago. But when I moved to Charlotte, I wasn't involved in any music. When I was in D.C., I was involved in some music with Uncle Bob [Robert Finney], the guy who gave me the ringworms,

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he and I. When we got out of high school, he went into the military. I didn't see him, I don't know, 15 years. And his last duty assignment was in Maryland, not far outside of D.C., so I got to reconnect with him. One of the guys who got assigned to the post in Maryland with him was a guy named Terry Sinsay, a heck of a keyboard player. He and Bob had been doing some things, and one of the guys I worked with was the manager at this club. So he says, "Rock, I'm looking for maybe somebody to come do little bit of something, like doing happy hour, a couple hours." I said, "Bob, you know, maybe we could do this for a couple hours, it'd be fun." So we got with Terry, we must have known maybe seven songs, that's about it. Yeah. So we go there, we do the five to seven happy hour thing, some people from work come. "This is great. It's great. We should do it next week, we should do it next week." Next week comes, the guy's name is James Glenn. Glenn says, "Hey, man, can you guys come back?" And we come back, now we know maybe ten songs, right? So we came back, we're doing some stuff, and he said, "Man, I need you guys every week." Time out. We need to talk. So we wind up doing Friday night for like, I don't know, maybe a year. You know, the happy hour thing. So me, Bob, and Terry. And as we were doing this people would see us, "Oh man we need you to come do this thing." "We need to come here." So we wind up doing some private gigs, and then we wind up doing more clubs. We did a bunch of clubs in Baltimore [MD] for about maybe, I don't know, we ran that circuit for maybe a year, two years. Just going around D.C. and Baltimore playing. And then when I left, I moved to Charlotte, I figured, "Yeah, music's done. Yeah. I had a good run. What the heck." Found a church, joined the choir. This is another interesting story. So the day I joined the choir, I sit down next to this older lady named Miss Jones, Miss Mary Jones. I introduced myself. I said, "My name is Morris Whitaker." She says, "Whitaker. Hmm. I knew a Whitaker." I said, "Yeah?" She said, "Yeah. Moses Whitaker." My eyes get big, like, "That's my dad." I'm like, "So where you from?" She's like, "Norfolk, Virginia." I said, "Where'd you go to high school?" She said, "I went to high school at IC Norcom." I said, "That Moses Whitaker guy, that's my dad." She looks at me, she said, "You got to be kidding." I said, "Nope." I pull out my phone, said, "Dad, I'm sitting next to a lady named Miss Mary Jones." "Yeah, she went to high school with me. She was a cheerleader." I'm like, well, I must be in the right place. And that

was the first person I met in that church. Miss Jones, who went to high school with my dad. Long story short, fast forward about 3 months, there's another woman in the band. The band? The choir. Name – what's Tony's last name? I forget Tony's last name. Her name is Tony, and she was a singer in this jazz band, 21 piece jazz band. I didn't know it at the time. So Tony goes, "Would you be interested in, you know, we're looking for a male singer. Would you be interested in auditioning for us?" "Alright, yeah." I wasn't all that excited about being in a band again, because I knew what that took in terms of practice and time, and could I get my permission slip signed from my wife to do this? So I go to audition, I walk in there, serious musicians. They got music up on the stands, they're reading stuff, they're going back and forth. I'm like, I don't know if I can hang with these guys. So they play a couple, say "What do you know?" "I know this. I know that." Boom, we're right into it. I start singing. "Man, this guy's good." "Okay, would you be interested in joining the band? We need a lead singer." "Okay." 20 years later, I'm still in the band. My favorite part of that band, and the band is a 21 piece jazz band, we play all kinds of different jazz stuff – old stuff, new stuff. We break down into a smaller R&B component of about 7 people, and we do all R&B stuff. But my favorite group is the Latin jazz ensemble, where we play just straight Latin music. Salsa, everything, Cumbia, all of it. Singing in Spanish, I have no idea what I'm saying, but I can replicate the sounds. I can imitate the sounds, so I can sing the language. Have no idea what I'm saying. So we did a gig one time in the park, after about 40 minutes, we get off, I'm standing by the stage, about five people come up to me, start spitting in Spanish, right? I'm looking at them like, "Muy poquito espanol." Yeah. "What? Wait a minute. You just sang 45 minutes, seven different songs in Spanish, and you can't speak the language?" I'm like, "No, I don't even know what I was saying in the song." So now I've been saying for the last two years, "I have to learn Spanish." But I'm still involved in that band, and that's probably my safe space. When I really need to decompose, I go to practice, just sort of calm down. I'm happy about that. That's pretty much what I've been doing. And then I started two companies. I started a company called Sports Connection with a couple of other people, and we started doing camps for professional athletes – basketball, football camps. We did that for maybe a year or two, and then my two partners moved away. Got

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other jobs and moved away. So I pretty much dissolved that and started another company I still have. It's called MC3 Sports and Entertainment. So we started, picking up where I left off, with individual athletes doing their camps, doing autograph signings, looking out for opportunities for other sponsorships with companies for them. And I pared it down to only two athletes, because they could be a pain in the butt. So I started working with a young lady named Dawn Staley, who is now currently the Head Women's Basketball Coach at the University of South Carolina. And on the football side, I worked with a guy named Muhsin Muhammad, who played with the Carolina Panthers. He wound up playing with the Bears, and he came back to play with the Panthers and ended his career there. The reason I liked both of them is because they weren't high maintenance, and they listened to what I said in terms of opportunities and were always open to suggestions. So I still maintain good relationships with them. I went to see Dawn's team play last, no, early in the year. I want to say February, something like that, January. They played LSU. It was a great game. Muhsin, I haven't seen him in a while. But he did well. He is in the investment company. Bought a bunch of property. He owns housing developments. Ran into him at the airport. He was leaving, and I was coming in, and I'm like – I call him 87, "87!" He looks at me, goes, "Rock!" I hadn't seen Muhs, oh, I don't know, maybe five years or so. He and his wife Crystal. So that was cool. So MC3 Sports is still rolling. I do a lot of sports management activities with college conferences. So, for example, I do two HBCU College conferences. One is called the CIAA, or the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association, which is the oldest Black college conference in the country. They are a 12-school, Division II conference, and I run and manage their end-of-season basketball tournament to determine who's going to go to the NCAA basketball tournament. And I also do tournaments with what they call the MEAC, or the Middle Eastern Athletic Conference, which is also an HBCU conference. I think they had 10 Division I schools. So I run and manage their conference. Last year I was able to pick up another piece of business with a conference called the Big South. They're a DI conference. I think they have like Wofford, Campbell, some other schools. I just don't remember off the top of my head. We also are involved in running and managing some college football games. We did this year a game at Hard Rock Stadium where the Dolphins

play, and it was Florida A&M versus Jackson State. Wound up doing another game at MetLife Stadium where the Giants and the Jets play, and that was between Albany State and, who was it? Morehouse. Morehouse College. I picked up another piece of business, and when I leave here, I gotta go home and get all of that together, because that game is on December 13th, and that's going to be in Fort Lauderdale. That's a bowl game between the champion of the the CIAA Conference, football conference, and a champion of the SIAC with the Southern Athletic Intercollegiate Conference. And that's a DII conference, as well. So I've been fortunate in that I've been doing sports management for about 20 years now. The thing I like about doing that, I've worked with several different undergraduate institutions. Johnson C. Smith University being one. Johnson and Wales in Charlotte, some of the other schools in the conference. Saint Aug, Livingstone College. And I'm able to provide an opportunity for young people to learn about the business of sports. What happens is, I bring them in to work with me to run and manage games, to run and manage the tournament. So that they actually are the ones developing the pieces to make it work. They're running show, meeting with the bands and the ADs and the teams, to make sure that we have all the logistics together. It's been an honor for me over the last 20 years to help train and get these young people into the sports business world. I say over the last 20 years, I started counting one time how many interns I actually had in my program. It's over 100. Close to almost 200 young people. Yeah, man. I'm like, that can't be true. So I started going back through. Yeah, yeah, yeah, close to 200 young people. Some of them still work with me to this day. And I had to, because I'm here, I sent two young people to a pre-game operations meeting in Fort Lauderdale for the game that's coming up on the 13th, that I can't, that I couldn't be at the meeting. So I sent them. And they're going to represent the company, represent the organization. The two that I sent probably have been with me close to 10 years. I'm really, really proud of the fact that I jump started a lot of careers for young people. That's pretty cool. And while I was working with them, I said, at some point in time, somebody will have to take my place. It's gonna be somebody in this room. And I said, "What's going to happen is you guys are going to take off, you're gonna go do stuff, and I wouldn't be surprised if one day we wound up working for you." You know what,

that's exactly what's happening now. One of my young people works for the CIAA. He is the guy that writes the contracts to hire the people to run the game operations. So when A.J. got hired, he said, "Mr. Rock, guess what." I said, "You gotta write our contract. Don't you?" He said "Yeah, how do you know?" I said, "Because the guy before you had to do it." What's-his-name? Ugh. I can't remember the kid's name. You know, that's what happens when you get old. But I had another young person who worked for that organization who had to do the same thing. And I said, "I told you guys, it would come full circle." I said, "At some point time, somebody's got to be me." So they're always talking about who's going to take my place. Who's gonna take my place. "Mr. Rock, you just sign the checks we'll do all the work." I say, "Okay." But, you know, coming out of Dartmouth –

VEROT: Watch what they have you sign!

WHITAKER: What'd you say?

VEROT: Oh, I was just joking. Better watch what they make you sign. Read the print!

WHITAKER: Oh, right! But coming out of Dartmouth, I didn't see any of that, any of that happening. You know, my whole stay at Dartmouth was to get out. It was not an option to go home. I was not going to fail, failure was not an option. So I had to be successful. I had to get out. There was, and it was not just me. I think I told you, between, I want to say '66 and '75 or something. No, '71, think it was, Dartmouth admitted like 33 Black men. And then from '71 to like '75 they admitted like 190. But double-check those dates. I think I said that to you before. 190. And that didn't happen by accident. There were a lot of brothers on campus who went to the admissions office and said, "Hey we got to get more Black guys up here." And they're like, "We don't know where to find them." Said, "We'll do it for you, we'll find them." And they started a program called the Negro Recruitment Project, or something like that. So it was the other Black students on campus that reached out and actually went to different cities and high schools across the country to find African Americans to apply. That's how I got in. It was a guy who was there ahead of me, that went to my high school, that was part of that

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project. Came back with a guy from the admissions office named Sam Smith. I think he was the one of the few Black faculty on campus at the time. Gave the program, did the whole slide show presentation. I'm like, "George." George got recruited to play basketball the year before me out of the same high school. So after the presentation I'm like, "George," because I, at that time, I had a football and track scholarship to a small Black college in Salisbury, North Carolina called Livingstone College. My dean of students at high school knew the AD and got me the scholarship. Cuz coming out of high school I wasn't, I wasn't recruited by anybody. My grades were good, so I knew I would get in some place, but I wasn't the star athlete on the team. I was okay, I mean, I made honorable mention my senior year, but it wasn't like anybody came looking for me. But he got me a scholarship. That's where I was going, until George showed up with the guy from Dartmouth. And I was like, "George, I'm looking at these slides, man, this all-boys school?" "Yeah, it's all-male." I'm like, "Bro, who wants to do that?" He's like, "No, no, no. There's a girls school right down the road." "Okay." He said, "Boston, right down the road, good to go." I'm like, "Okay." I think I can get on the bus, go across town. I'm good. Hmm, he didn't tell me the whole story. Yeah, right down the road. You know, I gave him the blues when I got up here, asking where the road was. So the thing that got me, because I had already had applications in at Howard and Norfolk State, where my brother was. And I had the scholarship at Livingstone. So he said, "Well, we'll waive the application fee." What? My parents won't have to pay the 50 bucks or whatever was? I signed it, sent it in, thought no more about it. About two weeks later, I got a letter from Brown asking me to apply. Huh? I didn't even know what Brown was. I'm like, "Okay. Alright," and I had never heard about Dartmouth before George went. I knew Princeton, Yale, Columbia, and Harvard. That was about it. I knew Cornell because a guy in George's class ahead of me had gone up there to play football. So I knew about Cornell. I didn't know anything about Dartmouth. So I sent in the application. I got this thing from Brown, I sent that back. About two weeks later I get a letter from Brown. Sorry, but you're not coming here. I was like, oh, okay. I guess I'm going to Livingstone. A couple days later, I got an admission offer from Dartmouth. And once I got that, you know, everybody kept saying, including my grandmother, "You gotta go. You gotta go. You gotta go. This is the spot for you. Ivy

League, good education." You know all the hype about the school. And I'm like, okay, I guess I got to go. So I went sight unseen. I never visited the school. So when I showed up, we drove through the campus looking for the school. We're way out by the daggone med school somewhere. Turned around and came back, and that's when I realized, uh oh, this might be a little different. My parents stayed about, I don't know, two hours. Helped me fix up my room. My dad gave me 50 bucks, he had never given me more than like 10 bucks, ten dollars. He gave me 50 bucks. He said, "Look, don't embarrass the family, don't mess up the money." He turned and looked at my mother, said, "Catherine, we're gone." And they left me sitting right there. So I sat in my room for about 20 minutes. Then I start walking around the campus. Went into the Hop. I finally see a Black guy, right? This guy named Ted Moody [72]. He's on the football team. So the team was already practicing. This guy was the biggest human I had ever seen in my life. Ted Moody was probably about 6'3, 6'4, probably about 245, chiseled like a rock. So he's sitting there at the Hop eating, and he's got like five glasses. He's got two plates. He's hunkered down over it, he's shoveling, because I guess you got to get back to practice, right? So he's shoveling, and I say, "Hey, man, how you doing?" He looks up at me and says, "What's up?" Kept eating, and that was the only conversation I've ever had with him. So after I walked around town for about 20 minutes, you know, how long it takes you to walk around Hanover, and I realized there's three stoplights, and that's it. I'm like, what have I done? What have I done? I should have gone to Howard. What have I done? So we finally meet some other guys, you know, Freshman Orientation Week. So the other 299 Black guys show up, and we got a good little crew. I'm starting to meet some people in my class and meet some of the older guys. I met the guys. And the interesting thing was once I got in, I got a call from one of the Black students here welcoming me to the family. And they say, "When you get on campus, you know, we've got our own little place where we hang out called Cutter Hall. The El Shabazz Temple [The Shabazz Center for Intellectual Inquiry]. So you're welcome to come down there, welcome to the family." And that's how I sort of got initiated into the whole Black alumni, the Black student thing here. And then I realized when I got here that everybody was somebody. All-American this, All-Academic that, All-World this. I'm like, damn, these guys are really smart. I don't know

if I'm as smart as the rest of them. But everybody in that freshman class was saying the same thing.

VEROT: Yeah, the imposter syndrome is so real.

WHITAKER: Yeah, man. So I get there, I'm meeting some of the guys who are gonna be on the football team, and they're All-Conference and All-American, this, that, and the other, and I'm like, I'm all-nothing. But you know what, I can hang with you guys. So we get there the first practice, the head coach has us in the theater, whatever the name of it is, in the Hop. So we're all sitting in there, and he's going, "Well you never know what's gonna happen, just because you weren't recruited don't mean you might not play," and this that. I'm like, "Okay. I hear you Coach. I hear you Coach." So first day of practice, this is a crazy story. First day of practice, I walk up and find this guy –

[Recording paused].

VEROT: Sorry? Yeah, now you are. You were in the Hop?

WHITAKER: Yeah. I'm in the Hop, and I see my first Black student, right. Guy named Ted Moody, I ain't know that at the time. Ted Moody played on the team. Played defensive end.

VEROT: Oh, I got that part. I meant with your coach.

WHITAKER: Oh, you got that part? Yeah, oh, with the coach. Yeah. Yeah. The coach is saying, "You never know what's going to happen, you know, just because you didn't get recruited doesn't mean, you know, you might not be able to play." And I'm like, "Okay, well that's encouraging." Because I wasn't recruited. So we get to the first freshman practice. I'm determined to find this kid that I met in high school in Jersey. One Saturday, Rutgers is playing Colgate, and I guess it was high school days. So Rutgers would send all of these tickets to high schools in the northern Jersey area. So Coach takes us to a game. It's halftime. I'm at the concession stand, and I'm standing next to this guy, and he has a Red Bank, Red River coat on, jersey or something. So I look over, I said, "Red River. That's where Joe Theismann went." You don't know Joe Theismann. He

went to Notre Dame. Was a quarterback there, big time quarterback with the Redskins. Alright. I said, "Hey man, you went to Red River?" He says, "Yeah." I said, "That's where Joe Theismann went, right?" He said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." I said, "You play ball?" He said, "Yeah, I play ball." I said, "What position?" He said, "I play DN, linebacker." I said, "Okay. So you headed off to school? You a senior?" He said, "Yeah," he's going off to school. I said, "Where you going?" He said, "I'm going to Dartmouth." So I look at him. He says, "Where you going?" "I'm going to Dartmouth." We both laughing at each other, says "You playing ball when you get there?" Said, "Yeah I'm playing." I said, "Tell you what, I'll see you at the first practice." Sure enough, first practice I'm looking for this guy. I couldn't remember his name, but I remembered his face. That's him. I walked up on him I said, "Hey man, you remember me?" He goes, "Rutgers." I'm like, "Right." He and I are still friends to this day. I saw him the other day. He lives in Hanover. Lives in Hanover, I know his wife Judy, because she was a '76. Yep, to this day we're still friends. And from that day on, the first freshman practice, I was like, this is going to be really different. We had over 100 people, a lot of Black guys who were trying out for the team, guys who can really play. By the time that season was over we probably had, if there were 50 Black guys that tried out, there might have been 10 left. Maybe ten by the time my freshman year was over. And at the last game, I walked off the field because the coach was a butt. He was yelling at me for something I didn't do, and he's yelling at me for the whole season, "You can never do anything right. Never do anything right." Jack. Coach Curtis, we called him Captain Jack. So he yelled at me for something I didn't do. I said, "Coach, kiss my ass," and I walked off the field. And to this day, guys go, "You're a hero." I go, "No, I was an idiot." I didn't handle it well. There's a better way to do it besides walking off the field in the last game. That was a punk move, now that I think about it. But given the time when you're 17, 18 years old, you're just going on emotion. So I finished the freshman year. Sophomore year comes, I can't play. My grades suck. I'm this far from going home. Nuh uh. I can't do both, so I sat my own self down, because if I didn't get it together, I was not going back to Moses' house. That was not an option. And after the first year here, and that first winter term, I was like, why would anybody stay up here to do this? Ain't nothing up here but white people, snow, and trees, and that's it. I got to get

out. And no, no women? No, this is crazy. Why would I do this? I tried to transfer my sophomore year. I was going to transfer to Norfolk State with my brother, right? I'm not playing ball.

VEROT: What school?

WHITAKER: Norfolk State is a HBCU in Norfolk, Virginia. Actually, my mom did her first year there at Norfolk State. So, I call the coaches. I don't have a scholarship. I don't care, I'll walk on. I get admissions people to send me an admissions form. I fill it out, send it in. I get in. I call my brother, "Hey, man. I'm coming down there with you. I just transferred to Norfolk State." Silence. "You hear what I said? Mo, you hear what I said?" "Yeah, I heard you." "What's up?" "I'm leaving school." "What? Mom know this?" "Yeah. I'm getting married, man." "What?" You know what I said? "Is she pregnant?" "No, she's not pregnant, bro" I'm like, "Why the hell you wanna leave school?" "Nah, man. School just ain't working. You know, I like her, we gon' get married." I'm like, "Shit. Well, I guess I'm staying in Hanover." God looking out for me again. So I stayed, and I got my act together. At least I did a better job of learning how to study. Because those habits I brought for me from high school didn't work. I didn't have anybody. Think about this. There's no adult mentorship on campus for us. So it's just the older guys telling the younger guys how they need to navigate their way through this. It's the blind leading the blind so to speak. I had a English Professor – they brought us up early to be in the Bridge Program to sort of ease you into this – so they had a couple categories of English. English five was the top one, and they had English four and English three. My ass got English three. I'm insulted. I don't want to be put in no English three, blah, blah, blah, blah. So I go to class, we write our first paper. You couldn't even read that paper, it was so much red on it, on that paper. Scratch marks, reds, "What are you talking about?" I'm looking at this like, woah. Well, I guess I am in the right class. So I went to the professor, right, I go to the professor, I can't remember her name. If I look it up, I could probably find her, she's on my diploma somewhere. So I went to the professor and said, "Obviously I need some help. What do I need to do to get better? How can I get better?" You know what she said to me? She looked me dead in the face and said, "Well, maybe you might want to think about transferring, because this might not be the place for you." To

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my face she said that. So I'm like, whoa. She didn't offer me any help, she didn't offer me anywhere to go get help. She told me to leave, basically. God again. Right. So I said, "Thanks. You told me exactly what I need to do." You know what I said to her? I said, "When I graduate, I'm going to find you on that stage, and tell you you were wrong about me." And I did. When I graduated, I got my diploma. I sat there in the audience first, and I'm looking, I'm looking at all of all the faculty and I'm like, there she is. When they called my name, I walked up there. I got my diploma. I went right over to her and stood right in front of her and said, "You were wrong about me. You said I would never make it here. You said I didn't belong here," and I did like this [shakes imaginary diploma]. Walked off the stage. I know the professors next to her were like, "What the hell did you say that kid?" I sure did. Yeah, I did.

VEROT: What was her reaction?

WHITAKER: I don't know if she remembered me, but she was stunned. She didn't say anything. She was just sitting there, stunned, and I reminded her what she said to me. Absolutely did. Let's go back to sophomore year. Sophomore year I got better at learning how to study, you know, don't study in your room. Get the heck up out of there. Go right after you finish eating. Just go up in the library and hide, take your watch off. So I got better at that. So my grades got better. So that summer I was, I had a summer internship at Georgetown. And a couple things happened, but this is what happens when you don't know –

VEROT: You had a what?

WHITAKER: Summer internship at Georgetown University.

VEROT: Okay. Doing what?

WHITAKER: Working in the Medical Department with a doctor. What is his name? Mortimer Lorber. Don't ask me why I remember his name. Mortimer Lorber was doing research on reticulocytes, which is part of something in your blood, right. So he taught me how to recognize reticulocytes in the microscope on these slides and count them. And count them. So I had to count reticulocytes the whole summer.

But he put me in his book. I'm in his book as an acknowledgement in his book. Somewhere I have a copy of it.

VEROT: That's amazing.

WHITAKER: Yep. So I did that summer in D.C. Made a bunch of money. And while I was there, I started getting in shape for football, because I wanted to play again.

VEROT: Okay, so sophomore year you stopped playing.

WHITAKER: Yes.

VEROT: And how did you get in touch with this internship? How did this come about?

WHITAKER: A friend of mine, again. I ran into her mom, and she knew the guy, the doctor at Georgetown who was running the program. I think I ran into her at Christmas break. She says, "I know Dr. so-and-so is doing this program for the summer. Would you be interested?" I said, "Yeah." I said, "That's my summer job, and I'm in D.C.? Heck yeah." And that's how I got hooked up, because I had a relationship with somebody that I knew. And she got me the interview, and I got the job for the summer. So just before I left, I called one of the guys on the team that I knew was going back up early. I call Smitty, I say, "Smitty, I'm coming back to play, man." He say, "Good." I say, "When you guys going up?" He gave me the date. So went back home, got up from D.C., got on a bus, rolled up to Hanover. I didn't have a place to stay, I didn't have a room, I didn't have anything. All I had was my stuff. I had no idea if Coach was going to let me play. So I got there, I ran into Smitty, they had just had one practice. "Yeah, you here, you here?" Said, "Yeah, man. I'm going to see Jake, see if he gonna let me play." "We'll go with you." So Smitty, his brother, and three other guys went with me to go talk to Coach about letting me play. We walk into his office. He looks at them. He looks at me, and I say, "Coach, I'm coming back to play. Can I get back on the team?" He looks at them. He looks at me. If I hadn't brought them with me, I don't know what he would have said. He said, "Go get dressed," and I went and got dressed, and that's how I got back on the team. So I was late. Huh?

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VEROT: Was this preseason, or was this already fall ball?

WHITAKER: Yeah. No, this was before the season started. They were still doing early practice. So I got to do early practice and —

VEROT: Oh, so you didn't have a place to stay and stuff because it wasn't class yet.

WHITAKER: No, there wasn't any classes. We were ahead, students weren't even there. Yeah, we got up like 2 weeks before any students even got there. But I missed a couple of days. So I missed some of the things I needed to know, so I had to catch up. Had to find a playbook, I had to study it, I had to catch up. So I'm on the team, season comes, I'm not dressing for any away games. Alright. I'm behind a guy that I respect. He should be starting in front of me, and he should have been starting the year before. No problem. Wes Pue, he's the man. I can learn from him. I don't have a problem with Wes. But there was some other issues on the team. I mean to the point where the brothers on the team were actually going to boycott a game, because they felt like brothers were being treated unfair, and they weren't gonna play one. I don't know what it was, they decided we're not playing this Saturday. We boycotted to make a statement. And the only reason they didn't, because one of the guys on the team named Stu Simms [Stuart "Stu" O. Simms '72], who wound up being – who ran for Attorney General of Maryland – went to the coach and said, "Coach, you got to do better. You got to do something, or else these guys are not playing with us on Saturday." So we had a meeting with all the Black guys. He understood, he listened to what we had to say, made a couple of cosmetic changes, and we went on with it. But that was a point of contention the whole season, because we felt like, you brought us up here, but then you're not giving us an opportunity to play. Why the hell you bring us up here, if we don't have a chance to play? It's just not right. So I finished, so halfway through the season, I'm not playing. I'm not on special teams, I'm not playing at home, I'm sitting on the bench, I'm not making any away games. So I went to my position coach and I said, "Coach, what do I have to do to get on the field? I know I can do special teams. I'm, you know, I'm not a bum." He looked at me in my face and said, "Well, you know, Rock, if you don't like what's going on, maybe you should quit." Second

time. You know what I said to him? I said, "Thanks, Coach. You told me exactly what I need to do." I went and got dressed. I went on the field, and I turned into the player from Hell. I started knocking down everything that was moving. I was yelling, screaming at people. "What's wrong with you?" "I don't get to play! All you [inaudible] damn bitch. This is the only time I get to play, so I don't care! Strap it up, I'm coming after everybody!" Just went off. Went off.

VEROT: And this was a game or practice?

WHITAKER: No, this is practice. This is practice. This the only time I get to play is at practice. So I told them, I said, "This is my game. Yeah, this is the only time I get to play, so I'm coming hard." By the end of the week, they went to Coach and said you better find something for this guy, he's crazy. So next week I was on special teams, but I had to go nuts to get a chance to play. And then the very next year, my senior year, the same coach was the coach that went to the head coach and said, "He's the guy. He's the guy. I want him to start." The same guy who told me to quit. The same guy that told me to quit. Yeah, so it was a journey.

VEROT: Okay, I have a few clarifying questions. So you were recruited by George and this conversation took the form of a slideshow, and he's telling you to come, and he's telling you to try to walk onto the football team, or –?

WHITAKER: No, he didn't tell me anything about the football team. He knew I didn't get recruited there. So it wasn't about sports, it was about coming to the school. So I asked him about the team. "How is that team?" "Man, it's a great team, you know, they take care of us, blah, blah, blah." He knew I didn't have a scholarship there. I wasn't recruited to play. If I was going to play, I was gonna walk on.

VEROT: Do you know, I know that you went to high school together and stuff, but do you know why he specifically chose you to speak with?

WHITAKER: I was the one asking the questions. I mean, it was a whole class full of us. It was all guys from the team. Athletes and –

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- VEROT: Oh! It was a big presentation to multiple people.
- WHITAKER: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was college night. Every college got a chance to do their presentation, and I just happened to know George, and he knew all the guys on the football team because he played with us.
- VEROT: Right, okay. So then you were asking questions. So then, I guess I'm looking for some clarification in terms of, you spoke about Dartmouth as like, "Uhhhh, there's no girls there. I don't know anyone there. Uhhh it's up all the way up in the North, winters, right." But also you were kind of interested. What was pulling you to make the decision?
- WHITAKER: Well, I knew it was the top flight school.
- VEROT: Because you had a scholarship, right? You were dropping a big opportunity you knew about to be – you had something secure in place. So like what made you – ?
- WHITAKER: Imma tell you the turning point. So I get accepted. I'm still not sure I want to go. Everybody is saying, it's Ivy League, you're not gonna get a better education. I'm like, "Yeah, I get it. I get it," but I don't know if I want to be stuck up there in the woods. I get a call from grandmother, my mom's mom, who worked for a guy who was a Dartmouth Alum. Probably, who knows, Class of '40-some, '50, who knows what it was. My grandmother calls me. She says, "Mr. Watson," I'm making up the name, I don't know what his name was, "Mr. Watson. I was telling him about, you know, my grandkids and they were going to college, and he asked me where you were going, and I told him Dart-mouth, and his eyes lit up. He said, that's my school, tell your grandson he has to go, he has to go. It'll be a great opportunity for him. You know, the future is just going to be bright for him, blah, blah, blah." She had me on the phone for 20 minutes talking about how I could not pass up this opportunity, I needed to go, it was going to be great for the family and myself. So when your grandmother calls you and tells you that's the place for you, how you gonna say no?
- VEROT: That's true.

WHITAKER: Yeah, so that was the turning point. I was like, okay, I guess I gotta go. God again looking out for me.

VEROT: Yeah. You spoke about the imposter syndrome, which I think students still today experience when they come to this place. What were your feelings or notions going into, walking onto the team. You spoke about the Black population being cut down dramatically, were you able to evaluate the team for how it stood and kind of be like, "Uhhh, what's going on here? Why is there such a discrepancy?"

WHITAKER: Well you don't know until you get in the mix. And the freshman team – well, freshman weren't allowed to play Varsity. So they were isolated from the Varsity players. Although I knew there was some contention on the Varsity team, because all the brothers stuck together, we're all talking. There was some contention on the Varsity teams about brothers getting playing time and access to positions and getting stacked behind each other and all that kind of stuff. But walking onto the freshman team I had no contention – I know no worries about that. I was gonna let my skills do the talking. And once we got there, and everybody's there, and I'm watching their skills compared to mine, I can hang. I wasn't intimidated, because they got recruited and I didn't. Once we put on the pads, it's a different story. You put on a pad, you start knocking people around, you start going through drills, you start doing stuff, and I could tell I was competitive with everybody else. To the point where the freshman coach made me the starter as safety. So I started on that team as a walk-on.

VEROT: What was this team? Because I don't know if that still exists. Was it club football?

WHITAKER: No, it doesn't. It doesn't. No, it used to be where freshmen weren't allowed to play Varsity. So there was a whole thing about freshmen. They had a freshman football team that played other freshman football teams in the Ivy League. So the only way we got to play —

VEROT: Oh, so all Ivy teams did that?

WHITAKER: Yes. No freshmen were allowed to play Varsity back then, so you can only play on a freshman team. All of the schools, every school had a freshman team, because the NCAA said no freshman can play Varsity football. So Ohio State, all colleges have freshman teams. Freshman only played against freshmen back then. So we traveled around. We played Harvard and all the different schools. We played their freshman teams.

VEROT: Okay. Then you stopped playing sophomore year, and you took that whole year to kind of get yourself together. Did you keep training during that time? Did you know you wanted to go back?

WHITAKER: No. I knew I had to get my grades straight. That was my priority.

VEROT: When did you know you could go back in?

WHITAKER: I knew at the end of my sophomore year, when my grades got better, that I could do it then. Because I had the habits to maintain the grades. I could go to practice and still make sure my grades were tight. I knew I always wanted to play. I didn't know if I was going to at my sophomore year. I would go sit in the stands and be like, "Damn. This is not right. I should be playing." It was agonizing, but I knew that I would never get to play if I flunked out. So I had to get my act together. And at the end of the spring term and I got my grades, I'm like, "Okay, I'm good. I'm good. I got to get back. I got to get back because I can't sit in the stands." I just had that feeling that I cannot sit in the stands. And the other thing was, I wanted to be competitive with the guys I went to high school with. We had guys and went to Ohio State, played for Woody Hayes, which is a famous, famous Big 10 coach. The guy went there won two Rose Bowls, got two Rose Bowl rings. I had two of my guys, three of them then went to Howard University to play. A bunch of guys off of my high school team got scholarships to go play places. And one guy before me went to Cornell, so he knew I was going to Dartmouth. He knew George was at Dartmouth. So it's almost like, man, I can't go there and just let the legacy down. I felt responsible to people that I was connected to in high school, and we went off to play, we all made a commitment to make sure that we did the best we can to showcase our talents and our school. But that was part of

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what was driving me. It's like, no, I can't go out like this. The guys – I'll get back home again and they go "Rock, you still playing?" I'm like, "Nah, I quit." "What? You quit?" I didn't want to have to have that conversation with them.

VEROT: Yeah. I know you've spoken about implicit experiences of racism on the Varsity team, was that on the freshman team, also?

WHITAKER: Yeah. Oh yeah. We got stacked. They put all the Black guys in the same position behind each other. So we all had to fight for one spot. And it depends on what the spots were. If they were high profile spots – hmm?

VEROT: Pardon? Sorry, that glitched. What did you say?

WHITAKER: I said yeah, we knew what was happening. We could see it. When they take guys, and there's one position and you put five Black guys in the same spot, so we're all fighting for one spot, that ain't right. And it depends on what – the skill positions almost were like reserved for the white guys. The split end, the tight end, the running back position. I'm like, "Come on, man. You brought us up here to play these spots, and then you want us to play another spot. Or you want us to all compete for the same spot?" That ain't right. Years later I had an opportunity to talk to Coach. I don't know, maybe five years, six years ago, when we had a celebration about the year we won the championship in '73, and he was there. We're talking, he says to me, "When you guys were there we could have done a lot better." He said, "We could have done a better job." And I just looked at him. I said, "I'm glad to hear you say that, Coach." I mean he realized it years later, but it was new for them, too. I get it. It was new for them to have an influx of African-American players that they didn't have before. Where I had maybe three on a team, two, now I got 50 that are trying out. How I'm going to manage this?

VEROT: And so –

WHITAKER: There's always talk about, well – I'm sorry.

VEROT: No, I'm sorry. Keep going.

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WHITAKER: There was always talk about, if your dad was an alumni with money, you're going to get a chance to play. That kind of thing, but who knows if that was true or not?

VEROT: When you quit for that period of time, did you ever feel like it was nice to escape that type of treatment at all? Was that ever a thought?

WHITAKER: Yeah. I thought I was justified in doing it and telling the coach to kiss my ass. Because he was out of bounds in my head. And that wasn't the first time. It really wasn't the first time that it felt like he was rude and inconsiderate for no reason, just because he was the coach. I'm like, nah, I don't have to put up with that, man. I'm like, I'm out, and I felt justified in that moment, but years and years later you look back and say, you know, you're just young. You don't really know how to handle it. There might have been a better way or a different way to do it, but in that moment, I meant that.

VEROT: Do you have any specific, I mean, I know that a lot of it sounds pretty, like I said, implicit in terms of people being stacked on the same position and not having playing time. But were there any specific instances that you felt, something really felt wrong, or you were disturbed with something that was happening? Whether it was between the coaching staff and the players, or players and players? Was there anything like that?

WHITAKER: No, I can't say I did. I mean, nobody ever called me a nigger. Nobody ever did something outright in my face. All sort of just the low level, I don't know what they call it. Just implicit in a couple of different ways. Never had a problem with any of the guys on the team. To this day. We've been friends on that team, some more than others. But the team was cool. The guys on the team, not a problem. If they didn't want to be involved with the Black guys, it wasn't a thing. Back in that time, pretty much people stayed in their own silos. The African-American population pretty much stayed to themselves. Mistake, but we young and we didn't have any adult mentorship, nobody to lead us. So we might stay to ourselves. White guys pretty much stay to themselves, and ones fraternities and ones that weren't in fraternities. I mean, I didn't know until the years later that even the white population had their own silos. Just

cuz I wasn't in the mix. I did have friends on the football team and we did do stuff together while I was here. And that in itself was a good thing, because it allowed me to have friendships outside of my African-American circle. Friendships that I still have to this day. Especially since I've been involved in the Class, in Class leadership, and involved in College leadership. Something that I didn't see coming and didn't think that I would do, especially on the College side. I knew I'd probably be involved with the Black Alumni Association, and I got involved with that pretty early after I got out in the '80s. And that got me involved in the Class. Did I tell you how I got involved with the Class?

VEROT: Yeah, the anonymous nomination –

WHITAKER: Yeah, they voted me President in absentia, because I talked smack. So I said, "Okay, I'll be the President." And I was President for two terms. They tried to give me a run for a third term, my wife was like, "Nah, he ain't doing it." So that's how I got involved in that. When I became the Class President, then somehow I got on the radar screen for the College. And I got asked to be on the Alumni Council back in the '80s. I had always been involved with the Black Alumni Association. I was the President of that one and a half, almost two times. I took over when somebody had to leave, so I finished up their presidency. But then I had my own. I was Regional Coordinator for D.C. So I would coordinate Black alumni events in the D.C. area. And I got involved in recruiting for the admissions department. So I did that in D.C. for a long time, still do that. I do that in Charlotte. Still involved in that. So that's how I got on the College's radar screen. And once you get on the College's radar screen as a volunteer and activist to do stuff, they don't let you go. So that's how I'm still involved to this day with the College and Alumni Council. So, what I said I wasn't going to do, and how I hated this place, and was never gonna come back, and could care less, wasn't gonna send anybody here. Man, all that went out the window. To the point where I have a kid who graduated from here. Class of '06. She loved it, man. It was the greatest thing. She says it was the greatest thing that ever happened to her, was coming to Dartmouth.

VEROT: So outside – I guess, a few things. So you speak kind of about how after leaving you were really frustrated. You're like, "I'm not coming back. This is messed up." Were there experiences you could touch on outside of what you experienced with the football team that kind of jaded you in that way after graduation?

WHITAKER: Yeah. I mean that whole conversation with that freshman English teacher never went away. I wasn't the only one that had experiences like that. There were other guys here that shared the same kind of experiences. There were other guys that said, "No, man. My English teacher helped me out a lot." "I had a professor who took me under his wing." I only had one professor who did that. And that was Professor Wright. I took a couple of his courses in history. And I took a graduate course of his in history. And when I took that course, he and I really, really bonded. To the point where I would call him a friend of mine, and I could call him anytime I needed to. Later on, I want to say late '80s, '90s is when we really connected more outside of college. But he was, when I had him here, he helped calm me down in terms of what this place was, what the potential could be when I left. But the experience just wasn't good. It wasn't happy. It wasn't, it wasn't. It wasn't just me. When you got 300 young Black guys who are 17, 18 years old who got nothing to do and nowhere to go, and they feel like this environment isn't friendly – You got to remember, and I have to say this. The college was sort of ready to bring us, but they weren't ready to bring us up here. When you go from 33 to 190 to the 300, they just didn't know the culture of the people they were bringing in. So they had no idea of how to integrate us into the existing community. So their expectation was that we would just fit in. Our expectation is: This is white world. And we know how to navigate in that because we've had to all our lives. But to live in it, you know, 100%, that's a different thing. When I have to negotiate and code-switch in the world, then I can go back home. But now, I'm not going back home. I still got to live in white world 24/7. And it's not real hospitable to me.

VEROT: Do you have specific examples or – obviously, culture and things like that are big pieces. Can you specifically maybe touch on where culture sort of clashed here at that time, where it wasn't working?

WHITAKER: Okay, probably the biggest one would be right before we got here. They were able to take a dorm offline and provide it as a place for the African-American men to have a place of their own. Because we did not have any place to gather, to have conversations, to talk about how we can help each other survive. Remember, we're leaning on each other to make it through this place, so we don't really have a place to organize, to talk about the things that are important to this Black community. How we can even have a concert that features somebody that's relevant to us, how we can have speakers who come up here that are relevant to us. It wasn't so much that it was overt racism, it was just a lack of knowledge of how to integrate this group, this demographic, into the community, and what would be helpful, advantageous, supportful, if that is a word, supportive of this demographic. So we had to teach them, the College, as much as they had to teach us about the world we were in. If that makes sense. Because they had no idea. They just said, "Okay. This kid's got good grades, let's bring them up here." To what? Under what conditions? You're just going to bring somebody up, in this environment that they don't know anything about? Now, some of the guys have been up here before. Some of them had gone to Exeter and Andover. There was a program at Exeter and Andover that brought these guys up to campus so they could experience Dartmouth during the summer they were up here, and that was a year-long program at both of those schools. They had alumni from, I want to say Class of '70 and '69, that stayed over to help orient those guys who were in that program that were coming to Dartmouth. This is where you're coming. This is the environment you're in. These are the support systems that we've created, that we've had to create, to make our lives better and hopefully your lives better while you were here. So they had some [pause] forethought on that, based on the guys who were there in the '69, '70, '68 that knew that if Dartmouth was going to bring in more African-American men, they had to change the environment significantly for them to be able to feel comfortable and survive. So it was more of a thing to educate the College about who these people are you're bringing in here and the kind of support systems that they need. They had no idea, thought we would just fit in with everybody else. No. No, this is a country club atmosphere, and people who have money can survive here and get off campus. We don't have money. We don't have cars. We are stuck. We're not

going anywhere for the weekend. We're not going to Vail [CO] for spring break. We're not going anyplace special. We trying to figure out who's going with me home for Thanksgiving, because they can't afford to fly back to California. A lot of guys did that. "Man, I can't afford to go home for Thanksgiving. I can make one trip, and that's Christmas." "Alright. Well, you might as well just come on home with me, man." It was a lot of that. You know, so we had to look out for each other just in terms of survival and, like I said, I can't remember any points of overt racism. I remember some stories about people who came up here that the Black guys had some problems with, or challenges with, and demonstrated against. George Wallace being one of them. Another guy named – think his first name is William – William Shockley who was some geneticist saying that Black people were genetically inferior to white folks. The College had him up here to do a presentation, and a guy – this was before I got here – the guys protested. You know what they did? They stood up and clapped him down the whole time. Wouldn't stop clapping, so he couldn't speak. And George Wallace, they pretty much ran him out of here. Pounded his car as he left. So, you know, it was some insensitivity on the part of the College. I mean, I get it, you were a liberal institution. You can bring up different ideas, but that doesn't mean we have to listen to them or like it.

VEROT: You also touched on *The [Dartmouth] Review* when we spoke in our pre-interview. Yeah. Is there anything you could say about that, or what that was like?

WHITAKER: Yeah, that happened after I left. That had a big influence on recruitment on the African-American side. I can't tell you how many of my former classmates I had conversations with about Black people not wanting to go to Dartmouth now because *The Review* somehow had got national press. I don't know if you remember, there was this whole thing about shanty town and South Africa and apartheid. When people had built these shanties on the Green to demonstrate apartheid in South Africa, and then these conservative white guys came in and smashed them all up. And had this article in *The Review* about how that wasn't right. You know, boom, boom, boom. It was all messed up. It was really messed up. I mean to the point where I think there was even a *60 Minutes* piece or some kind of national news broadcast about it and about *The Review*. It was a

dark time for recruiting African-Americans up to Dartmouth. So I had to do a lot of damage control with friends of mine, people who knew I went to Dartmouth. "Man, you went to that place? Dang." Just, it wasn't good. It wasn't good. And we got by it eventually, but I want to say there was a good amount of time. Six to eight, maybe even 10 years, that Dartmouth had a stain on it because of *The Review* and because of the things that happened because of that newspaper and articles and stuff. It was ugly.

VEROT: You also mentioned that you were involved with AAS [the Afro-American Society]. Were you heavily involved? Did you play any type of role? What was that experience like?

WHITAKER: No, they asked me just to be a member of the group, to give them some guidance and maybe some suggestions on some of the topics or some of the directions that they may want to go in, or some of the events that they want to plan. So I'm more like a mentor than anything else for that organization.

VEROT: I see. I was reading these, I guess sort of reports that were published. They're in Rauner [Rauner Special Collections Library], and they were published in spring or fall of '74, so it would have been right after you left. And there was a lot of complaints about inefficient meetings, and specifically the overuse of funding for parties and things like that, instead of all these other things. I just wanted to know your opinions on that, or if you think that's even accurate?

WHITAKER: Well, I don't know if that's accurate. It might be. The College, I think, I don't know if they still do it, but they used to provide a budget for some affiliate groups and some of the clubs on campus. So I'm not sure how you got your budget or how it was defined, how you could use the money and that kind of thing, but I did hear about some clubs using the money to throw parties and buy liquor and that kind of stuff. So I can't really say that I know that for sure. However, rumor control has it that that did happen.

VEROT: I guess on that subject of partying and social life, specifically – at least in my experience here, Greek life plays a really, really big role on campus. I was just wondering what that looked like for you? If

you felt included or not in Greek life, if you were in a fraternity, what that looked like for you in terms of your social life?

WHITAKER: No. I wasn't in a fraternity. There were no Black fraternities at all. I think there was a chapter that started with the Alphas [Alpha Phi Alpha] my junior year. That was the first chapter that happened on campus. It wasn't like we weren't – I can't say that I ever got invited to join any of the fraternities. I went as a guest of some of the guys I knew on the football team. Said, "Come on, Rock. We having a party, you can come over." But, you know, it might be me and one other Black guy there. So I'm looking around like, "Okay, this is cool. What's up, man? Yeah. Thanks, man. I'm out." There were some Black guys that joined fraternities there. It wasn't frowned upon, but it wasn't anything that I think the majority of the Black guys saw as part of their extended social life. It was almost like, "Well, that ain't really for us." Nobody said we couldn't join, but it's not like they're opening the doors saying, "Come on in, come on in, come on in." So it was like, "It's cool." We didn't have any beefs with any of the fraternities. We tried to have a snowball fight one time with Bones Gate [chapter of Delta Tau Delta], some of the guys on the football team. They kicked our butts, ran us back to the AAM [Afro-American Society]. So there was fun stuff like that. But, nah. Social life – we had to create our own social life. There were a couple times we actually sent buses down to the women's schools, Wellesley, Smith, and Holyoke, to bring them up to stay for the weekend so we can have a party. Absolutely. That happened more than once. And we would have celebrities or groups or bands come up from New York or Jersey for a concert. Then we'd invite busloads of women up to share in the festivities. We have a party at the AAM, and they'd stay for the weekend. And that's how we sort of enhanced our own social life. Outside of that it was 20 brothers in a room celebrating somebody's birthday with a bottle of wine we hitchhiked over to Norwich to buy.

VEROT: On this topic, do you have any – I know you say that when you left you weren't looking forward to going back or planning to. But do you have any, well I'm sure you do. But I guess I would just like to hear about some moments that contradict that, I suppose. In the sense that you did find belonging and you did find community and

happiness here. Do you have any specific instances where you're like, "I am glad," or grateful, in real-time, that this is happening?

WHITAKER:

While I was there probably the best thing that happened was the relationships and the bonds I developed with the other guys in my class. To the point where we still hang out and talk to this day. We have Zoom calls every couple of weeks, and it's sixty of us on the call, talking smack. Yes, from the class of like '68 all the way to like maybe '78. So, we've stayed together. We formed our own social group called Hanover Hall Partners, and it's probably about maybe 15 to 20 of us in that group. And we go through stuff together. We've been to Montreal [Québec, Canada] a couple of times. We've been to Vegas [Las Vegas, NV] a bunch of times. We've been to Puerto Rico a bunch of times. We've been in the D.C. a bunch of times. We've had honorary guests come to our social events. We honored President [James] Wright and his wife when we went to Montreal. We honored Brother Ah and the music class when we went to Vegas. We look back at some of the professors and faculty members who were instrumental in our development. There's a couple of folks that, oh, what was Dean's name? Ugh, I can't remember. I can't remember his name, but he was here. He was one of the Black Deans when we were here, and we honored him and thanked him for looking out for us. So, even though I paint a picture of I wasn't really happy, this wasn't a great place, there were some great things that happened. And one of the ones was those bonds with the guys in my class, the Black guys in my class. The bonds with the white guys that I met and played with on the football team, I'm still friends with a lot of them, and that bond has shaped itself in a different way. Where it used to be about us playing ball together, over the years it's transitioned into life, social justice stuff. Talk about things that we didn't talk about when we were here on campus, things that affect all of us. We talked about the George Floyd thing, all the stuff that happened in 2000. We'd have conversations about stuff we didn't talk about then. But as men we talk about. We support each other's efforts, like one of the guys wrote a book, Rick Gerardi ['74] wrote a book, all of us bought it. And supported his effort to write that book. Other guy in our class, Reggie Williams ['76], who's a couple classes behind us, wrote a book. All of us supported them. So, although it was challenging and trying, and when you're 18, 19 year-old and that's

all you know, that's all you know. So you frame your thoughts and everything around your limited existence. "I ain't coming back here. I don't like this place. Blah, blah, blah, blah." But as time goes by, you get to see the good things that that place brought to you. The other good thing that it did, as limited of time that I had on campus with them, was when they went co-ed. That was a good thing, because prior to that all my relationships have been with women from a distance and weekend kind of stuff. But now I have a group of 30 young women here, and I call them young because they were. They were 17, 18 years old. I'm like almost 21 now. So I knew that it probably wasn't a good thing to try to have a relationship with any of them on campus, because I'd be gone, they'd still be here, they're really young, a lot of my relationships already been off campus. It wasn't just, it wasn't going to work. So I became friends with a lot of them to try and – it was almost like a big brother thing. Say, "Hey, watch out for this guy." Or, "This is a class you might want to take." Or, "Hey, just make sure you guys are safe. We don't want you walking around campus at night by yourself." Just things that I wouldn't have had an opportunity to learn about how women perceive this place. Relationships with the guys that are here, and what they're trying to accomplish while they're here and when they leave. "Yeah, I want to do pre-med." "Well, you need to talk to this guy." Or, "I'm thinking about going to med school." "You need to talk to this guy." Or, "I'm thinking about doing something in publications, write a book." "Talk to him." We tried to point them to different resources that were available while they were there to help them try to figure out 1) if that's something they really want to do. 2) They have at least somebody who has some experience in taking the courses that they need to have, and 3) just to sort of watch out for them. Just to make sure that nothing crazy happened. No guys try to take advantage of them. You go to visit one of the ladies, and five guys sitting in the room. "What the hell y'all doing in here?" But there's only 30 of them, there's 300 of us. But it changed the dynamic and the culture of this place. Now all of a sudden, guys are combing their hair. Now all of a sudden, guys are not wearing their pajamas to class. Now all of a sudden, just a different kind of presentation. Because now we have ladies. But it was a good thing, because I'm still friends with them to this day. And I was able to have my daughter talk to them, as a female coming to Dartmouth. And they all know my wife. So it was a good

thing. I didn't recognize it at the time. Years later, I say, "You know what? That was a good thing."

VEROT: I was curious about – you're saying at the time you didn't recognize it. I am curious about the feelings around – you were a part of a very historical class. Were you aware of that in the moment?

WHITAKER: Oh, yeah.

VEROT: How did that feel knowing that? Did you feel kind of tokenized at times? Did you feel like you were really contributing to something? Like what were the feelings associated with that?

WHITAKER: This is the thing. I want to say probably the majority of the guys here were for co-education. There still was a small minority that was like, "Ah, we don't need that." But we realized that if Black women came on this campus, we had a level of responsibility to make sure that they were taken care of. And some of the things that happened to us, or some of the situations that we found ourselves in, we could probably head off. Hopefully, head off at the pass, so that they didn't have to have to go through any of that or meet any of those challenges. So yeah, we knew that it was a historic turn. We absolutely did. Just like we knew it was a historic turn when they went from 33 [Black] men to 190. I knew I was in a historic moment, and most of us knew we were in a historic moment that was going to be looked back at years later as a historic moment. And how well did we do? What happened? How well did we do, 20 years, 50 years later?

VEROT: You think it created a pressure?

WHITAKER: We knew that. I think we put the pressure on ourselves to be successful, because I want to say, to a person, we knew that we had to uphold the expectations that our families had for us. It wasn't just us, there were expectations. Like my grandmother, that our family had for us. So failure wasn't an option. We knew that, and I'd say 90% of the people who were here had those familial expectations, family expectations. They did, and if you ask any Black person, I bet you a dollar to a doughnut, they would say they had that.

VEROT: And then, I suppose, because you speak of these experiences, especially with your coach and stuff in a very, I mean, I'm not trying to put words in your mouth. But I guess what I'm perceiving is like, you do have the perspective now to say, "Obviously I could understand that it was messed up the way they were treating me, but I can also understand that they didn't know how to deal with the situation." What happened? What did you experience? Was it from working so closely with the school as an alumni that you gained perspective to be able to sit here and say that?

WHITAKER: You know, whenever I come to campus, I always go by the football office. Always go to the football office. Because we've stayed in touch with the program, the guys that played, stayed in touch with the program over the years. We get emails from the coach or from the athletic department. So I would go by and always introduce myself to the head coach. I knew the head coaches most of the time since I left, some of them came in right after me. One of the guys was a freshman on the team. So I'd always go by the football office. Over time I've had conversations with the coaches, and they would say, like my head coach did that time, "Man, we could have done a better job. We just didn't know, we just didn't know. We had no idea how to manage it." That was it. And how to manage not only the players, but how to manage their integration into a team that had been mostly white forever, till the late '60s. That '69 team that won a championship, there was one guy on the team, one guy, one Black guy on the team in 1969. One. And then that 1970 team, when I was a freshman, that won the Lambert Trophy, might have had, I don't know, 8, might have. If I look back at it. You see a team picture, you'll see. And then they went from like eight to a bunch the next year. So I'm sure the coaches there are like, "Woah, woah, woah, what're we gonna do?" They just hadn't been placed in that situation before, and I don't think they gave it too much forethought. You know, a football player is a football player. Well, yeah, but this is a little different, Coach. This is a little different. You bringing in people from different backgrounds. I was out at the field yesterday talking to the new head coach. You know what he said to me? "I am glad you are here. I hope you can be a mentor to some of our kids." And he says, "especially the Black players." So he got that they could use some perspective from someone who looks like them. He

got it. And even Buddy [Buddy Teevens], the coach that just died. He called on us a lot to help mentor his Black players, because they're coming from an environment that looks nothing like this. Yeah, nothing like this, and you get up here and try to figure out how to survive. If you're not happy, you want to get the heck out of here. So over the years we've tried to put together teams of Black alumni to help support however we can. Because the whole thing, is whether you're an athlete or not, we want you to finish. And we can help support you in any way to finish, that's what we want to try and do. And there's tons of Black alumni that are willing to do that now. I mean, we got mass, we have mass. We don't just have 33, we got thousands. So it's different.

VEROT: I also would just like some insight on your perspective of watching the school, and also playing a huge role in the way that you're associated with the school as an alumni, especially – wait, I have it written down somewhere. I know you were specifically working on, like a program for Black recruitment, correct? I might be wrong, but –

WHITAKER: Well no, it was the program about Health Equity.

VEROT: Yeah, sorry. Never mind. Oh, you were an enrollment interviewer. Not, okay. That's where I got it from. I guess your perspective on how Dartmouth has grown and changed and handled race more carefully? If you think they have. What has that been like from this slightly removed point of view now?

WHITAKER: I think the College has – well, let me back up. I think we had some challenges back when, in the '80s, '90s, when *The Review* was out. Remember we talked all about that? So I think that put Dartmouth in a funky light for for a minute. So once that sort of faded away, and we weren't in the national news about being a racist institution – and the interesting part is I know that during that time a lot of Black alumni were trying to defend the College and support the College. Saying no, that's just one group that's funded by some conservatives. That's not Dartmouth College. So that was a uphill battle, but the Black alumni that I was involved with were committed to try and change that narrative, change that picture. I think the College since that point has made a compelling effort to try and

balance out bringing in students with a good racial mix. When one time African-American admissions were, at one time, 13%. Then I think it went down to like nine, and then like maybe six or so and, you know, we're looking at each other saying, "Why is this happening? Why is the number of African-American enrollments going down?" Well, I think two things. From our time they classified a lot of people as African-Americans that would be classified in a different category now. The Latinos, the Africans from the continent of Africa, they just got lumped in with us. But now as you start to segregate those categories out, you put them with International students or Latinos or Native Americans, who got lumped in with us as well. Those numbers won't be 9%, it won't be 13%. It'll be more reflective of just that particular group. But still, I think some of the alumni saying we got to help the College get that number up some. I have to say that's kind of self-serving on our part, but everybody wants their people to be represented. But I think that the College is trying to be as equitable as possible in the last couple of years, creating diversity, equity and inclusion departments, doing things around LBGQ. Did I say it right? L-G-B-T-B-Q stuff? No disrespect intended. Just trying to diversify and look at the variety of categories and groups that are different now. And trying to put together a community representative of all of those, and build a community that's representative of what the College thinks this school should look like. As I walk across the campus these days, I see it. I look at the football team, I surely see it. There's a ton of Black guys on the team. I see the track team, there's a ton of Black people on that team. And it's just not African-Americans, I see different kinds of folks, different kinds of genres and races and all kinds of stuff. So I think the College is trying. I think they are hearing the alumni out there, the young alumni out there. I look at the Alumni Council, I'm one of the oldest guys on the Council. Everybody else, I think the older ones are like '07. I'm like, that's my daughter. It's not the same school. It wasn't the same school when my daughter went. It just wasn't. It's not. It's not the same place as when she went in '06 as it is now. And the evolution of this place is just going to continue. I think it's good that we have an Alumni Council that can give input back to the College. And they have young people on the Alumni Council. And I think that counts a lot, because they're the ones who are closest to the ground on this thing and the ear of the other students and just came through being

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involved in the College as a student, and now have transitioned into being more on the governing side through committees and different organizations. But we need that. We need young minds. We need young people to give us some idea of what the future can possibly look like for them. So I'm with it, long as the College doesn't – long as the College continues to give value to all and respect all and figure out how to even bring everybody to the table, even people I may not agree with. But they still should have a seat at the table. I'm good with that. And I mean I may not agree with what you saying, but you should be able to say your piece.

VEROT: It's been a long time. I don't want to keep you too much longer.

WHITAKER: Sorry. Yeah, I got a meeting I gotta get to, too.

VEROT: Okay. Yeah, we can cut it then. But this has been or, I'll pause it now.

[Recording paused].

VEROT: Is there any way you can send me the recordings? Like I know you said they're not on Spotify or anything like that, but —

WHITAKER: I can. I have some.

VEROT: Yeah, could you send them?

WHITAKER: I have some MP3s. I'll send you some recordings, and some pictures, too.

VEROT: Okay. Yes, please. That'd be great.

WHITAKER: I'll send you some pictures, too. I'll just tag them to your email. That work?

VEROT: Yes, because I think it would be super cool if I could put an MP3 file or something on the digital exhibit of your band. It would be super interesting. Okay. Well, thank you so much for everything. This has been really great and interesting. I don't know if this still stands, but I'll let you know when I'm in North Carolina, when I'm in Charlotte.

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WHITAKE: Please do, absolutely. You got lunch or dinner, whatever you need. I got you. No problem. I've got you, absolutely.

VEROT: Aw, well this was great.

WHITAKER: Well, I thank you for doing this. Yeah. I'll talk to you soon.

VEROT: Yeah, I'll see you. Bye.