

Karen M. Turner '76
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Black Lives
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Transcribed by Aleemah N. Williams '24.

WILLIAMS: Okay, so my name is Aleemah Williams and I am at the Rockefeller Center in Hanover New Hampshire and I am doing a zoom interview with Karen M. Turner who is in Westampton, New Jersey. Today is October 28th 2022 and this is an interview for the Dartmouth Black Lives oral history project. So, hello Karen. Thank you so much for joining me today. I'd first like to learn a little bit about your childhood. Can you please State when and where you were born?

TURNER: I was born on May 23rd 1954 and I was born in Trenton, New Jersey.

WILLIAMS: So can you tell me the name of your parents?

TURNER: Okay, my mom's first name is Gloria [Turner]. My father's first name is Arthur [Turner].

WILLIAMS: Thank you. So what was it like growing up in Trenton, New Jersey?

TURNER: At the time, it was kind of a small town, I guess Trenton still is somewhat of a small town. It was very community-oriented. I only lived in Trenton [NJ] for I guess my first six years because for second grade, when I turned seven, we moved to Ewing Township which is a suburb of Trenton [NJ]. But when I was, In Trenton, it was on Oakland Street and I lived across the street from my first cousins and they were three years, excuse me, three months younger than me. And so, and I say were because one is deceased, the other is like my brother cousin and my parents used to our mothers. I should say they dressed us up as triplets. So even though I have, I had a brother who was four years younger than me growing up. At least those first few years, I was very close with my cousins who lived right across the street, they dressed us up like triplets. So it was a kind of neighborhood where all the kids hung out. It was, it was nice. It was, it was, it was nice. It was safe. Everybody knew everybody. Everybody was in everybody else's home. It was a nice community and some of the kids who we grew up with, we're still in touch with and especially my cousin Donald. But yeah, it was, it was a nice childhood. I used to walk to my kindergarten, it was A block away. My first realization of racism though came during kindergarten when one of my white classmates said that and we had been friends for a long time. And one day, I don't know what happened. She comes in and she says that her blood was red and my blood was white and I remember as a little five-year-old,

not understanding and not tried and couldn't make any sense out of what she was talking about. Because I remember saying to her and I remember this after so many years that when I fall down, my blood is red. So I don't understand what you're talking about. And so I remember going home telling my mom. And so my mother, you know, she immediately knew what was going on. And so she said well, you know, one day when she passed our house going home why don't you just bring her over to me? And I'll talk to her and so that's exactly what I did. A couple days later she was on my street walking home and she was a little afraid of bugs and I have dogs and I've never been afraid of dogs. And so I went down to walk her by the dogs and walked her to my mother who was outside and explained to her that, on the outside. We may look different, but on the inside we're all the same and I teach. It seems that all the classes that I teach now, I ask the students a question about the first time, they, they recognize, or they became aware of their race. And that's always the example that I give.

WILLIAMS: Thank you. So after hearing about the incident did your mom contact the school afterwards?

TURNER: [Nods]

Williams: Okay. And so after your mom talked to your classmate, did you feel like that kind of helped mediate the situation, resolve the situation a little bit more?

TURNER: Yeah, I mean honestly I don't remember what happened after that. I'm assuming we went back to being friends. Yeah. I mean in terms of my memory I don't remember any follow-up or anything like that.

WILLIAMS: Thank you. So do you mind describing what it was like growing up in Ewing, New Jersey?

TURNER: Yeah. Well when I grew up in Ewing and [Ewing] was, like I said, a suburb and the area that we lived in was primarily African-American not completely it had been the heart of it. It Had been kind of like open land at the time and people were building their houses, we built our house and a lot of the houses on the street had been built. When I moved out there, I went to the school right around the corner for second grade, they redistricted and so I went to a different school for third grade and then they redistricted again and went to a different school for fourth grade. And so I was there from fourth, fifth, and sixth, I went to Antheil and then, and then I went to a private school --which was in Princeton so that was not in the area.

WILLIAMS: Interesting. Interesting. So what prompted the change from initially where you were in Trenton, New Jersey to Ewing, New Jersey?

TURNER: My parents, they wanted--I don't know--you know honestly I never asked them why we moved. I just know that they wanted a larger house. I then had a brother and I'm assuming that because when we moved to Ewing [NJ] we each had our own bedrooms and so it was a larger house and with some land and I think probably better schools. But there were I mean at the time if you could you build your house and you move to the suburbs and so we did.

WILLIAMS: Do you feel like you still had that similar sense of a community that you did that you initially had in Trenton and Ewing [NJ].

TURNER: Yeah. I mean because by the time I moved out to Ewing, like I said, I was in second grade I guess I was around seven. You know. That's when you're playing softball. You're joining Girl Scouts. So I did.

WILLIAMS: Do you mind elaborating more about the activities that you were a part of while you're growing up?

Back then. I mean, I know I was in Girl Scouts. Actually, I mean, there is one thing I must say and let me kind of All right, so I was in second grade, third, grade, with Mrs. Getsinger. I remember Mrs. Getsinger. Fourth grade, I went to Ewing and --I mean went to Antheil [Elementary School] was a relatively new school at that point and all the way through school, I went to integrated schools. That was not an issue. We may not necessarily have lived on the same streets but the classrooms were integrated when I got to Antheil in sixth grade, Mr. McNabb suggested that I go to a private school. And he did so because I was getting all A's and there are a couple of classmates and we used to--and actually with my cousin Donald we used to all try to compete to see who could get the highest grades. He was still living in Trenton going to a different school but I had, I had some friends Antheil and we all, you know, we competed with one another and Mr. McNabb had been living, I think he at the time lived in Lawrenceville [NJ] and so he had previous students who had gone to Princeton Day School and he knew that when they was looking to bring in black students. And so he convinced my parents that I should probably take the test. And so I remember going up there and meeting some of the students and then I took the test and I got in. And so I went to Princeton Day for seventh through twelfth. Now my mother felt it was very important despite the fact that I was going to private school in Princeton that I still keep up my activities in Ewing [NJ] and still play with the kids in Ewing [NJ]. And so I did Girl Scouts all the

way through Cadets, I guess it is and then and played softball. those were the big things and you know, and then I had friends and, you know, by that time your teenager and you did teenage stuff. I think sometimes though I found that there was some jealousy among the kids. that I was going to private school and that you know, Karen must think that she's better than us and that wasn't the issue. I was getting a better education though and sometimes that was hard because I wouldn't necessarily want to go out and play with people who at times I felt did not want to play with me but my mother always pushed me and there was a time actually when I was into ninth grade. I remember I told my mother, I just want to go to private to public school for one year, just let me go for ninth grade.

And she told me that if I did leave PDS, that she would provide me with only the bare essentials which would be a roof over my head and food to eat and that was it. And I believed my mother. So I stayed and I'm glad I did, you know, it was a little hard what she did, I think. But I stayed. And Prince Day was a challenge, which honestly, I think, prepared me for Dartmouth, because I was in a class of seventy about seventy-five students. There were four black students, two males two females [at Dartmouth]. And it was, it was hard being there during Prime dating time in a teenager's life because the white males certainly weren't talking to the black females and there were parties that they had that I wasn't invited to. I was invited to parties at home but in terms of school it was very difficult. It was very different.

WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you. So I just wanted to revisit something that you said, you said that when you told your mom that you wanted to go to a public school for a year, she's just emphasizing how she really wanted you to stay at Princeton day. So needless to say education is really important in your household?

TURNER: [Nods]

WILLIAMS: Okay. And then from there, do you mind explaining how you were first introduced to Dartmouth College?

TURNER: It was the ninth school that I applied to which was the last school that I applied to. I saw that Dartmouth was going co-ed. It happened--I don't know if it was like October or something, but anyway, it came to my attention that they were going co-ed. And so I said, okay, I've applied to eight, I'll just go ahead and apply to ninth. Now I had also applied to Rutgers, and Rutgers was going co-ed at the time. And I was also kind of in the mindset of trailblazing, I got out of that at some point, but, you know, being a Trailblazer going to Dartmouth being among the first women, you know, in the first class of women to matriculate as a freshman, that was important to me. And so, I applied. Ironically,

my advisor, who was a Dartmouth grad, didn't know that I was applying. And I remember going into his office and telling him and he was like, oh he was shocked that I was applying to Dartmouth, whatever.

WILLIAMS: So when you got that acceptance letter, what was going through your mind?

TURNER: Well, I was trying to decide if I really want to go to Dartmouth because honestly, I would have gone to Trinity in Hartford for a tour and really liked Trinity. I got into Rutgers, didn't consider Rutgers or since Rutgers was in New Jersey and I did want to go away so I was just kind of weighing things and I decided to go to Dartmouth and I like the color green that didn't hurt.

WILLIAMS: I will say, definitely that was a big component of why I really fell in love with Dartmouth--greens of beautiful color. Yeah. So when you arrived on campus, what was your initial impression of everything,

TURNER: I remember being left on the green watching my parents drive back into Vermont and feeling very lonely, but also having a sense of anticipation. And let me just tell you too, when I was looking at schools I looked at, I went to visit Dartmouth. I went to visit Cornell. I had gotten into Cornell too. Cornell, and it must have been somebody told me later, it was Penn's relays weekend and so, when I went to Dartmouth, there were less students around [an annual track meet at UPenn, and recognized as the world's first track meet] students that I saw were either on the green working, or in the library working and said, oh, this is a really good environment. You know, and academics is really valued. When I went to Cornell students seemed to be partying more and it was a larger school and coming from PDS [Princeton Day School] which was a small school, I thought that I might get lost at Cornell and not so much at Dartmouth. And so that kind of played into my decision why to go there as well.

WILLIAMS: Interesting, do you mind repeating what weekend it was at Cornell?

TURNER: Penn Relays weekend.

WILLIAMS: Okay and what is that, exactly?

TURNER: It's a track and field contest, but it is at Penn and a lot of track and field teams from across the country, maybe the world, I don't know, but certainly across the country, they go to Penn and they race.

WILLIAMS: Wow.

TURNER: A lot of people go and watch it. And so I think the point that was being made to me was that people were down at Penn

WILLIAMS: Yeah. So not many people on campus, right?

TURNER: Right. Right.

WILLIAMS: So while you're moving it like did your parents help you move in? Did your RA [Resident Assistant] help you okay.

TURNER: [Nods] Yeah yeah. Alright I don't I don't think we had. No, I don't think we had an RA already.

WILLIAMS: Okay. When you were, did you end up going on your first year trips?

TURNER: And I wasn't in, what is it, Bridge? I wasn't in the Bridge [program]. So when I got there, there were relationships that had been formed because of the students who had done Bridge Summer. I was not invited to do Bridge Summer, I didn't know anything about it until I got up there. I think that—let me just backtrack. I lived in the Choates and in Cohen [housing cluster at Dartmouth College] and actually when I went back to Dartmouth in 2020 I was up there for the New Hampshire primary. I took some, I went with some colleagues and a class of students up there to cover the primaries and so we jumped in the van and I took him on a little tour of Dartmouth and because we were in Hanover for a couple of the rallies. And so we went by the choates and I pointed out my window on, I think, the third floor in the middle. So that was fun.

But I think the first person that I really clicked with, I can't say the first person I actually met the first person I click with in terms of lifelong friendships, was Judy Redding ['76] and we were walking someplace around the green and I don't know we Just really silly and I jumped in for some reason, she had a shopping cart and I jumped in her shopping cart and she was wheeling me back to the choked and talked about-- I was, I was vegetables or something, you know, here she is, she's lettuce and this, I don't know, it's really silly. But anyway, I do believe Judy [Redding] was the first good friend that I formed, and that's how we met. That's how we ended up meeting. Mmmmm.

WILLIAMS

WILLIAMS: How do you spell her last name?

TURNER: R-E-D-D-I-N-G.

WILLIAMS: Thank you. Did Judy also live in the Choates?

TURNER: Yeah, she was in, let's see. I was in Cohen. Bissell is the one that's connected, right? I think to Cohen.

WILLIAMS: I think so.

TURNER: Yeah, yeah, yeah. She was in Bissell.

WILLIAMS: So interesting. So do you mind just talking a little bit more about what it was like being amongst the first group of women on campus and a male-dominated area?

TURNER: Um I remember when I first got up there that one of the black male students came up to me and basically said, I shouldn't be there because I was taking, I was taking the seat from her brother. [Laughs] I remember responding that if I wasn't there, there would be another woman there so you know. So that was really silly as far as I was concerned, but I think for the guys who thought they were going to a male all-male school on the part of some of them and not all of them, but some of them I guess there was resentment because you know, especially if they were upperclassmen they had a certain expectation. And then all of a sudden here come these women. I had no empathy for anybody who came in my class because at that point, they knew they were going to a co-ed institution or what would eventually be truly a co-ed Institution. So, and not everybody, some of them, some of the faculty members didn't want women up there. It was pretty obvious. I think the expectation for especially black students, we didn't say students of color at the time, I mean, that's, you know, more modern term term, but I think anyone who is non-white.

So there was a sense of maybe the expectation of rigor and the ability to do. The academics wasn't as high. yeah, it was--there were good days and there were not so good days and it really depended like I said. There were some guys even upperclassmen who kind of took me under their wing. I guess they could see that it could be very difficult. I didn't live in and I can't remember the name of the dorm but there was an all-female dorm and some guys went through, I think from the frats and overturn, waste paper baskets and wrote on their whiteboards and that kind of thing. And they did call us some of them call this "cohogs" instead of coeds, and in the spring they put had on the spring sing or something like that and all of the frats would get together and they would sing. One of the deans

sang with one of the Frets and they changed the word co-ed to co-hogs. So you heard it on various levels.

WILLIAMS: And so the instance with the dean singing with one of the frats was that during your first year there?

TURNER: Yeah, I do believe it was my first year in the spring.

WILLIAMS: Wow. And so, after having multiple experiences, did you feel as though you are supported by the administration, and if not, were there any other people that you could turn to for support during this time?

TURNER: Well, I mean that they brought in, for instance, Dean Joan Nelson. She was, I believe, dean of students when she came in there she's black. Her husband, I think maybe taught history. She was there. And there were faculty members, certainly who, but we didn't have a lot of faculty of color. And certainly not a lot of black faculty. The ones that were there for the most part, I think were supportive. But you know, they had their own issues because they were definitely in the minority. I think probably that's why the relationships that I made are still very deep relationships in terms of the other students. You know, I mentioned Judy. Also Eileen Cave, Eileen was in the Cohen. I had a single in Cohen I think on the third floor. She was in a double I think they called it the living room in Cohen. I think she was a floor down [from Karen's room].

WILLIAMS: Did I'm sorry, do you mind spelling her name out?

TURNER: Eileen E-I-L-E-E-N, Cave, C-A-V-E.

WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you.

TURNER: And so the three of us became fast friends. We started calling ourselves the SSS [Sinister Sisters of The Syndicate] and we would go to parties and we just start yelling "SSS." It was funny because one time, I know there was a student, I think she transferred in and she wanted to become part of the SSS and it's like, well, we really weren't like a club or a group. It was just something, we made up just to yell at parties.

But, you know, I'm still friends with them. And, actually, we talked frequently and as a matter of fact, Judy Monica Hargrove was also in my class and Judy Eileen and Monica were the three authors of the Redding Report. And so, Monica was in the Choates [dorm housing cluster at Dartmouth College]. I forget which dorm she was in, but Judy, Monica, and Viola Alan, who's also in my class, we start a bible study. We did bible study for two years, took a little break the beginning of the summer and it

would probably start up again. But I say that because we're still friends and we are deep friends, and that's really nice. You needed that as a young person to feel that there were folks who had your back. I mean, we were young. Eileen I think was sixteen when she got on campus you know. So you are talking about sixteen, seventeen, eighteen-year olds. And you know, you're dealing with some real tough issues and so I think that's why those relationships are so deep.

WILLIAMS:

It's really interesting. I think that's just like something that also occurs now like a lot of people bonding over at least on campus over a certain situations whether it's like I guess in my case like me and my friend were the only two Muslim athletes on campus. So we've bonded over that and like it also helps that we're on the same team. So I definitely understand what you're saying.

I have some more questions about specifically your first year. So right now on campus it's the homecoming weekend and so I was wondering how was homecoming for you. I know the whole, you know, running around the bonfire and stuff, but I know one thing that you experience that I would like to hear more about is just like, you know, going through the running around the bonfire, but seeing like all the Alum that are, there are all seeing like only men, they're only men coming back to campus during this time. or you're celebrating school spirit and with you being the first woman there you know, what was homecoming like?

TURNER:

I really don't remember to be honest. I mean I remember the alums coming up and there were some really supportive of alums, like Garvey Clark ['57] and others who were very— they love Dartmouth— and they were very accepting of the women. There were some problems in our class when our class came in there were alums who thought that we would turn it into. I don't know like an all-women's school or something, you know, you'd be walking around in heels and things like that. Wherein I think the women who were up there, there were a lot who were athletes, a lot who were raised on Dartmouth wallpaper. The expectation of how I guess the culture in terms of being in Hanover with change, just never happened. But you also have to remember too when we came in in '72, not only are you bringing in women, but you're also getting rid of the Dartmouth symbol, which was the Indian at the time. That's when they went to the Big Green. So for some alums it was just, oh, my gosh, like all of this change. And so you would go to events, like you're talking about homecoming, homecoming games. I'm sure I went to the games because, you know, I like Athletics. I mean, I'm teaching a course On Sports media now [at Temple University] and so you would hear people doing wah-hoo-wah or you know. And it's like, no this is no longer the Dartmouth Indians it's the Big Green and so that went on for a while as well.

As I said, you're asking me these questions, you know, because I haven't thought about it, I had thought about a lot of the alums, but it was tough on them. Change is tough on people but change is going to come. And so, my whole thing was to get with the program because it is going to change, you know? So you want to make sure that you have a voice in that change because it's going to happen, but a lot of them wanted to go back to the past and it just wasn't happening.

I can't remember, I don't think in my class there were any legacies. In subsequent classes there were in terms of the women, but I don't think in my class. But I mean, one thing that I can say about our class of women, everyone graduated there on time or early and among the black women, and I think we only lost one woman who matriculated as a freshman, and that's because she left and she transferred but we all finished.

WILLIAMS: Do you know whether or not she transferred just due to the pressures or she wasn't happy? Due to the pressure of like you know, or no due to the resistance?

TURNER: I think she missed home. I think she was from California and, yeah, big difference being in Hanover, New Hampshire and living in California, right?

WILLIAMS: Especially with that, the first winter, [oof]. So I just want to ask you a question about whether or not, being faced with such resistance to the changes that were occurring if that changed the way that you presented yourself while you're on campus.

TURNER: A lot of what I'm saying today is me reflecting on my life experiences since leaving Dartmouth. I mean, there are times when, oh, my goodness, if it was possible to travel back in time to be able to look at the situation through my older eyes. When I do reflect on it I am amazed that we came through, to be honest with you, with our heads on straight and not crazy. And I say that because there was so much pressure coming from so many different places. And I think there was a lot of support but you know, we concentrate on the negative sometimes and there was a period of time that I know that I would talk to friends and they would come into my room and I'm sitting there and I might have my black light on, or I might have some type of dark bulb in, and I was just there and I think that I was depressed at times. And it was easy to go to Dick's house and get valium. Oh my gosh, I remember when I left Dartmouth, I was throwing away vials of Valium. Instead of someone saying, you know, why don't you go into therapy? Because I don't think that was ever offered, but it was almost a joke, go down to Dick's house, and you can get valium.

WILLIAMS: Interesting. So did you often turn to your friends for support or maybe like your parents?

TURNER: Oh, well definitely my parents and my friends but definitely my parents. But my parents didn't, they couldn't understand because they weren't in it.

WILLIAMS: Mmm. [Nods]

TURNER: You know? I mean, they could certainly provide support from where they were and try to keep me grounded because they knew me but my friends were in it. And I think that's why we're still friends today because we had so many similar experiences.

WILLIAMS: So to balance everything and create a sense of community, you know, away from home at Dartmouth College, you joined a few organizations, correct?

TURNER: Yeah, I mean I was involved with the AAM [Afro-American Society]. I think pretty much everybody was involved with the AAM. I always enjoyed media and so that's why I got involved with radio and Black Side [a show that on WDCR that catered to black students on campus] really was the only show that was offered to black students. It's like, if you're a black student and you're coming, the WDCR [Dartmouth College Radio] Of course, you want to do Black Side? I remember trying to do a news show with one of the transfers. No, she wasn't a transfer we, they and I don't know if they still have this now, but there was a program where a student from Smith could come and spend a year, I guess. And so Ginger Crawley [Smith '77], I think she might have been a sophomore. I was a junior but anyway, she was here behind me, but we were trying to do some work over at WDCR in the area of news. But Black Side, I guess is where I spent most of my time and as you reminded me, I was the minority affairs person there. I was known for just playing very long songs and I would laugh because Donna Summer came out with Love to Love You Baby that went on for like fifteen minutes or something. And I was constantly putting that on like every time and I think I had a show on Thursday night or something and it was always like ten [pm] to midnight or ten [pm] to one [am]. I mean those were the hours that they gave us for Black Side. I was the only woman who was on black side at the time. Certainly, I was the first woman on Black Side, but it was great. I mean, I enjoyed being up there, I enjoyed playing the music. We would get calls. People were going "what are you doing playing Donna?" What are you doing up there? You know, but it was fun.

WILLIAMS: So, Black Side, that ran from ten to twelve fifty.

TURNER: Something like that yeah, it was night. It was yeah, it was nighttime.

WILLIAMS: Was this like everyday or only on the weekends?

TURNER: I don't know how many people had a shift but we had several people who had a shift and I had a weekly shift and Cruz Russell ['75] who was class 75. I remember Cruz brought me in to get involved with the radio station and I really enjoyed it. I mean and as a professional, I was doing my work. When I started my first media job was in radio. You know, and I think back on my time at WDCR.

WILLIAMS: And so that brings me to another question. So in 1975, you wrote an article to the D [The Dartmouth] titled On Recognizing Racism and then you specifically mentioned what's going on at the WDCR and how it was considered off limits to the blacks. I was wondering what prompted you to write this letter to the editor?

TURNER: It was the article that appeared before that talked about racism at Dartmouth, I believe. And then that was my response to it in 1975 correct?

TURNER: Yeah, I'd get you found you found my yeah which obviously I had completely forgotten laughed. What I read that I was like oh my gosh, you're calling people out?

WILLIAMS: And that's important for change.

TURNER: Yeah, yeah. But I had forgotten about that [the article she wrote], that that warmed my heart. Thank you very much for finding that some things are consistent, right? But I do remember, I am assuming I was referring to the fact that we really weren't offered other opportunities within WDCR at the time. The black show was Black Side and that's why I was saying I wanted to do news and I don't remember having the opportunity. I remember Ginger and I kind of talked about something. I don't remember that coming to fruition but the opportunity at the time for black students was to do Black Side.

WILLIAMS: interesting. So, what specifically about reporting was so captivating to you?

TURNER: I don't know. I've always been kind of a news junkie even when I was young between news and sports, I used to subscribe to sporting news and stuff like that. When I was in high school, I always enjoyed sports. I played some high school basketball but

at the time it was pre Title IX. And it's a different world and different attitudes. I mean I remember when I cheered in high school, my mother was really thrilled. When I was playing basketball it's like, [hmmm] okay, but those were the attitudes at the time. And then when I get to school, of course, then that's when Title IX opened up. Our first year, I mean, Judy and I were the Freshman Basketball team's managers. We were co-managers. The only reason why we became co-managers and because nobody else had stepped forward and wanted it. Like I said, my cousins, the ones who grew up across the street from me, they were athletes and we used to follow them. They played all sports and I knew a lot of athletes and I liked watching athletics and any sport—be it anything, excuse me. And so I get to Dartmouth and because I liked basketball and at the time we didn't have a cheering squad, I wasn't thinking about cheering. I said, you know, okay Dartmouth is opened up to women, so why can't we be managers? And so, Judy and I came to manage, it was such a big deal because as a manager, you have to go into the locker room. Clean up all of that and it was like, oh, such a hassle, you know, they can't come into the locker room when the guys are in there so we would stay outside. Wait for them to leave, then go in there and clean up the locker room. It was almost like an inconvenience that we had to be accommodated because we couldn't go into a stinky locker room and pick up after these guys, but we did it for that first season for the freshman team. Now the tradition was that one of the managers from the freshman team would then be promoted to varsity the next year. Didn't happen. Neither Judy nor I got that opportunity and so that's why our sophomore year we helped form a cheerleading squad. So I cheered, I don't think I cheered junior year. I know I cheered sophomore year and then, you know, we were managers and it's so interesting. Now, you know, because I tell my students about how hard it was. And I don't know. Have you seen the picture of me and Judy with the Freshman men's basketball team?

WILLIAMS: Cheering or as a manager?

TURNER: No, as a manager.

WILLIAMS: I was not able to find a picture of that. I did find a picture of you cheering.

TURNER: Okay, I will send you that picture because the picture we look, sad. And we look sad because I'm looking at myself, and I was like, oh, my heart goes out to this young woman, who's sitting there, who's me at age, 18, and I realized how we had to fight to get in that picture. They did not want us to sit there with the

team. But I'll send you the picture because I wanted the picture because its history and I didn't want it to get lost. I ended up writing Dartmouth and someone told me to write to the athletic department and I did and they had the picture. So I do have the picture so I'll send it to you and you'll see what I mean. I mean, Judy, and I are sitting there and we just have this hurtful look in our eyes, I think.

WILLIAMS: So, if you were offered the opportunity to be the manager for the varsity, For the varsity basketball team would you have taken it knowing that?

TURNER: I've been knowing what now? You probably just going to say—

WILLIAMS: Knowing that you were kind of unsatisfied. In your current position.

TURNER: I wasn't unsatisfied, it wasn't welcoming. I mean today it's like no big deal. If you have a woman who's a manager I mean you see women on the sidelines all the time. I mean even football oh my gosh. It's like no big deal. It was such a big deal and it was really around going into the dogon locker room. I remember as one of the Freshman managers, I ran the clock during the game. I ran the clock and I think Judy tended to the players, but I ran the clock. That, I remember, was part of my duties as well.

WILLIAMS: Were you able where you and Judy able to travel with the team during away games?

TURNER: I don't remember, I don't remember. I don't remember, I really don't remember. Yeah, I don't remember the end. And two, some of the some of the male students—the guys on the basketball team, were great. They became friends of ours, during the time that we were there. I think some people they questioned why we want to even do that? Kind of the arguments that were made in the 80s, about women's sports reporters, who want to have access to locker rooms, same kind of thing, like, oh, you know, you just want to see naked men or, you know. We're trying to do our job. We were trying to do a job and I remember we tried to push back a little bit in terms of one of us being promoted to Varsity and you have to choose your battles, you know? And it was just hard, it was just hard. And so, we were like, okay, then we'll cheer. And that of course, is much more acceptable to everyone. I mean, because some of the male students, some of our male colleagues, our friends questioned, "you know, why do you want do it?" "It was like a man's job." Well, you know why do you want to do a man's job?

You know, we wanted to do this. We're now a coed school. We're here. Why can't we do this?

WILLIAMS: Interesting. And so was that the first official cheer squad at Dartmouth College?

TURNER: That's my well— I know they had the football cheerleaders and it was kind of integrated but the basketball squad, the first basketball cheer squad was all black women.

WILLIAMS: Wow. Interesting.

TURNER: And you saw the picture, right?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I think it was a--I will look back at the picture. I did see it. I thought I saw a few like individuals from different like racial backgrounds in there.

TURNER: Ah no, I don't think so.

WILLIAMS: I do have a few questions in regards to your time working with the Black Praxis [First Dartmouth Black Publication]. And you did that your Junior and Senior year. So what was it, like working for the college's first Black Publication?

TURNER: I don't have a lot of memories of working with the Praxis. I just remember I enjoyed writing and I don't know if you found anything that I wrote from Praxis because if you did, I would love to see that because it might jog my memory. But at the time I was thinking about journalism but Dartmouth didn't have a journalism program. Everybody was either going to medical school or not even not even business school so much at that particular time. It was really medical school or law school and those seem to be my choices and I because we didn't have a journalism program. I didn't know how to do the next step. I was always interested in journalism, I wrote for my high school newspaper. Journalism has always been something that I wanted to pursue and actually I remember I considered transferring my junior year to go to someplace. I think it might have been Occidental [College in Los Angeles, California]. I know someplace in California who that had a journalism program that I had thought about and then I said, well, let me just go on and finish it at Dartmouth and you know by that time you're an upper class person And you know, you have a little clout, you have a sense of how things work. And so, so I gave up on the idea of transferring now but my thoughts of transferring had specifically to do with trying to figure out how to get into journalism as opposed to escaping something there. At least that's what my memory says to me.

WILLIAMS: So in 1976 you graduated from Dartmouth in the winter term, correct? Because you graduated a term early.

TURNER: [Nods]

WILLIAMS: And you graduated with an AB in Psychology and Urban Studies, yet you're still passionate about journalism. I want to ask you about what steps you took to pursue a career in journalism? Do you mind just talking a little bit more about Urban Studies [minor] and what that was like because I know it's not offered any more at Dartmouth?

TURNER: I just remember learning so much about cities and hadn't really thought much. I mean, the Trenton and Ewing area were not like big cities, it's not like I came from New York [New York] or DC [District of Columbia]. So I remember really enjoying the urban studies minor that I had. I did psychology because early on I was interested in going to medical school and thought about going into psychiatry and I said, oh psychology would be a good major. Then I discovered Urban Studies, but I didn't know where to take that. If I had done that today and if they were advisers, who would say, oh, this could lead to doing policy or doing, you know, whatever. I didn't have that. And as I'm saying this to you, in terms of career advising, I can't even remember having conversations like that. I mean, we would talk to one another. You might have some alums, a lot of them were lawyers, who would, who would come or doctors? And I don't know how it is now in terms of advising students, once you get your Dartmouth undergrad degree, like where certain majors will take you if there is a career services office or something like that, that exists there. I don't remember anything like that at Dartmouth. I do also remember I was involved with the-what's the center that there's a center there that deals with public policy?

WILLIAMS: The Nelson A. Rockefeller Center [at Dartmouth College].

TURNER: At the Rockefeller Center. Yeah, I remember being involved with the Rockefeller Center and I forget who was the head of the Rockefeller Center at the time. I remember that he was someone who I was very fond of because, honestly, I can't think of a lot of faculty who really resonated with me? There were a couple of female professors who ended up for whatever reason not getting tenure. So therefore they moved on and I didn't understand as an undergraduate student. I didn't understand what that all meant. You know about getting tenure and how you

get tenure and all that. I just knew that they were moving on to another job. I mean, there were people like Ray Hall who were there and I remember, I would interact with him because he was always studying black people on campus. And then like I said, I got involved with the Rockefeller Center which ties into the fact that I got that minor in urban studies. I think that was the attraction then to the Rockefeller Center. When I took the students from Temple [University] up to Hanover in 2020, in February, we ended up having lunch at the Rockefeller Center, so that was really nice. And, you know, I was able to walk around and look at the exhibits that they had.

WILLIAMS: Interesting. I actually work for the Rockefeller Center now. Wow.

TURNER: Oh really.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, I'm a student assistant for the deputy director and we work on various different projects. Yeah. So what exactly did you do while you're active at the Rockefeller Center?

TURNER: They had, what was it? They had internships or something and I know I did something with that I believe or maybe it was my junior fall. My junior fall I spent in Mexico. I did the study away in Mexico. And that's why I was not on campus when Judy, Monica and Eileen did the Redding Report. Because had I been, I would have been part of that group and as it turned out. I was on the Smoyer committee that looked at the catalyst that formed the Redding report. And so they were doing the follow-up to see about equal opportunity on Dartmouth campus.

So that fall I was in Mexico. In San Luis Potosi. In the spring I was off campus and I was in Boston. I worked at a nonprofit. And I think I found out about that either through the Rockefeller Center or there is another similar kind of program that was out of that. What's the building that's on the corner? There is kind of like in the back but this is on the corner of kind of catty-corner to the Hanover in it's a brown building. It's across the street from, I don't know what, one of them secret societies or something. It's it's on one of the corners of the green

WILLIAMS: And it's a brown building and it's like close to where the hood is now?

TURNER: Yeah. Well, no. The Hood [the Hood Museum on Dartmouth;s campus] is over on the if you're standing in front of the Hanover, in all of that is to the left, right? If you're standing facing, this would be on the right.

WILLIAMS: Collis [at Dartmouth College], the Collis Center.

TURNER: Yeah. Maybe that's what it is because there was, I don't know. I just remember Dean Traenum being involved with something and I did something with them as well. I don't remember what it is though.

WILLIAMS: Was it possibly through this social impact Center? Does that ring a bell?

TURNER: They wouldn't have called that social impact that time. Probably. So okay. And maybe its Forerunner. You're taking me back too far. And I like, I don't even have resumes from that far back in the day. So I can't even look into it.

WILLIAMS: I will do some investigative journalism of my own in the spirit of the interview. I just want to go back to when you are discussing Ray Hall and you're saying that he was studying black people?

TURNER: Yeah blacks at Ivy League schools. He was always interviewing everybody.

WILLIAMS: Did he end up interviewing you?

TURNER: Yeah we did. Honestly I don't I think--cause I think you wrote a book about blacks in the Ivys. But the way he wrote the book, I don't think he had like chapters of people. He just kind of put everything together.

WILLIAMS: As shared experiences.

TURNER: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Speaking of which there's a book kind of like that but it's called Upending. The Ivory Tower and talks about civil rights at the Ivy Leagues, are you familiar with that? It's a very recent publication.

TURNER: From a Dartmouth related author more author or just someone who went to the Ivys or maybe didn't even have to go to the Ivys, right?

WILLIAMS: He did not go to the Ivys but he was in constant communication with a bunch of black individuals that went to the Ivy and he has

like a whole chapter about Dartmouth and dedicates it to Dartmouth. I was just asking.

TURNER: What's the name of it again, I will look for it.

WILLIAMS: Upending the Ivory Tower. Okay, it's really interesting. We actually had to read it for class to learn more about civil rights on campus and just how black students continue to advocate for themselves during this time.

TURNER: Had to advocate for themselves during the time, but remember, I always felt that I kind of miss the sixties because I was too young, really, to participate in a lot of those activities. And then, you know, the seventies were very different. I remember talking to some of the older, black students male students, obviously who had gone to Dartmouth in the late sixties about what that was like, and I always felt that I kind of missed it and then in the eighties, that's when the Shantytown happened, right? Or isn't that when? Yeah, because that was pre the Dartmouth [the Dartmouth newspaper] was the newspaper and then what's the one that came after?

WILLIAMS: The valley, not the not, the Valley [The Upper Valley News].

TURNER: The other one, the conservative Dartmouth Paper.

WILLIAMS: Oh we call it the D [correction this is the Dartmouth Review] now. The conservative paper,

TURNER: Okay. So you have the Dartmouth. You still have Dartmouth, right?

WILLIAMS: Yeap and the conservative one is the D [Correction, this is the Dartmouth Review].

TURNER: Oh really. Do you know what that was called before?

WILLIAMS: I'm not entirely sure, I can look into that.

TURNER: Yeah, no, I was just curious because I was about to say that was not around when I was on campus. I think that came around, maybe late seventies, early eighties or something. And if it was around, it was quiet.

WILLIAMS: The Dartmouth review?

TURNER: That's right, the review.

WILLIAMS: Founded in the 1980s.

TURNER: Yeah,.

WILLIAMS: So I know you were saying that you didn't really have, since you did attend Dartmouth in the early 70s, you didn't have much experience with the civil rights movement on campus, but I do know that there are some other historical events that possibly affected you. So, the women's rights movement, were there any instances of either a march or some type of speaker— did any activities on campus happen, in relation to the women's rights movement?

TURNER: Not that I can think about. Thinking back on it, we were struggling with that whole intersection of gender and race and, you know, we didn't have words like intersectionality at that time, but that's what was that's what was going on. We were just trying to navigate life, for some of the white female students may be for them. I think the way in which Judy and I approach being managers, we felt that we should be empowered as women. I think that's where the gender came in. When we were in other spaces, that's when race would come in or race and gender, I can't think of anything specific. Actually, when I think back on it, I do remember when Labelle [?] came to Dartmouth and I enjoyed that concert. I mean, we did have really good concerts. They would bring people up and one of the gosh, Michael. I can't think of Michael's last name and he has since passed away and he was from Atlanta. And I think he brought, mmm, he was I think Andrew Jackson [Andrew Jackson Young Jr. the late US politician] came up there. Who else? The former ambassador, the ambassador to the UN [Andrew Young], I can see his face and I'm drawing a blank on it also from Atlanta but he was plugged into all of the Atlanta politicians and so we did have kind of, you know, a direct path from Atlanta to Dartmouth. We had some really good speakers. We did have some really good speakers and we had some follow-up, you know, at the AAM.

There should have been a way to have broader conversations, I think among the students among the various races and ethnicities, but there was just so much change going on. At the time, the Dartmouth plan was new going to trimesters that was new. Getting rid of the Indian symbol that was new, bringing women on campus that was new. There was just so much going on in terms of change.

WILLIAMS: It sounds like a lot especially to happen at one time. Do you feel as though the plans that were put in place to help? Make it a smoother transition? Do you think that was helpful or do you feel like they could have done a better job supporting female students or supporting the students, as a whole going from semesters to trimesters?

TURNER: Clearly they could have done a better job. Clearly they could have done a better job and I say this because I took a course at Temple [Temple University] and I remember being in a meeting with a friend who went to Holyoke [Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts], I think she went to Holy. No, she spent a semester at Dartmouth and for some reason I'm drawing a blank on where she went to college. But anyway, she knew some of the people that I knew and she was there pre-coeducation. I think maybe the year before and we talked about this all the time and I said to her that there didn't seem to be a plan.

It seemed that Dartmouth wanted to bring in women and I wonder if that was to help the bottom line. I don't know. But you know, I remember questioning that. It was said, we [Dartmouth] want to bring a cohort of future leaders and we want them to also be women. I don't think they really thought it through because it seemed kind of quick when they decided to bite the bullet and go co-ed, you know. Some of the other schools like Princeton and Harvard, you know, they had migrated and, and were co-ed. I think we were among the last or the last. I don't think the kind of planning that if you were to do that today, it would, it would be very different. I mean, even in terms of housing and those housing decisions that were made. I just don't think there was a lot of planning— I do think, and I never been able to find anything and maybe at some point through this oral history project, it would be interesting to know exactly what they were looking for in the women who they admitted in the first class, particularly the first class, who matriculated as freshman. I think they were looking for a particular type of student because obviously they wanted to set them up for success. And so I think they needed a certain type of female student to come into Dartmouth and I've never been able to find anything in writing that talked about specifically what they were looking for. But I know that there was a type.

WILLIAMS: Interesting because there was just a lack of support and they needed them to be able to do XY and z or just be independent in a way where Dartmouth did not [need to] support them and be able to survive.

TURNER: Yeah, I think leadership, they were looking for people who had demonstrated some level of leadership and independence. They knew that we were coming to a hostile environment, more hostile for some than others. But it was a hostile environment because at the flick of a switch you're going from all male to to c and so and then you have the alums to deal with. Like I said there was just so much change that fall. From the Dartmouth plan to getting rid of the Indian symbol, which, you know, you question me, you know, the Indian symbol anyway because there weren't many Native Americans on campus and then, you know, then you're bringing in women. So no, there was a plan on something. I am sure someone sat down, it may not be in writing but, there was a type. . I do believe there was a type.

WILLIAMS: How do you think, as someone who is now a professor, at a university, they went about, selecting women who were this type? This type of ideal female student that would be in the first co-ed class.

TURNER: I think me and this is one thing that we discussed a lot. I think they were looking for students who had maybe a mixture of public school, private school experience. If you were going to private school at that time, you were used to being in the minority and so maybe you had the skills to survive that. Like I said, I think they were looking at leaders who had leadership positions, some legacies, people who they thought could be future Leaders. However, they defined that. But I do believe that they felt that they were grooming the future leaders of America and they wanted to include women.

WILLIAMS: Thank you. And so, I know you're saying earlier that you felt the whole transitioning, especially with all this change could have been planned better. You were a part of the smaller committee. Correct. This is. And so, do you mind, just speaking a little bit more about that? I know you're saying that you were abroad initially, when the first committee was formed.

TURNER: No, when the Redding report came out.

WILLIAMS: When the Redding report was formed. The Smoyer report was a follow-up of the Redding report. Do you mind just discussing that?

TURNER: Well, okay, what the committee did was real interesting because there was also a Minority Report. I just remember, you know, having these conversations and here you are a student. You're on a trustee committee with all these trustees. For me, I remember, trying to find my voice knowing that I was going to be graduating soon and trying to balance respecting these alums,

yet making sure that they dealt with the issue at hand. This was formed because of the Redding report. However, there was an earlier report in 1968 called the McClaine report. That report first talked about the number of black students at Dartmouth, how to increase the number of black students. I do remember, we went back. We looked at the McClaine report. The way this was framed was to not be in response to the Redding report because I think maybe that would give the Redding report credibility. As I look on it today, that might have been why it was framed differently. But it was framed to be a follow-up to the 1968 McClaine report. what we ended up doing, which was frustrating to me, and I do remember this, as I go through, and I've read through the report. I remember some of these feelings coming up, what we did was we went through, we looked at what McClaine had suggested as recommendations in terms of recruitment, retention of black students and we responded to those recommendations like where we were. The Redding report, they really didn't address the issues that were raised. And I remembered that for me was a real source of frustration because the reason why the Smoyer committee was even convened, was because of, in terms of the timing, it was because of the Redding Report.

WILLIAMS: . Interesting. How many other students were on the committee, the Smoyer Committee?

TURNER: I think there were three others. They have us listed, maybe at the end. I think I remember seeing three other students. I'm trying to see quickly if I can find the list of who is on there. Yeah. Maybe they were at the beginning. Anyway, someplace in this report, they have us listed. Here it is, it is in the beginning. The dean of Tucker Foundation. That's what that was in the Collis building. I think that's what it is now. Collis, on the corner there. So Dean Traynham, he was one of the members, Michael Carter is a student, Melanie Fisher, William Hutchinson, and me so yeah. So it was. 4 students.

WILLIAMS: Yeah because now they moved the Tucker Foundation, they kind of changed it to the Tucker Center and they moved it behind the Masses [dorm clusters on campus, Massachusetts hall].

TURNER: Oh okay Mass hall.

WILLIAMS: Yeah they've moved it behind there. And yeah it's a little white building across from FOCO [Class of '53 Commons, a dining hall on campus].

TURNER: Okay, because it used to be on the corner there.

WILLIAMS: Interesting.

TURNER: Yeah. I can't remember if the externship or internship that I had that semester that I spent in Boston. I believe I was a Tucker fellow. I think that I was called Tucker fellow. I was working for a nonprofit and it did advocacy for children, I believe. I happened to be in Boston at the time when they were going through busing. And so Louise Day Hicks, who was a very famous leader of the Boston Anti-busing movement. She always wore a hat. They were constantly having rallies on their green area, which I forget what the green is called, in the middle of Boston, but remember that the building of the nonprofit was around the perimeter. Something He's of that, that, that green and they had rallies all the time. I also remember people telling me, don't fall asleep on the train because I was living in Cambridge. I had to take the train to Cambridge from Boston. I remember people telling me don't fall asleep on the train, you'll end up in South Boston, and you'll never be seen or heard from again. So, go from Dartmouth at the time and then you're in Boston, it was a hard time. It was a hard time to be a black person than to be a black woman.

WILLIAMS: Do you feel as though these experiences of you getting that externship being a Tucker fellow and working at that internship where you advocate for children, in addition to having to do with racism and sexism, do you think that kind of pushed you more and more towards advocacy in journalism?

TURNER: Absolutely, when we look at our past experiences we don't know what's really going to resonate with us as we're going through those experiences. But then when you can, I've got fifty years to look back on this and clearly my experiences at Dartmouth have informed everything else that I've done on some level. It has even informed the way I deal with my students, I didn't feel that I had real authentic relationships with some of my professors and I didn't feel all that comfortable with them. So my approach to teaching and interacting with my students is probably on many levels, very different from my experience at Dartmouth. I kind of learn what not to do. I recognized it's a different time. It's a different generation. I think your generation is a little more demanding in terms of relationships that you expect to have with us and I think we accepted the arm's length relationship with our professors.

One thing that has always resonated with me at Temple [University] is the first time that I went to a graduation and having students come up to me, wanting me to meet their relatives, their parents, their friends and hugging me. I could not imagine hugging, other than the professor whose name I can't remember at the Rockefeller Center and maybe his last name

was Rockefeller, I can't think really of maybe more than a couple of people who I would have had that relationship with that I would have wanted my parents to meet them.

WILLIAMS: I think Dartmouth has kind of learned from that because now they're pushing for us to start to, to create relationships, with our professors. I know now they have the opportunity where you can take your professor out for lunch and Dartmouth will pay for that. I'm guilty of that. Me and one of my close friends, we try to do that if we have a class together. I'm definitely one of those students that are constantly sending an email like hi, I'm Aleemah, I'll be in your class. It's so interesting to hear how not having those types of relationships kind of changed you or pushed you to become this person that wants to make sure your students feel comfortable to go after these relationships with you. Yes, sorry,

TURNER: 've taken three groups of students to South Africa [from Temple University]. It's International reporting program that we have. I have students who when I first started teaching, there's a student she ended up going to Harvard Law and she invited me to her graduation. I went up to Harvard for that. When she got married, she invited me to the wedding. We're still in touch. She worked at the White House, working with Vice President Biden at the time and so I was able to do a tour of the West Wing with her.

WILLIAMS: Wow.

TURNER: I mean it was fantastic and actually Eileen has two sons and I invited Eileen and her son's to go with us. One of her son's ended up working on the hill.

WILLIAMS: Wow.

TURNER: Which I always say I'd like to think that that experience he had in high school, put the plan into motion so that he would pursue this. But yeah, I have had wonderful students over the years with whom I still am in touch. And that's very important to me. But I would like to think that Dartmouth is different. Now, I would hope.

WILLIAMS: I know, especially after fifty years.

TURNER: Absolutely.

WILLIAMS: So next, I just want to quickly transition to your current career. I know that, you know, in 1979, you graduated from law school at Northwestern University Pritzker [in Chicago Illinois]. Then you

ended up going to Columbia University to Graduate School of Journalism, in 1984.

TURNER: Finally did the journalism thing, right? [Laughs]

WILLIAMS: Yeah, what prompted that decision?

TURNER: I didn't find the law as satisfying as I thought I might, I'm glad I went through the experience, but I always had in the back of my mind journalism and then living in Chicago. I worked on Harold Washington [former mayor of Chicago, 1983-1987] –on one of his committees. I think it had something to do with energy. And helped write a policy paper. It was real neat to go back to the library in Chicago and actually find the position paper that I helped write. I enjoyed writing and when I worked for the American Bar Association, I was able to do some writing, some articles, that kind of thing. But then when Harold Washington ran for mayor, I remember watching the news coverage and tears came to the eyes of someone who was on team Jane Byrne. I think she was in favor of, you know, one of the people who ran against him. I thought to myself, I can't do any worse. You know, you really should not let your biases come out in your reporting. Since I enjoyed writing, I was kind of at odds with my supervisor and I said, you know, this isn't time for change which is why when I talk to parents today with their students who come in with an idea of what they want to do in college, I tell them I've changed careers many times and I think you follow your passion. At age eighteen I don't think you should be expected to know what you want to do at age forty-five, right?

I always believed that you should feel empowered to go where you think you need to go because I believe we all have our purpose in life and sometimes it takes a little longer to find what that purpose is. For me it was always in the back of my mind about journalism and I originally wanted to do sports journalism but there were no role models. Then I got caught up in news. I liked sports, I liked news and so I just bit the bullet and said, this is the time. I had been in Chicago for eight years. I kind of missed the east coast and so I actually applied to Northwestern that ends in Northwestern. I think at the time they weren't offering me any money, go into to Colombia and got a free full ride to Columbia. So I just felt that this was showing me that I'm on the right path and so I ended up going to Columbia, lived in New York, lived in the International House [at Columbia University], loved it. But also, in the back of my mind, I wanted to get into broadcasting because I had an internship at Newsweek. And I thought about seeing if I could work at Newsweek, which one of my classmates, we were both doing the internship that summer. She stayed at Newsweek and then I got into radio with

the intention really wanting to do TV. But my first opportunity came in radio, and I had done radio back at WDC.

I knew I liked radio but I hadn't thought about it as a career. I just loved it and ended up working for a black company, Inner Urban radio. And was able to make some contributions especially when I was in Cincinnati because I was in Cincinnati, working for Inner Urban, made some contributions because my general manager challenged me to eventually do a two-hour live radio show and I love live radio.

WILLIAMS: Wow.

TURNER: To be able to make that contribution to the Cincinnati black community was just real important to me and I ended up getting that job from someone from Temple, Jim Hutchinson who was class of I think '68 who was part owner of the radio station. My Dartmouth connection helped get me the job or got me the job, I should say.

WILLIAMS: Do you mind spelling? I'm Jim Hutchinson's last name. Please.

TURNER: H-U-T-C-H-I-N-S-O-N.

WILLIAMS: Okay, thank you so much. Wow. That's a really interesting career path. Especially being challenged to be on air for two hours.

TURNER: I loved it, you know, like the Sunday show. Yeah. It was great. It was great. It was Straight Talk. It was called Straight Talk—the name of my show.

WILLIAMS: Oh, and I just want to put on the record for reference. So here

TURNER: WIZF was the station.

WILLIAMS: So Harold Washington was elected mayor of Chicago 1983 and 1987. Then 1984 is when you went to Columbia

TURNER: Columbia.

WILLIAMS: Then you graduate in 1985. That's really interesting. I know your undergraduate experience is different from your graduate school experience but could you possibly try to compare the two? Being at Dartmouth versus being at Columbia?

TURNER: The fact that I had worked, I think it gave me a different attitude towards studies. I was very focused and you didn't have the same kind of pressures that you do in undergrad in terms of the

need to fit in. [Laughs] Since I had worked and I had an apartment, I had lived in a couple of apartments, I had to pay bills. I was an adult going back to grad school. So it was different. I really had a purpose. Not that I didn't have a purpose at undergrad, but, you know, you're still exploring, you're still kind of open to things. Going to the Columbia program obviously, I had a focus. I knew I wanted to do journalism.

WILLIAMS: While you were at Northwestern, you were a little younger and you had less like experience.

TURNER: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Less job experience. How do you feel like your experience at Northwestern, your experience at Columbia, how did that differ? I know you were saying that you were an adult and you haven't had these experiences.

TURNER: The same thing because I went straight from undergrad to law school. I probably should have taken a break because since kindergarten, I've been going to school. [Laughs] I probably did need a break. I had like I said more focused more direction. I was doing what I wanted to do by making that change going into journalism. The fact that I worked as a journalist and now I've been teaching at Temple in journalism for 30 years, I think that speaks to the fact that I made the right decision in terms of making the change and going to Columbia. That kind of jump-starting that part of my career—you can't teach for 30 years without loving it. I was named The Great Teacher [an award bestowed upon selected professors at Temple University] and to me that was the pinnacle in terms of the accolades because I really appreciated that.

WILLIAMS: Congratulations. That's amazing. And so you started working at Temple University in 1992. Correct.

TURNER: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And then over the years you've had multiple different honors and positions.

TURNER: And reinvented myself because we didn't have— we now have the sport certificate and as soon as I heard that they were planning to do something in the sports area, I jumped in and I said, absolutely. I was one of the first people to offer a course online in 1997 my Race and Racism in the news class. I've been offering it since 1997, so you can imagine how technology has changed. Obviously I have changed the class with the technology but I've been teaching it since '97.

WILLIAMS: During your sabbatical you wrote, you worked on a project that had something to do with journalism and racism. Do you mind elaborating more? Sorry, I can't find the exact name right now.

TURNER: I think it was about the Race class. Race and racism in the news, which started off being a course that specifically looked at race and with time it deals with intersection of gender and class as it applies to race. I teach it anonymously, which is a different way. The students don't know one another in the class, they are identified as race one through twenty. They don't know the gender or race or ethnicity of the other students in the class, only I do. I teach it that way to force them to have conversations where they're not making assumptions about who's reading it. Because I mean, if you're talking to another black person, or you're talking to another Muslim, you have certain common experiences. If you don't know anything about the person you're talking to then it forces you to express and give context to maybe your point of view that you wouldn't if you think you're talking to some alike person. The students really are forced to come to terms with why they think about things a certain way. Because we don't often take a step back and think about, "oh, why do we see the world this way?" Unless you have to explain to someone, it's almost like going to a therapist. You have to explain things to the therapist, but it's kind of like I hadn't thought about it that way before, but it's kind of like that.

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TURNER: I'm facebook friends, with someone who took the class twenty years ago, a white male student, and he's now teaching in public school. He talks about some of the things that he remembers from the class that has helped him in dealing with these students of color who are in his class.

WILLIAMS: Do you think that the course being anonymously also allowed them to embrace their views which they might not publicly display due to their own identity? For instance, there was this study that most black Americans are actually conservative, above fifty, but yet a majority of black Americans registered as democrats for multiple reasons. Sorry, what I'm trying to say is do you feel like they [the students] were able to embrace and discuss their views because they didn't feel as though their race, name, wouldn't be associated with their own viewpoints?

TURNER: Of course, some students say it's freeing to be able to. Once they kind of get used to it because, you know, it's hard at first because we pigeonhole people, right? There are students who push back and I do push back because they do have to write reflection papers. I have had some students who talked about

the colored people and I have had to explain to them it is people of color and the history of calling people of color “colored people.” I mean, the students have been absolutely honest with me to the point that sometimes I'm like, oh my gosh, they're really saying that. Sometimes I have to take a step back, I exhale and I might leave it for a day or so, so I can come back and try to figure out how to respond, because I want to be respectful of the fact that they are sharing this with me.

WILLIAMS: Thank you. I have one more question.

TURNER: I want to get a copy. I want you to send me the link to that article about the conservative fifty-plus people because I really want to read that.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I will do that. My last question is— I just wanted to ask you to speak more about the connection between journalism and advocacy.

TURNER: What I try to do because as a journalist, you shouldn't be advocating unless you are actually working for a publication or or an outlet that has a point of view. We talked about objectivity. Objectivity really doesn't exist because we all come to our view of the world through our experiences. So when talking about advocacy, what I try to do is teach my students a level of awareness of their biases that I think helps them be better journalists because we don't often take time to understand our biases, admit to our biases, and figure out “okay, I don't I feel uncomfortable around transgendered people.” “How do I tell the story and be respectful of this story?” Know first that you feel uncomfortable, right? In all of my classes, I tried to get the students a more heightened awareness of their biases and then give them permission and encourage them to talk to those people because we're not experts on everything and it's okay to ask for help and it's and it's okay to feel what you're feeling but acknowledge that you're feeling that.

I mentioned the transgender issue because we just finished in the sports class a module on transgendered— there was a transgender editor to the student. I could see on the faces of some of them, they might have felt a little uncomfortable and so I brought it to them. I said, “you know, certainly people of my generation a lot of them feel uncomfortable with unisex bathrooms” you know and “it's okay” but you need to have that recognition. I think that there are ways of advocating. It depends on who the experts are that you have in your, in whatever it is, you're writing about. I mean, their editorial decisions that though someone might not admit to the fact that they're advocating a point of view. Yes, it happens because of the people who you end up quoting in an article or you put in a broadcast piece.

Traditional journalism would say we should not be advocating, but it happens. If you really want to use your journalism for advocacy, go to a place where you can do that/ Does that answer your question?

WILLIAMS:

Yes, thank you so much. And thank you so much for taking time to just discuss, you know, your experience and just reflect on everything you've experienced. We really appreciate it. With that, I'm going to stop the recording. Okay? Let's see.