

Wanda E. Powell '73.
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Black Lives
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Transcribed by Kambrian Winston '26

WINSTON: Hello. My name is Kambrian Winston. I am at French Hall on Dartmouth College's campus in Hanover New Hampshire and I am doing a TheirStory interview with Miss Wanda Powell — Miss Wanda Johnson Powell who is in Agawam, Massachusetts. Today is October 25th, 2022, and this is an interview for the Dartmouth Black Lives Oral History Project. Hello Mrs. Powell, thank you so much for joining me today. First, I'd like to learn a little bit about your childhood. Can you please state when and where you were born

POWELL: When you say when you want the year as well?

WINSTON: Yes ma'am, if you wouldn't mind.

POWELL: On April 7th, 1951 in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

WINSTON: Can you tell me the names of your parents please?

POWELL: Yes, my father's name was William C. Johnson senior, my mother Lola Rogers Johnson.

WINSTON: What was it like growing up in Chattanooga?

POWELL: Actually, I had a wonderful childhood. I often say that when my father got married, he failed to move out of the house with his parents. So I grew up with his parents, my grandparents and my mother and father. There were seven of us. I was the third of seven children, and we were by no means [pause] I mean we weren't, I never thought of us as being poor, but we certainly were not wealthy. My father for a long time was self-employed. My mother was a homemaker so she never worked outside the home, she raised the seven of us and so being self-employed like a carpenter, plumber, handyman, type thing. Money wasn't flowing in but we just never went without. We always had food, we always had clothing. Whenever there was a big event at school, we always got something new. We were probably poor but we never knew it. And all of my siblings, we all went to college. Four of us graduated, two were probably one semester short of graduating, and the third one, maybe a year or two. I mean, the third of the three that didn't

graduate. So we got good educations. And at some point, my father became a custodian. I remember that, but we, it was just fun.

The neighborhood I lived in, there were seven in our household. There were five in the next-door neighbor, one across the street, so we always had friends and just a lot of fun. School was [pause], I loved school. That was not a problem. I had great teachers and a good school system and so that worked out well.

WINSTON: Can you list the names of your siblings please in order?

POWELL: Unfortunately, most of them have passed but there are [pause]. My oldest sister was Billie, B-I-L-L-I-E. Billie Regina Johnson. My second sister was Barbara Dean Johnson, then it was me. And then I had a brother, William C. Johnson Junior. Then there were twins, Christine and Kristen Ada, and then my baby brother was Nelson.

WINSTON: Thank you very much. And you mentioned your education, and I was wondering what was that like, growing up in Chattanooga, educational-wise? What were your courses like, and your school life?

POWELL: Well, first of all, in the South, it was still at that time very segregated. So all of the schools that I attended up until the twelfth grade were not predominantly Black, they were all Black. And we had excellent teachers. I can't think of any issues that I recall with any teachers, and it wasn't until my senior year that the school system was trying to integrate, and they did that by bringing in four white teachers. So, for the most part, my whole secondary and education was [pause], it was all Black schools. High school [pause], high school became a merger of two junior high schools. Back in the day, Junior High was considered sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. No, I'm sorry, seventh, eighth, and ninth grade. And then, in the tenth grade, two rival schools joined together to become the high school that I went to. And we meld together very well. It started off a little rough but then, everybody became good friends. We had a wonderful basketball team. Football was fun. We had great, just sports in general and we had a wonderful band. And, as I said, the classes were great.

The one downside that I remember about the school, the one very bad thing: there was a shooting in our school and, you don't think about that happening back in the day. But as I understood it, it was a result of an issue that came up over the weekend. The Temptations had come to Chattanooga and they had hired some

young men, as I understand it, to help them bring in all of their equipment, and there was some kind of disagreement that occurred there. And then the next day, unfortunately, this student brought a, [pause] brought a gun to school and he did shoot and kill one of our classmates. So that was, that was extremely terrifying, but after getting past that — and that was my senior year and the young man unfortunately, that passed away, was a friend of mine. So I do think about that from time to time.

WINSTON: I'm very sorry to hear that. Yes, gun violence is a very terrible problem that needs to be dealt with. Yes ma'am. And so you mentioned desegregation, and I was wondering, because growing up in the Civil Rights Movement, I think I often times ask my grandparents about this all the time. What was that like? And I believe there was a couple of sit-ins in Chattanooga in the 1960s as well. I'm not sure if you remember them.

POWELL: No, I was not part of that, and I don't recall those issues specifically in Chattanooga. I do know, just from history, there had been, at least in the fifties but [pause], I was not involved in any. Certainly, race was always something we were aware of. It's almost like knowing your place. I remember going to a state fair. And it wasn't Chattanooga, they had the signs up for the restrooms, colored or the water fountains for color. And again, that was just a way of life, it wasn't like you thought, oh my gosh, this is terrible. You just thought, this is the way it was.

WINSTON: And you said, you genuinely or generally enjoyed growing up in Chattanooga?

POWELL: I did. It was a great experience. I probably wouldn't change it for anything, as I think about it again. Good people, my family, we attended church, had good experiences at church. Good experiences at school, wonderful neighborhood. Everybody knew everybody. Everybody looked out for everybody. It was just like a family.

WINSTON: And if I'm correct, I believe you started at Stephens College in the fall of 1969 and I was wondering what made you pick Stephens College.

POWELL: Well actually, I didn't pick it. How did that work now? My senior year, most of my brothers and sisters, well my sisters at the time, my two older sisters had gone to Tuskegee, at the time, it was Tuskegee Institute. It's now Tuskegee University, but they have gone there, and I thought, well, that's where I'll go. But during my

senior year, one of my teachers was involved with a program called Upward Bound, and apparently Upward Bound was a program to try to get minority students in predominantly white schools. And so, she asked my parents if they would be interested in me participating. And they said, sure, and three of us were selected. And when we were selected, they just told us what school we were going to. They didn't give us an option. So after the whole process where we went through the applications, our interests, and all those kinds of things, the teacher came back and said my friend, Adrian, and I are going to Stephen's College. And my other friend Wanda was going to Reed's College in Oregon. And I had no idea where Stephens College was. I'd never even heard of it. So of course I had to start doing the research. I said, okay, well, I'll go. It was a free ride. They were paying for everything, and I had never been on a plane. I had never really stayed out overnight anywhere before leaving for Stephen's College. But once I made the decision, yep, I'll do it, that's where I went.

WINSTON: That was a lot of firsts.

POWELL: Oh yeah, Adrian and I, that morning, we landed in, I think it was in St. Louis [MO], and someone picked us up from the airport and drove us to Columbia [MO], and at the time, because it was so late in the decision making for us to get there, there were no dorms available. So we were both placed in homes of professors and we were both across town. So that was really, really, really strange. But the family I was with was really nice, and so we were only there for about a month before a dorm room became available. So my friend Adrian and I roomed together so I knew her, and it worked out really well.

WINSTON: Would you say you were comforted by having her there? Maybe it was a little less daunting.

POWELL: Yeah, I would say that but again, the family, they were just so nice that it didn't take long before I felt comfortable. And Stephens College for years had been, prior to our getting there, had been a finishing school for wealthy white women. It was an all-girl school when Adrian and I went, it was still an all-girl school, but it had become a four-year college. So and again, it was predominantly white. The memory is leaving a lot. I bet there was no more than ten of us on campus. And Black women, when I say us, but because of that, we formed a pretty tight bond. We all knew each other and, we didn't take classes together or that kind of thing but we had a good relationship. And even though Adrian and I roomed together, we were in a suite with [pause], with two other young

ladies. One was from Texas and I don't even remember where the other one was from but they were wonderful. So we got along very well.

WINSTON: How was your education at Stephens College? And were you an English major there as well?

POWELL: Yeah. No, actually, I went there with the intent of going into journalism. And I again had great teachers, as I recall, a good experience. I ended up being the editor of the Stephens, I think it was called the *Stephen Sonia*, their yearbook, my second year there and it was good.

Adrian and I both had what we called work. We were on work-study, and again because of Stephens' history, having been a finishing school, I do recall, we were waitresses, and what that meant was for lunchtime, and for breakfast, and for dinner, we would have to don these waitress outfits, and we would serve the other students. So, our schedule was set up so that we would have time before lunch, breakfast, and dinner to get to the lunch, I mean the hall where they were serving lunch. People come in, they'd have to stand at the foot of the, before you could come in the door, there was a certain time you could come in, we were assigned to tables. And as people came, we would show them to their table, and then they would place their order, because they could order whatever they wanted to drink, we'd go in the kitchen, we'd come back out. I'd learned to do that whole tray thing really well. You'd come back with sixteen drinks on a tray and then serve them, and then by then, they'd picked out what they wanted to eat. You go and get that. So we did that for at least our freshman year. I don't recall doing it my second year. But that was a hard job. It was a lot of fun. We just made it fun, so I didn't regret it and I did need the money. So it worked out well.

But classes were good. I don't recall anything specific, but I do remember thinking I did enjoy my experience there. There was one professor though, he was sort of boring. I remember falling asleep quite often in his class. It was a large class, so he probably noticed but it was hard to stay awake.

WINSTON: How did you hear about Dartmouth?

POWELL: Again in Chattanooga, one of my neighbors had a son who was a Dean at Dartmouth, and the summer, maybe it was when I came home for Christmas my sophomore year, he and I were talking and he was telling me that Dartmouth had a program with the Seven

Sisters schools up in the Northeast. It was an exchange program and they would bring them on campus for a year. And he wanted to know if I might be interested, and I said sure, why not? And so he got me the information and I applied and even though Stephens was not part of the normal schools that they normally recruited from, they looked over my information and said, yep, if I wanted to come, I could. So, the plan was for me to go for my junior year, and to return back to Stephens for my senior year. So when I was made the offer to come, I accepted it. I thought it would be good on my resumé and it would be good experience. And again, being at an all-girls school and then going to an all-male school, I thought, yeah, that could be quite a dichotomy, so I said let's try it.

WINSTON: And what was your initial reaction to Dartmouth, to Hanover, going from Chattanooga to Columbia to small Hanover in the middle of the woods?

POWELL: Yeah well, I actually liked it. I liked the, I don't want to say this seclusion, but it was such a beautiful campus. And like just for Stephens College, I never went to visit before I attended at Dartmouth. I didn't visit before I attended, I just showed up and here I am. And I remember thinking what a beautiful campus it was. Much, much larger than Stephens. But that was my first reaction, just a beautiful campus. And I don't recall too much more as far as those early days. But after being on campus, getting settled in the dorm and I think my junior year I did have a roommate. And she was from, Bobby was from New York, upper state New York. And again, we got along very well. So, I can't think of anything else about those early days at Dartmouth except remembering how beautiful and big the campus was, but I didn't feel overwhelmed. It wasn't like, oh my God, what is this? It was just a big, beautiful campus.

WINSTON: And I know you said you were interested in the program and that you thought it'd be interesting going from an all-women institution to an all-male institution, but were you scared or were you excited to encounter that dynamic or just, face that adjustment?

POWELL: Probably more nervous than anything else. One of the things, again, I've always sort of taken this approach, and even when I left Dartmouth and went to the University of North Carolina, wherever I am, I'm going to make the best of it. And so, I wasn't so much scared. I wanted to do well. I was nervous whether or not my prior education between high school and Stephens College would allow me to be competitive or at least not fail at Dartmouth, but I wasn't

really worried about it. I felt whatever came at me, I could probably figure it out.

WINSTON: And how did your education prepare you for Dartmouth? Or did you find it lacking in some sorting? Were you struggling a bit or were you okay?

POWELL: Hmm. I'm going to say I was okay. Now, if I could go back 50 years and the memory was a lot better, maybe there were times that I didn't feel that way, but as I sit here and think back, I really can't think of any time that I thought the classes were too hard. I remember pulling a lot of all-nighters, because maybe I didn't read as much as I should have read, and it was time for either a paper or test or something. But I don't recall feeling like, oh my gosh, I wish I had had more of this or more of that. I don't remember that.

WINSTON: And your junior year, so you were in the exchange program, and while you were on campus then, they announced that they had been working for about three years to move the college to become a co-educational institution. And I believe they announced it at a Princeton football game. Something like that. I'll have to check, but they announced that your junior year in the exchange program. So how were you feeling since you were there for an exchange program, and you were expecting to go back home, but then you realized you could continue your education here and then you decided to do so?

POWELL: I don't recall how it was announced. I don't recall how I was selected. I don't remember if we had to apply. I just remember getting a letter saying that I had been accepted to matriculate at Dartmouth. Graduate, I'm sorry, graduate. And I don't think I remember being torn by it. I had become so acclimated at Dartmouth my junior year that it wasn't like I thought, oh my gracious, I am going to miss going back to Stephens. I think had I gone back, it would have been wonderful. But I had made a number of friends at Dartmouth. I had met a lot of the professors. I had gotten involved in a lot of activities, which I know you asked me that before and I had to go back and look at some things to remember them, but I did. If anything, I guess it would be excited that they offered me the opportunity to stay.

WINSTON: So, some people were not given the opportunity to stay from the exchange program?

POWELL: Right, if I remember correctly. Oh, I know everybody wasn't accepted. I remember a couple of my friends who were not

accepted but I don't know. I don't know how many women were on campus initially for my junior year. There were forty of us that were offered the opportunity to stay. I think it was a lot more women on campus and I think there was a lot more women on campus than the forty.

WINSTON: I believe your junior year, in the exchange program, there were about one hundred and fifty women.

POWELL: That probably sounds about right. And of those forty that stayed, I think there were seven Black women if I remember correctly. Seven or eight.

WINSTON: Wow, that is definitely something. So I know it was an all-male institution, so I guess I should probably ask about the men. From my research, I noticed a lot of women said that for the majority, a lot of the men were actually happy you were there. You were adding diversity to the campus and they wanted women there rather than having to go out and go to Boston, or go somewhere else to engage in dating and activities with women. But there were a small amount of men, students who did not want y'all there and who voiced that very loudly and made it very difficult for you to integrate into the system. And I was wondering, what was your experience like with that?

POWELL: I did not run into any of that. All the men that I took classes with or met in whatever setting we met were very, very supportive, very pleasant. I don't recall getting any feedback.

WINSTON: That's wonderful. Do you remember any — like not involving you from the time or did you just happen to graciously miss that entire thing?

POWELL: You're saying do I remember not being...

WINSTON: Like it happening to other women while you were there.

POWELL: No, no, I can't. I don't remember anybody telling me that they ran into that situation. Now again, I'm not going to say they didn't. I just don't remember anybody sharing that with me or my having that experience.

WINSTON: And as you mentioned, there were only a handful of Black women on the campus at the time, and you said there are probably about seven of y'all, and I think I saw that somewhere too, and I was

wondering, were y'all close? Were y'all friends? And how was that situation?

POWELL: Oh yeah. We were very close. I don't, again, I'm so sorry I keep having to say I don't remember.

WINSTON: Oh no, you're fine.

POWELL: I don't remember where everybody lived. We were all in dorms, and we all had our individual dorm rooms so, we were not all in the same dorm but we got together a lot. I have photos of us, just hanging out in somebody's room. Going out to the Afro-American. What's it called? The Afro-American Society, whatever that building was. I don't know, maybe that's what it was called then. I don't know, but we never called it that and we did a lot of things together. I'm trying to recall, like when they have the ice sculptures or the bonfire or we just went together. It wasn't always the same group but we were at some point all of us would socialize together.

WINSTON: And I guess that leads me to my next question. What was life like at Dartmouth for you outside of just you being there as a young woman in this small town in the middle of New England. How was it?

POWELL: It was great. It was fine. It was comfortable. Very rare did any of the people that I hung with, very rare that we go away on the weekends, maybe once or twice. But for the most part, we were on campus during the weekend now. Which year was this?

My junior year, I participated in a study abroad program. So the spring of '72 [1972], I was in France. Which was an amazing experience again, another first for me. I'd never been to Europe. So, I did tried to take advantage of some of the opportunities that Dartmouth offered and so, socially, it was fine. I can't think of anything that I would say was negative.

WINSTON: Yeah. Can you expand more on your time in France? That's wonderful. Were you there with a certain department?

POWELL: Yeah so, I went with, oh boy, his last name was Rassias, Professor Rassias [John Rassias]. What a wonderful person. I decided to take French. I don't know if we were required to or not, take a foreign language, but I took beginning French. So this particular class was to go to France and we would all live with individual families to try to pick up the language. And every day we would come to school and it would just be the Dartmouth students and our professor to learn

the language. So, I was the only female, as I recall, and when we first went over, there were about six or seven of us together and we went a little bit early so we could do a little traveling.

And then we left. And then eventually we ended up in Bourges, France, where we had our classes. I lived with a wonderful family. It was a little boy, I don't know, maybe he was two, we probably communicated better than anybody because he couldn't understand me and I couldn't understand him, but they did have a daughter that was maybe a teenager. Fifteen, sixteen, and she was learning English. So in a real pinch, she would help me communicate. The parents didn't speak any English. So I was forced to try to speak as much French as I could, and I lived probably, I'm very bad with miles, but I had to get a used moped, I think it was called, to ride into class every day. And so, again, really, really good experiences.

And we had a spring break and on spring break, several of us went to Spain and then we went to Morocco. Yeah. And the culture experiences that, you know, I was able to have in those places is just amazing. It was just an excellent experience. And again, Professor Rassias was just, he was very animated and, he encouraged us to do more things and to try to learn more. So, it was a good experience and then I lost every piece of French I learned when I came back.

WINSTON: How long were you there for?

POWELL: I think it was three months. Let me think, it was a spring semester. Maybe it wasn't that long but it seems like it. I'm trying to think. I was going to say, maybe two months, I don't know.

WINSTON: But spring semester?

POWELL: Yeah, whatever, however long that was.

WINSTON: Okay. Wow. That's amazing. And you talked about Professor Rassias and I guess I was wondering about your other professors on campus. What was your relationship like with them? Or what did you think of them? And coming to the campus from this exchange program, deciding to stay. How were your teachers?

POWELL: For the most part, again, they were all very good. I cannot think of the names of the others but there was one particular one, he was an English professor, and he was very, very tough. But I really liked him. I liked them up until, this is terrible to say, I think I would have

graduated with honors had I gotten an A- out of his class but I got a B+ and I couldn't get him to change it. I really thought I deserved higher but anyway, as I think back over my professors, I thought they were good. They were well-prepared. They were, the ones that I can remember, they were very encouraging and there was a level of expectation. So, you know that you had to do the work, it wasn't like you can just slide by, and it was tough sometimes, like I said, I remember several all-nighters, but I think it was well worth it and I can't think of any professor that I didn't care for. I don't recall having any female professors, now that I think about it, I think they were all male professors that I had. Now, maybe I did, but if I had my class schedule and I went back and looked, I would say oh yeah, but I can't remember any.

WINSTON: And your major was English. So, how was that?

POWELL: I took English because they didn't offer journalism and I thought, okay, what's the next best thing? And then I rationalized that if I took English, you have to know how to read, you have to know how to write, you have to know how to communicate no matter what field you go into. So I'll go with English, and you know English, that were classes on Shakespeare, there were classes on, I took some biblical classes. There were just an array of different types, different literary classes and because it was English, it did require a lot of reading and I think that's how I got behind.

But I'm glad I took it. It worked out well for me. Ideally, I would have loved to have stayed with journalism but they didn't offer it. But I did join the newspaper staff. I was a reporter and a photographer. I had taken a photography class at Stephens. And so, when I came, I had my little camera and I did, you had asked me before about some of my extracurricular activities and I had forgotten. But so, I was able to participate from the journalistic side with the newspaper, but the English classes were, they were English classes.

WINSTON: Were there any that stood out to you though? While in your two years of taking English classes. Oh, and I guess I was wondering like when you got here, obviously since you've spent two years at another college, some of your credits had to transfer over, so, there were certain classes that you took here and I was wondering like the makeup of that, like were they majority English classes or distributive that you hadn't taken yet or? If you remember.

POWELL: That's an excellent question. Yeah, I'm trying to think. I did have to take quite a few English classes to make that my major. Maybe a few from Stephens transferred over but I don't recall how many, but

I do remember I did have to take quite a few English classes. And as far as your question about did any stand out, I just remember this one Shakespeare class that I loved, I loved and hated it [laughter]. I've never been a Shakespeare fan, but the instructor was really, really good and finally, I understood it and I loved reading it but beyond that I can't think of any other specific classes that I took that I can mention right now.

WINSTON: And you mentioned your extracurriculars. You were a writer and the photographer for the *Dartmouth*, the newspaper. What was that like?

POWELL: You know, honestly, I don't remember any stories I wrote. I just remember going around campus with my little camera and snapping pictures of, whether they ever used them or not, I couldn't tell you. But getting pictures of people doing things, like at the Bonfire or just sitting on the Green reading. I don't remember any particular assignments that I was given and maybe, maybe I did have some, I just don't recall them. But I do remember the photography part. I was also a reporter so I must have done some story somewhere. Just can't remember what it was [laughter].

WINSTON: I'll gladly go back and find them, and I'll send them to you, if you'd like. And what about other extracurricular activities that you engaged in while on campus?

POWELL: I was in, what did they call it? They called it inter dorm council rep or something like that, and that was like, you're in the dorm for freshmen coming in. You would try to help them and, you know, be supportive of that. Inter dorm council, I think it was called. Then there was something called, I actually was a co-chair of the community council and I was a member of the Afro-American Society.

I mentioned to you before, in April of my senior year, we put on a weekend called, and I don't know what Y2BB means, but it was Y2BB: Beautiful Black Woman, Essence of Life and it was a three-day weekend where we brought in Black women, mostly, but one Black man. But we brought in Black women to speak on different things. Like, I think that first Thursday night, we had a dancer who did an interpretive dance of the Black woman from Africa, a dramatic dance from Africa to the present day and then that, that was a Friday. And then on Saturday, we had people from the Labor Department of Equal Employment Opportunity, and she was from D.C. as I recall. And then we had someone from Chicago,

speaking about — what did she talk about? Some kind of community something in Chicago.

Our main speaker was a professor at Rutgers, Toni Cade Bambara. She was an author of a new book called, *The Black Woman* [1970]. And so throughout the day, we had different workshops going on. We had this one Black male, I think his name was Higgins. He was a photographer and he did a workshop on the portrait of the Black woman [Chester Higgins]. And we also had his artwork displayed for probably two weeks prior to, and a week after the event. We had books by Black women displayed in a location. We also had artwork by two Black women displayed. So it was really a big weekend and it worked out to be, we had a panel of Black alumni in to do a career workshop for everybody. So it wasn't just for Black women. It was about Black women, so people could learn more, and I chaired that. And then, I also volunteered to be an usher at Hopkins for different concerts that came in. That was it.

WINSTON: That's wonderful. And you mentioned the Afro-American Society. We were actually flipping through some documents in Rauner [Special Collections Library] and it had you listed as an assistant for the communications committee for the executive board, I believe. So, I was wondering, what do you remember about the organization at the time, and your involvement, and maybe what y'all were doing? If you remember anything.

POWELL: Very little, I do. Unfortunately. I remember going into the building a lot and I remember at the time civil rights has always been an issue and discussions on that, but nothing so specific. Unfortunately, I'm drawing a complete blank, I didn't realize I was in that position. I'm sorry, I can't help you with that.

WINSTON: That's okay. From flipping through the records, I believe you were mostly focused on black recruitment and establishing a Black alumni network at that time. Just really bringing people back to the campus to enhance the Black presence and experience and just build up that community. So I guess students had someone to relate to, Black alumni had somewhere to come home to, and I thought that was really beautiful while I was researching that, and so I guess that led me to wonder, I guess, what was your Black experience at Dartmouth? What was that like?

POWELL: The Black community was very close, it was very close. Both the male and female, we just got along very well and were very supportive of each other. We had a lot of fun together. I remember, oh gosh card games in, we would play all hours of night. I

remember, once the power went off, and we were in the middle of a big whist game, and someone said, well, get some candles, we are not stopping and we continued. I remember the first year we were there, one of the other Black females and I realized that for Christmas, they never put a tree in, so we convinced one of the young men to go with us, out in the woods and we chopped down a tree. And they made so much fun of our little tree because it really did look so bad, but we decorated it. And I don't know if that was the first tree they had ever had, or just they hadn't had one in a year or so, but we tried to bring a little Christmas to the building. But as I remember, nobody wanted anyone to fail. So if you had any questions about anything, you could pretty much go to anybody. They would try to help you, give you the information you needed or the direction that they thought you should take. So, I would say the community of Black male and females, just the whole Black community at Dartmouth, very, very close.

WINSTON: And where did you live while you were on campus?

POWELL: My second year, is there a Brown Hall? I think it was in Brown. Now whether or not, it's now called Brown, I don't know. I'm confusing Stephens with Dartmouth. There's not an area of Dartmouth called the Choates is it?

WINSTON: There is. We have the Choates.

POWELL: Okay, I think my first year I was in the Choates but then Brown, wherever Brown is, I was there.

WINSTON: Okay, there actually might be a Brown Hall, I just, I don't know.

POWELL: Yeah, I don't know [laughter]. I could be making that up, but I really think that's where I lived.

WINSTON: And do you remember where you, the Black students, kind of hung out at that time?

POWELL: I think you called it the Shabazz Center.

WINSTON: The Shabazz Center?

POWELL: Yeah.

WINSTON: And that was around the time, it was like, I think it kind of became like the Afro-American Society's like house and they put the murals up of Malcolm X.

POWELL: Yeah, it was called the Afro, well, we just referred to it as the Afro-American — not house — Center? I can't remember exactly, but that's where everybody would be. I mean, you go through that a lot.

WINSTON: Okay. Today, it's the Living Learning Center for black students. So if they'd like to live somewhere on campus, just immersed in the black community, that's where it is.

POWELL: Oh wow. Okay. Yeah, I've only been back to campus probably twice since I graduated. Once, coming from Canada, and so we just stopped in. And then the second time, my nephew graduated from there, so I went to the graduation. Don't ask me what year, because I don't remember, but I would say maybe ten years ago.

WINSTON: Oh, you had a nephew that went to Dartmouth?

POWELL: I do.

WINSTON: Can you list his name, please?

POWELL: Kevin Johnson. I don't know Kevin's middle name, from New Jersey,

WINSTON: Okay. Oh, that's really cool. Did your experience there influence him?

POWELL: Maybe [laughter]. I don't want to say it did or didn't. Maybe. My daughter considered Dartmouth, but she wanted somewhere, she didn't want the seclusion of Dartmouth. She's more, she lives in Boston now, so she likes that kind of a big city and Dartmouth is not that.

WINSTON: And I guess I have one more question, about Dartmouth while you were there and then I'll probably move on to post-grad life. But while you were there, I know your junior year, there were only a handful of Black women and that kind of increased your senior year. Did you feel like y'all were so close, the black community, because of external pressure? Or did you not feel that while you were at Dartmouth?

POWELL: Well, actually, first of all, let me just correct something that you said. I think there were more black women on campus my junior year, because then my senior year, when they selected those of us to stay, there were only seven of us that graduated. And some of the

ones who had been there my junior year went back to their prospective colleges. That's my recollection of that. But your question of whether or not we felt external pressures to do what?

WINSTON: I mean, just being so isolated in the woods and there not being a, I don't want to say it, a big black community, but being at a predominantly white institution, did you just feel the need to come together more because of that?

POWELL: Yeah, I don't know if it was a need, if I felt a need. I just think it's almost like an automatic gravitation. I remember going to a, when I was at Stephens, I went to a conference in Milwaukee. And as I walked in the hotel, there were a couple of Black men there for the conference. And there were other people in the room, but immediately, you notice, you have that in common, and you sort of gravitate to, at least, say hello and start a conversation. So, I think at Dartmouth, similarly, it wasn't that because there was nobody else around or, because there was no big community of Black people, I think it was, it just felt natural. Maybe because I grew up in a Black neighborhood and then went to black schools, it didn't feel awkward at all. And because I went to Stephens, where they're mostly white, I didn't feel awkward at Dartmouth dealing with white people. It was just people. But as far as the women and the Black women, again, we just became friends and maybe it was because there was nobody else around but it just seemed a natural thing to do.

WINSTON: And to move on to your post-Dartmouth life. How was that? I know you went to grad school at UNC, right?

POWELL: Yeah. You know, the one thing about Dartmouth, when I went there, I had no thoughts about going on for a graduate degree, but the atmosphere at Dartmouth wasn't 'are you going to go get a degree?'—it was more 'where are you going to go get a degree?' And you sort of get caught up in that and you realize, yeah, well, I need to keep moving.

So, I apply to a number of schools, and the University of North Carolina was part of a consortium and I was accepted at UNC to get an MBA. And so, after graduating from Dartmouth, I went directly into UNC and, my educational experiences have all been very positive. If Dartmouth was big, UNC was humongous. It was just a huge campus. But again, I remember one of the first nights I was there, there was a meeting of the Black students. Actually, that's where I met my husband at the time. I mean he is now my husband. Just so we would all see those who were in the MBA

program and there are quite a few of us. So, after that, we, again, just stayed friends while I was on campus, but classes were and, maybe it's supposed to be this way, seemingly getting a little bit more difficult. The most difficult class I had was Accounting. And I don't think it was me. I think it was the professor. Oh my gosh. I had never drank coffee till I went to his class and I started drinking coffee. And I, to this day I drink it black, no sugar, no cream. It was for medicinal purposes only so I could stay awake. He was so boring. Oh, it was terrible. I ended up having to take a, he did offer some, what do you call those? Tutorial classes to help people who were failing because I just wasn't getting it and I did finally, eventually get it.

And actually, what I forgot to tell you is when I left Dartmouth as a stipulation to go to UNC, I had to take some kind of, they might have been, some kind of math class or accounting class or something. So I did go to the University of Tennessee for the summer to take whatever that requirement was. It was some kind of math class I needed. So, I went there and then I went to UNC. But the teachers were very good. Classes were tough, but good.

WINSTON: And you got your MBA in marketing, and that took three, four years if you remember?

POWELL: Actually, it was a two-year program, and it was, to the degree that you could specialize at the University of North Carolina, it would be Marketing with a minor in Human Resources, but it was more of a general degree. But you could take classes in specific areas, more classes in some areas than others. So to that degree, it would be considered marketing.

WINSTON: And I guess you started establishing your career shortly afterwards?

POWELL: Yep, as I said, I met the young man that would eventually become my husband, but he had gone, his original degree was from the University of North Carolina, his undergraduate degree. And then, he went to Cornell and he was working on a master's degree. So my first year there, he was still at Cornell. And then, after he got his Master's in Chemistry, he came to Carolina, so I was a year ahead of him, and I always tell people, I was a year ahead but he's older. Anyway, when I left the University of North Carolina, I took a job in Kansas City with Hallmark cards, and he was still at, he was finishing his second year at Carolina. When he finished Carolina, he came to Massachusetts, Springfield, Massachusetts, to work for Monsanto, and we continued to date. And then at some point, when

we decided to get married, I left Hallmark and moved to Massachusetts. And then what happened? We got married and moved to Massachusetts. And then several months later, I had the opportunity to go back to work for Hallmark in sales. And then, when they opened the Distribution Center, I went into human resources and I was there for probably about ten years or so before I moved into management.

WINSTON: Okay. And you mentioned your husband. Could you list his name, please?

POWELL: Yes, Steve, S-T-E-V-E. Last name, Powell. And we've been married forty-five years. We have two children. As I mentioned, our daughter's an attorney, she lives in Boston. Our son is in D.C. He works for the government and I could never remember where he works, but it's like, what is it like? He's going to kill me for this because I know it so well. But he does training for... it's almost like... anyway, he's in D.C.

WINSTON: Can you list your children's names please too?

POWELL: Sure. Kelli is spelled K-E-L-L-I, last name Powell. Ericc is spelled E-R -I-C-C Powell.

WINSTON: Thank you. And you said, you spent ten years with Hallmark there, before you moved into management. And I guess what was the progression of your career until retirement, if you don't mind sharing?

POWELL: When I left Carolina, I went into a program. I forgot what Hallmark called it, but it allowed me to go into sales for three months. It was one of these programs where you go into different areas to just learn the company. So they allowed me to stay in Chattanooga for about three months, and that's where my sales territory was. Well, you know what? I'm confusing this. This is when I first moved out to Kansas City and then after Kansas City, I left because I was in sales for three months and then I went into, what would they call it? Product management, I guess. Because I worked with gift wrap and stationary. And then I was assigned to a project myself, and I was basically with the stationary department. And after, it seems like I did have one other assignment. Well, I did go into customer services for a period of time. But then eventually, I ended up in gift wrap and stationary. And then I left there. When I quit to marry my husband, that's where I was, I was in product management. Married Steve, and then, six months later or so, I went back into sales. I got a call from the person who originally recruited me out of North

Carolina who said, if you'd like to go into sales, we need somebody out in the Massachusetts area, and I said if I can stay here, I'll do it. And so I was in sales for probably three years, something like that.

But I had mentioned to my manager, my sales manager, that this is just not what I want to do. I just wanted the experience. And as I think I've mentioned to you before, they had a distribution center in Connecticut but they were opening one across town, a larger one and they were trying to staff that. So they asked if I had any interest in that. I interviewed for an H.R. position, and I was hired, and I stayed in H.R., probably for about ten years. The first two or three years, I was doing the hiring and interviewing, and then I went into benefits and things like that. And then I had the opportunity to get into management. And initially it was called a Section Manager. I had maybe thirty people that reported to me and their position was to actually fill the orders and then I was promoted to Department Manager, first in shipping. So I was responsible for shipping all the stuff that we were shipping out of the distribution center. And then I was promoted to another department, another level of department manager, where I was responsible for all of the filling of the orders. So I would have maybe seven managers reporting to me, and each of those managers would have thirty or so people reporting to them. So when I retired, that was the position I held, and I retired after thirty-four years.

I really loved my job. I loved the people. Hallmark is a great company to work for, but at the time I retired, business wasn't as great as it probably could be. I think they were looking to downsize a little bit, and they were offering what's equivalent to a golden handshake and I thought yeah, it's time. So I took it, and I have no regrets about when I left. It worked out very well for me.

WINSTON: That's wonderful. Congratulations on a long and successful career. If you don't mind me asking, what was your husband's occupation?

POWELL: Okay, let me remember now. I'm going to say he was initially in marketing with Monsanto. At some point Monsanto became Solutia. He has a chemistry background, and he had an MBA. So he went into purchasing for a while, purchasing management. And I want to say, when he retired, and he retired probably three or four years before I did, he was in purchasing, purchase management.

WINSTON: And I have about two more questions for you, Mrs. Powell. Just going back to the early stages of your life, probably like the sixties, seventies, there was a lot going on at that time in the world, in general while you were, trying to form your life, trying to build

yourself. The Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Liberation Movement, there was Nixon, Watergate, the oil crisis, and I guess I was wondering how these national crises, national movements affected you during this time, and what influence they had on your life.

POWELL: I remember the Civil Rights Movement. We were very concerned. There were a group of us that sort of got involved in some of the Civil Rights issues when we were in Missouri. There were community meetings that would bring people together to talk about the issues and several of us would attend those meetings. I don't recall what actually came of them, but the idea was to get the community involved and understand what issues were to try to improve the community.

At Dartmouth, maybe again, because of the isolation except for reading the newspapers, I don't remember any kind of protest or activism going on there but I'm sure there was. I just don't recall. Certainly there was a lot of discussion about the issues of Watergate, and there were some nuclear concerns about some nuclear issues that were going on. And one of the things about Dartmouth, there was conversation. Whether it was in class or whether it was amongst students. Students and professors talking about those kinds of issues, but in terms of activism or doing something, I just don't remember any of that.

WINSTON: And I believe in our pre-interview conversation and throughout this interview you said you enjoyed your experience at Dartmouth. It was okay. And one last question, what's your impression of Dartmouth College today?

POWELL: I think Dartmouth is still an excellent school, and I don't follow it perhaps as much as I should. I do know that, as I believe, the number of females on campus is significantly more than what it was fifty years ago. And I think that has to, again, an outsider looking in, has to be an amazingly, wonderful situation, a great balance. I think Dartmouth has a lot to offer. It's just based on its name, based on its reputation, based on the experience that I had there, and I can only imagine that the educational part has, if it could have gotten better, it's gotten better. I doubt that it's gotten worse. So I would rank Dartmouth up with all the very, very good schools. Whenever I hear somebody who is thinking about it or who has gone to Dartmouth, I can't help but to think that's not a bad choice. So again, I have not been on campus for probably ten years, I don't know that I'd even recognize it, but my sense says it's still a great school.

WINSTON: Well, thank you so much for your call.

POWELL: Before we hang up, can I ask you a question. I meant to ask you this earlier. Do you know any of the other people who are being interviewed?

WINSTON: I cannot say I do but I can ask my professor for you and get back to you, if you'd like.

POWELL: Yeah I would love to. There are a couple that I would like to try and get in touch with. I don't even know where they are these days. But yeah, if you could, I would appreciate that.

WINSTON: Yes, ma'am. I definitely will.

POWELL: Kam, I hope I've been of some help. I do apologize because I know I said, I don't remember, I don't remember, but I honestly, not trying to plead the fifth I just don't remember. My remembrance of Dartmouth has been very positive, but short of that, a lot of the specifics just aren't here.

WINSTON: Yes, ma'am. Oh no, you were perfectly fine. I think your recollection of events, what stood out to you in your memory holds value. And thank you so much for adding your voice to this project and we're very grateful and yes ma'am, thank you.

POWELL: Now, will I get a copy or something of this?

WINSTON: Yes, ma'am, if you'd like one, I can send one to you.

POWELL: Yeah, no rush. But yes, all right. Is that it? If you need anything else, just let me know.

WINSTON: Thank you very much.

POWELL: All right, bye-bye.