Ronald Talley ’69
Dartmouth College Oral History
Dartmouth Black Lives
October 24, 2021
Transcribed by Anne Johnakin

JOHNAKIN: Okay, my name is Anne Johnakin and I’m at Topliff Hall in Hanover, New Hampshire. I'm doing a zoom interview with Ronald Talley, class of ’69, who is in Anderson, South Carolina. Today is October 23, 2021, oh it’s October 24, 2021, and this is an interview for the Dartmouth Black Lives oral history project.

So, hi Ron. Thanks for joining me today. First, I just want to talk about your childhood, so if you could just tell me when and where you were born.

TALLEY: I was born in New York City in 1948. And spent my—I went to public school there in New York City. I was born of parents who were from Anderson, South Carolina. So as a consequence of that, I spent much of my holiday time and outside of school time in South Carolina. And we were back in South Carolina for the summers all of the years that I was growing up. I often describe myself, and still think of myself really, as being a South Carolinian, as opposed to a New Yorker because of the fact that the South Carolina culture was so strong in our family. All of my siblings, cousins, my mother's people are all here in this community that we live in,. My goal throughout the time that I was up there going to school was that I would return here after I graduated.

JOHNAKIN: Can you tell me the names of your parents?

TALLEY: Mamie Talley and Robert Talley.

JOHNAKIN: And how many siblings do you have?

TALLEY: I have three. Two brothers and a sister. I’m the oldest and my sister is the youngest.

JOHNAKIN: So why did y'all move to New York City?

TALLEY: Primarily because of the racism that existed in South Carolina at the time. And my father had gone into the military when he was very young. He and my mother married just before he went off to service in World War Two. And he had made a decision, along with her, that when he returned home from the service, that they would relocate to New York City. Many of our relatives were doing

something similar. Some went to Washington, DC and other places in the northeast, primarily for employment. Then what they did, which is why I again so frequently describe us as living like immigrants, was that they were sending money back here in South Carolina to take care of family who were still here, cover property taxes and things of that sort. But it was primarily a move for opportunity.

JOHNAKIN: And did you still feel the effects of that racism and all of that when you came back for summers? Did that ever cause any tension?

TALLEY: It did. You know a lot of folks are familiar with the story of Emmett Till. So, what frequently happened is, we were not permitted really to leave the community, our home residence community at any time. And very seldom traveled into town. During that, I never felt it, but I was well aware of the tension that my parents were feeling.

JOHNAKIN: And how did that compare to New York City, did you feel that in New York City as well?

TALLEY: It was a strange thing. I'm glad you asked because, during public school I attended a neighborhood elementary school up until the third grade. That would have been somewhere around 1956. What happened is, I found out later what the reason was but apparently New York City was going through its own form of desegregation in response to the 1954 decision, the Supreme Court decision. What New York City chose to do, because the city did not have buses, school buses, is they gave us, as a friend of mine said, they armed us with bus passes and subway passes and sent the children off into New York City public transportation.

So, I went to the fourth grade in a predominantly white elementary school in Northern Manhattan. That was the first time in my life, and the only time in my early life, that I had ever been called the N word. It had never happened in South Carolina, but it happened on the playground at my elementary school in Manhattan.

JOHNAKIN: Did things ever get better or how did that progress through your time in grade school?

TALLEY: I was at that school, I ended up being at that school only I think one or two years. There were a group of about eight of us who were transferred out of our neighborhood school and sent up there. And we, all I can think of now is that it was part of an experiment. Because we were ultimately moved from that elementary school to another school, which was actually closer back into the

neighborhood. And then I left there and went back up to Northern Manhattan for middle school and high school. And in all fairness, never really felt the same contentions thereafter.

JOHNAKIN: It seems like a lot of pressure to put on just a few kids to kind of be the ones to desegregate. Was that rough on you? I imagine it was.

TALLEY: Oh, it was. But in the long run, it was good. I, I think that one of the things that happened to me in life, as a consequence of a lot of that—especially the travel and getting up being eight years old, nine years old and getting on the subway with rush hour commuters at seven o'clock in the morning—it matured me early. I remained forever thankful for at least that part of it, that it toughened me up.

JOHNAKIN: Kind of moving on to high school: what was your high school experience like? Did you do any clubs or sports or something like that?

TALLEY: High school was interesting because, as a consequence of the experiences that I had had at the elementary school and the middle school, I again being one of the few black people in the school. Actually in my class, let alone the school. When I had an option to proceed on to some of the select high schools in New York City, again, because of the racial issues, I decided I did not want to do that, that it was really too uncomfortable. So, I felt like I wanted to go to the high school that other people in my neighborhood were going to, which was George Washington High School. New York City did not have many large high schools. But I had been put in an advanced academic track that actually resulted in my skipping the eighth grade and finishing middle school in two years. So, I never told my parents that I had the option of going to any of the select high schools and they didn't know any better, so I just put myself back in the ordinary school track.

George Washington high school was a school of, if I remember correctly, there were probably around 4000 students in the school. The school at that time was larger than Dartmouth College, because it served all of Northern Manhattan. Once I got there, to my surprise, instead of me being tracked in an ordinary track and being back with folks in my neighborhood, I was still put in a special track. So I ended up being the only black person in my class for most of my courses there, which was, okay, because it was only the in-class experience.

I latched on to that, I was very much into the intellectual and academic experience, so I soaked that up. Especially the

mathematics part of it. I had a math teacher, who was Jay Stepelman, who I later learned something of Mr. Stepelman's fame. But in 19—I started high school in 1962, and Stepelman had us writing computer programs in Fortran [an early programming language] 1962. He had a connection with Yeshiva University and with Columbia University. So, what he would do is he would have us write these programs and then he'd carry them down to the university and get them coded and loaded onto the computer and bring back the results, and occasionally take us there to watch the program to run. So that ended up really being a very, very, very, very good experience.

Socially was okay. I ended up being President of the senior class and having a lot of other responsibilities in the school. I was on the school's math team, and there was a television series called "It's Academic", which was kind of an academic bowl program. I was on the school's team for that, so I had a very active school and club experience in high school. And as I said, I enjoyed that very much. Jay Stepelman was the one faculty member there that I bonded with to the extent of coming back to see him during breaks at Dartmouth, and some time afterwards.

JOHNAKIN: So would you say that your school had a fair allotment of resources or was your positive experience really because of your teacher Stepelman?

TALLEY: It was both. The school, the school resources were great. I mean for public school, but I didn't have a lot to compare it to, of course. The school had an Olympic sized gymnasium, I mean Olympic sized swimming pool. It had a large track, so I ran track there for a short while.

But because of the community it was in, which was referred to as Inwood, I-N-W-O-O-D, Inwood, NY. That was a more affluent area of New York City at the time. It was a massive building, as I said, to house that many students in that one building. But the school was very endowed with resources, the science labs were very well equipped. But again, as I said, I think, that the experience with the teachers, at least Stepelman and a teacher that I had, [Ms.] Skelly, who was responsible for preparing us for the SAT. Now, there were a couple of other teachers who were just the opposite. You know some of the bigotry remained there. And I fought my little battles with them, but by that time I was pretty well-steeled for that experience, so I saw them more of a challenge than a threat.

JOHNAKIN: What would you say prepared you for that experience, was there any foundational memories that you have that kind of prepared you to fight those battles?

TALLEY: Primarily, my mother. My mother had gone to a small black women's two-year college here that no longer exists. My mother was very strong on education. And she was also very strong on this idea of not allowing other people to define my path. And, in addition, not getting angry or upset with them, but learning to navigate around them. So that was good preparation and then, of course, as I said, the school yard experiences in the earlier schools had made me aware that I would run into some of these difficulties in life. And then of course the travels back and forth between New York City and South Carolina again made me realize that there were some things I was going to have to do better in order to have some of the same opportunities.

JOHNAKIN: Yeah, absolutely. So, did your love of math and computers come from your parents or your teachers or how were you exposed to that?

TALLEY: I would say my love of math came from my mother. My mother liked math and she liked puzzles. Early on, my mother taught me a lot of tricks for doing arithmetic—shortcuts and tricks for adding, subtracting, dividing. I thought that made me successful and then of course the successes fed the joy and the joy caused me to indulge in it more. Indulging and embracing it more gave me more success, so it was a wonderful cycle, and it continued that way. Then, of course I keep coming back to Stepelman. He was the penultimate mathematics—mathematician. He loved mathematics and he was, I found out later, as I said that he was a friend of John Kemeny's. Stepelman was ultimately responsible for me applying to Dartmouth and getting there. But his love of it and his interest in bringing in real world problems and exposing us to advanced mathematics fueled that love.

JOHNAKIN: So, did your parents encourage you to apply to colleges and how did they factor into the application process?

TALLEY: They actually had very little to do with it. My father, as I said, was a military man and came out of that and went to work, so he really knew little or nothing about college. I was actually the first person in my family and extended family to attend college. Nobody else that I knew and I actually did not know any other individual who had ever gone to college. So, the impetus to go to college came largely from

classmates, other people were going to college, so I decided, I was going to college.

Because that seemed like the natural thing to do. Interestingly, I was more interested in going to a technical college, because I had a strong interest in electricity and electronics at the time, and so I was considering some of that.

But I ended up, as I said, applying just to Columbia University. I think I applied to Columbia University, William and Mary and a couple of other schools that the guidance counselors had suggested. Other than Columbia University, I was not familiar with any of the other institutions. And it was Jay Stepelman who intervened one day. We were talking, he was asking me about what colleges I applied to and then he mentioned Dartmouth, which I'd never heard of. And he just made the statement: “Well, we need to get an application in there as well.” But I was just following the leaders.

JOHNAKIN: So where did most of the kids from your high school end up going? Did they go to state schools or Ivy Leagues?

TALLEY: Because the school was so large, I really only kept up with my immediate classmates. To be honest, I actually lost track of most of them after I left high school. I caught up with maybe three of them about 20 years out, 20 or 30 years out, just out of curiosity. I think one or two of them went to Columbia. Those who were in my class ended up, at an Ivy League school, so either Yale, Columbia, they of course stayed in the New England area. But I really lost track of them.

JOHNAKIN: Yeah, I totally understand. Before the Internet, it seems like it would be hard to keep track of everyone.

TALLEY: Well, the other thing was that I did not interact with them outside of school. As I said, the school was at the complete other end of Manhattan Island and, and so my social circle of peers was back home. [inaudible]. So, we were friends academically but not social.

JOHNAKIN: Yeah. Did you visit Dartmouth before you decided to come, or was your first time visiting stepping off the bus?

TALLEY: No, Mr. Stepelman took me up and I always tell that story is comical because he took me up in the very late spring. So of course, Hanover was warm and turning green. On the trip up I compared it to North Carolina, near here. Asheville, the Asheville

area of North Carolina. And I said, I thought “This is very nice. It's nice and rural. Again, it's just like back in South Carolina and North Carolina.” So, I was looking forward to it because also, as I said, my real love was for rural life. Of course, had I gone up in the late fall or the winter, I probably would not be an alumnus.

JOHNAKIN: [laughs] Yeah, I totally get that.

TALLEY: Yep. Yep. Yep. But, as I said, I did get to visit.

JOHNAKIN: Mm, that’s nice. Did you have anything that you wanted to add about your early childhood before we kind of shift to Dartmouth?

TALLEY: [pause] Nope. If I think of it, I may come back to it.

JOHNAKIN: Alright, so how was the transition to Dartmouth? What was it like, you know your first couple weeks of freshman year? I imagine it was very new and different.

TALLEY: That was interesting as well. I was pretty excited about it, of course. My father brought me up. He drove me up from New York City and dropped me off. I met my two roommates. You mentioned Topliff [Hall], I was in New Hampshire Hall, and I was in a triple: 209 New Hamp. And I met one of my roommates. And you know I had still not done any research on Dartmouth. I didn't understand anything really about college. The other thing that happened is that we had read a book during the summer. There was a requirement. Ortega y Gasset [a Spanish philosopher] and I don't remember the name of the book. But anyway, it was this book that we were mailed, sent in the mail. We were supposed to read it and be prepared to discuss it the first week I think of our freshman year there. So, I did arrive realizing and feeling like this was going to be some kind of an intense academic experience.

After I got there, it got interesting in a lot of different ways. The first thing that happened was I met my, as I said, my first roommate and then the second roommate showed up several hours later. And he was introduced to me by the first roommate. What always stuck with me, now I shouldn’t say stuck with me I just remembered it, was that he would not shake my hand and he then subsequently moved out. And we never saw him again. So, I ended up having, which is great, because my roommate and I had triple to ourselves, the two of us. But again, I shrugged this one off. Yeah, because I said it's just a continuation of other experiences that I've had. And, as far as I was concerned, it was his problem, not mine.

Then the next interesting thing that happened was freshman week. Remembering now that Dartmouth was all male at this time, and you've probably heard all the stories about what Dartmouth used to be. There was this week of freshman indoctrination. Where the upperclassmen took it upon themselves to indoctrinate us into all of the Dartmouth traditions and what it was going to mean to be a Dartmouth man and so on and so forth. So, I began to get the impression that this was a very social place. I was 16 years old at the time and, and so I began to see Dartmouth as a place that, in addition to its great academics, was a place where you gonna get to party and drink and raise all kinds of sand and have a ball.

I did not go on the freshman trip. I don't remember why. I didn't do the trip to Moosilauke, but in any case, I started hunting around to see what other classmates of mine were doing. My remaining roommate was on the football team. I said, "okay, I'll go out for football as a walk on." And so, as I said, the initial experience at Dartmouth, for the first several weeks for me, was just unbridled fun. Social outlet fun before the seriousness of classes.

JOHNAKIN: Had you ever played football before?

TALLEY: Never, never in my life. [laughs]

JOHNAKIN: And what position did you get?

TALLEY: I was right, I was right halfback.

JOHNAKIN: Okay [laughs] And how was that experience?

TALLEY: It was interesting because I had run track, so I was fast. So, if I had the ball, I could run like the dickens, but I was not very big, as I said. It didn't last very long. I obviously didn't get to start. And I began to realize after a while that I was going to have to learn the game. That there was more to just running and receiving, that I was going to have to learn this whole concept of strategy and plays. So, I dropped off the team. In addition to the fact that the seriousness of academics had begun, and I began to realize that this was going to be a huge challenge. I had done well enough on my SATs to exempt the first analytic geometry and calculus class and get placed into the second one on an honors track. That met at 8am in the morning. So. The math, the math was a challenge. And I guess I had an English class and oh a physics class probably. And so, it was not very far into the semester when I realized that I was not going to be able to manage academics and football.

JOHNAKIN: And at that time, was Dartmouth on a semester schedule, not a quarter schedule?

TALLEY: Quarter schedule. So, we took three classes and they met three times a week, I guess. Okay, plus the lab.

JOHNAKIN: Going back to sports real quick, did you ever experience any prejudice on the football team?

TALLEY: No.

JOHNAKIN: No?

TALLEY: And if I did, I didn't know it.

JOHNAKIN: Okay, that's good to hear. Then you also were on the wrestling team for a little while right?

TALLEY: Yes, my roommate was also a wrestler.

JOHNAKIN: [laughs]

TALLEY: And so, when wrestling season approached, he convinced me to come try out for the wrestling team. And I did. It was actually a club at the time. But I did wrestle, and I did travel with the wrestling team. I wrestled for that, again, for one term and enjoyed that. But then I decided that wrestling was going to cut too much again into my studies, into the academics. So, I left the wrestling team at the end of the season. Then came back to wrestling my sophomore year in intramural wrestling and ended up getting a bronze medal in the intramural wrestling sophomore year.

JOHNAKIN: Yeah. So, did you keep the friends you made on the sports teams? Or once you kind of shifted your focus to focus more on academics, how did you balance the social life?

TALLEY: Oh yes. Some of the—couple of folks that I met both on a football team and the wrestling team we remained friends, really for the rest of the Dartmouth experience. But then I was continually making new friends as the semesters, the terms and the years progressed. One of the things that also was happening is now when I went into Dartmouth, there were 15 black students in my class out of the 900 and something of us. And so, I began to meet them one by one. And then each subsequent year, some additional black students were coming in and we tended to start forming friendships among ourselves, in the dining hall and study groups and so on. So, I

ended up with a mix of friends as things progressed. I left New Hampshire Hall either my sophomore year or my junior year, I forget which one, and moved over into Massachusetts Hall. But I stayed close friends with many of the guys who were my dorm-mates in New Hampshire Hall. There are two of them that we have an annual get together to this day. Every November.

JOHNAKIN: What was the—since the Black Community was so small at this time, what was it like?

TALLEY: In what sense?

JOHNAKIN: So, Shabazz Hall didn't exist at this time…

TALLEY: No Shabazz Hall did not exist. So, our interaction largely took place around, more than anything else, meals at Thayer. We would kind of try and schedule ourselves to be there around the same time. Occasionally we would go spend some time in each other's rooms. But again, everybody was still very much focused on the academics, on being able to compete academically. So, some of those interactions took place over in Baker. We would just sit at the library together and study or sit at the house together and study.

JOHNAKIN: So the Afro-Am society was founded in ’66: were you at all a part of that?

TALLEY: Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, very much so. Because the other interesting thing that was happening, of course, was this was a dynamic time in civil rights in the United States. And Dartmouth itself was, of course, completely isolated from that. I think if, I don't think other than if there were a faculty or staff member perhaps at that time, living in the area, other than that, they were not a single Black family in the Upper Valley. And I somehow remember from sociology that there may have been something like 500 or so Black families in the State of New Hampshire. I am saying that to begin to say that we were cut off from all that. Dartmouth had, there were no television stations, if I can remember, that could be picked up through the airwaves. One had to have cable and then I think there were two or three television stations coming out of New Hampshire, Vermont, and/or Canada. So, we were isolated, but we were all, as black students, we were still connected to everything that was going on through our families who were still back home.

We, through the Afro-American Society, that provided us a forum for talking about what was going on and talking about ways in which we could have some impact, then and in the future. And so it

was very purposeful the, I would say that the first and foremost purpose of the Afro-American Society was again: survival at Dartmouth. Survival at Dartmouth meaning making sure that everybody who was there graduated and did well. So that was it, it was that first and foremost. And then it was a support group to allow folks to air frustrations and thoughts about things that were going on. And to formulate, how can we, during our years there, have some impact on the outside world, as we called it.

JOHNAKIN: Yeah, and did you guys have tutor groups and stuff like that to support each other?

TALLEY: Yeah, and in fact the first place that we got was, I think it was referred to as the Lord House if I'm not mistaken. It's a small house over somewhere along the street, where Dartmouth Hall was, going closer to the hospital [Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center]. So, we would meet in there a lot. And that was before we got what was then Cutter Hall. Cutter Hall grew out of a list of what were then referred to as demands that the Afro-American Society made on the College. There was a very specific blueprint for Cutter Hall and that blueprint included setting it up, again, as an academic center. There was a library to be in there, study facilities to be placed in there, there was going to be an office in there for some advisors. It was also going to provide residence for visiting professors and other visiting speakers to the campus. So that became the center of academic support for the students at that time.

JOHNAKIN: You mentioned that you guys kind of got together and were trying to figure out what you can do to impact the outside world. In what ways did that manifest? What were some of the things you guys decided upon?

TALLEY: We set up a program—well there were a number of things that happened, one of them was the recruiting. That we worked through the admissions office to go out and visit high school in the Northeast primarily to try and encourage additional students to come to Dartmouth and take advantage of the opportunities that Dartmouth had. We set up a field program in Roxbury, Massachusetts, that I later became the director of. What that program did is we were working with an organization called the Roxbury [Community-University] Center for Inner City Change that was headed by a gentleman named Byron Rushing, who then later became a councilman in Boston, Boston City Council. [inaudible] there for a term and those students served as interns, counselors, advisors to those community-based organizations. Then, at the same time we're coming back and forth to Dartmouth to do

research and get assessments from Dartmouth faculty on problems that they were working with there. And then we had a similar program in Jersey City [NJ]. Those are the two that I was most familiar with.

JOHNAKIN: It's obvious that these programs like recruiting were really important in the history of increasing the number of black students at Dartmouth, but I just kinda want to hear in your words, why you think that was such an important and meaningful endeavor.

TALLEY: Why the program was?

JOHNAKIN: Yeah.

TALLEY: Because what many of the organizations had were very committed people, usually volunteers, who are working on tenant problems, who are working on food problems, income problems in the inner city. So, they had all of the energy, they had all of the local knowledge, but what they lacked in many cases, was the theoretical expertise. How does—what's the relationship between city government and the local community-based organization? How does the local community-based organization bring the resources of city government to a problem that exists on only one street? What kind of planning devices does one have? How does one sit and organize a project that is going to have long-term goals? How do you set up a one-year plan, a five-year plan, a ten-year plan, envision how you are going to be operating many years down the road? How did we fund this thing? What similar things have been tried in other areas? What does the research say?

So, they lacked that kind of expertise and that was what we were able to bring to them from Dartmouth. And it was an I think it was especially valuable because even to this day, what happens is I still see the shortcomings of well-meant efforts—missionary efforts, other types of volunteer efforts—where students and sometimes faculty who are funded through research grants set out to have an impact on a needy population, but nowhere within their ranks do they really have expertise as to what's going on the ground. And they actually attempt to manage these projects remotely with occasional site visits. What that project did for those of us who were concerned about long-term solutions to systemic problems in the United States was it helped us realize as students and as academicians or as intellectuals that whatever we sought to do we were going to have to first establish relationships with target populations and embed ourselves there. And, if not embed ourselves there, then in establishing that relationship and power,

the relationship that we're going to work with, and let them tell us what we should be doing. Not us go in there as the Ivy League experts and tell them what they should be doing. So, we both gain from it.

JOHNAKIN: Yeah, this seems like it was drawing a lot on your sociology major. How would you say that your education impacted these, do you think? I don't know exactly what I'm trying to say. How was your sociology education at Dartmouth, do you think it adequately taught you the right things, or do you think it kind of was …?

TALLEY: [laughs] My sociology education at Dartmouth, I will simply first and foremost say was great. I don't know how it would at all compare with what is currently a sociology education at Dartmouth. I had a very unique situation and the unique situation I had was that I was very good at programming. I had originally started out as a math major, I wanted to focus all my time on computers. The Sociology department at Dartmouth then convinced me to change majors to sociology, in exchange for giving me the responsibility for what was then referred to as the sociology lab. There was a whole laboratory in the basement that was set up with computer terminals and computational equipment.

Because that was a period in time in which the social sciences we're striving to be recognized as sciences. I think most people were aware that there was tension between social science and science, the hard sciences, the life and physical sciences. There was a lot of writing going on at the time in the social sciences, both psychology and sociology, and some level of experimentation. But I think that a social scientist would have been hard-pressed at the time to get into a debate with a scientist let's say over such an issue as nurture versus nature. Where the hard scientist is saying people behave this way because it's genetic. And the social scientist is trying to make the argument that "No, this is nurture. This is upbringing." How does one conduct an experiment and crunch the data to back that assertion? Well, the onset of the computer made that so much easier because what social scientists could then do was crunch very, very large volumes of data. So even if you were not able to set up a controlled experiment, you could pull data from multiple different populations and then start crunching that data and pretty well substantiate the argument that it is unlikely that this correlation is by chance.

So anyway, with that backdrop, Dartmouth had a grant called Project IMPRESS. It was the Interdisciplinary Machine Process Research and Experimentation in the Social Sciences. Project

Impress had paid for all this computer equipment to be placed in, I guess the sociology department was in Silsby Hall at the time if I remember. So with that backdrop, they told me that if I switch to sociology I could have that lab. Have it, but that they would pay me to be the lab director, and so I said sure, and I went over to sociology. As a consequence of what I was doing in the lab, the person who headed the project and I became very close. He, of course, was a sociology professor, So I think the best description I could give is that I really took on all of the benefits and roles that one normally has as a graduate student. And, and so where I'm going with this is, I had a lot of leeway to do what I wanted to do, regardless of what class I was in, whatever I wanted to do with that class I was allowed to do it. So that's why I said it was, of course, very rewarding to me because I pushed my research, and I pushed my studying towards topics that interested me. In every case, what I was also doing was just having a ball in the basement chewing up census data.

JOHNAKIN: [laughs]

TALLEY: Every other data I could get my hands on and bringing that back to class. It went well enough that in one of the classes I was taking, the professor just handed the class over to me for four weeks, just to teach what I had learned on my own. So, to say that that prepared me well for the experience in Roxbury and other things I wanted to do in life, it did. Because whatever it was I was doing out at the community level, I could just bring that back to Dartmouth and go down in the basement and go to work on it, generally with a lot of support from the sociology faculty.

JOHNAKIN: Yeah, sounds like you had a really great experience with academics. Was that the norm at the time? Did your friends also find their education really rewarding?

TALLEY: You know, I actually don't know and I'm wondering why. I didn't know at the time. I was very buried in what I was doing, and I mean really, really immersed. That's why I'm making the comparison to graduate work. I was not even sharing a lot of what I was doing with anybody else.

I had made a friend, Bill Walsh was his name, rest his soul because I guess Bill’s gone now but Bill lived in the Upper Valley, he was a Dartmouth employee. And he was on the third shift in the computer center [in McNutt Hall] at the time. In order to get my, most students had to wait for their work to come back for the mainframe. One night I was dropping some jobs off at the computer center and it

was after midnight and Bill was there. As I was dropping this stuff off, we got to chatting and I told him what I was doing. And he said “Well, come on in,” and “you drink coffee?” I said sure, and he said, “Come on, and have a cup of coffee and give me a couple of minutes and I'll go ahead and run this now.” And I said “okay, great.” So, I went in and I'm drinking coffee and chatting with Bill about my life and his life, upstate, and Dartmouth students and everything else. So, Bill starts running my job for me and I guess I stayed there till about three in the morning. He handed me all of my finished work and I bid him farewell. For the years that followed I would go over there after midnight on many, many, many occasions and just hang out with him and get my jobs running and bring them back. I never told anybody how I was getting my stuff back so quickly.

But I say that to say that I spent a lot of all-nighters, I spent a lot of time in the top of Baker Library. But, again, I wasn't really aware of that. In hindsight, I was not really aware of what any of my other friends were doing academically, not at all. I didn't find out until we started talking after graduation years later, and I realized, you know what different people have been doing.

JOHNAKIN: I was just gonna say it sounds like you started teaching from a really young age, because you were what 18?

TALLEY: Yes.

JOHNAKIN: So were you a tutor? How did you interact with younger students at Dartmouth?

TALLEY: Primarily Tutoring. And then in the fall of my junior year I went down to Andover, Massachusetts for the ABC [A Better Chance] Program and spent that term as a resident tutor for the group of young men that were attending Andover High School. And then beyond that, still on campus, I would tutor anybody that wanted to be tutored, help anybody that wanted to be helped.

JOHNAKIN: Can you talk a little bit about the ABC Program for people who might not know what it is?

TALLEY: Oh sure. ABC was, in my opinion, a lot like what I had experienced as a child in public school in New York City. Project ABC was a program based on the sociological idea that students from disadvantaged areas could do just as well academically and have greater success in life if they were given an opportunity to go to school outside of the neighborhoods that they lived in. So Project

ABC actually moved students from everywhere from the rural south to some of the inner cities into rather affluent or certainly upper middle class white communities. There was a house in Hanover and there was also a house in Andover, Massachusetts. And, and why I'm pointing on this is that the students in the Andover program and the students in the Hanover program were simply going to the public high school. The ordinary high school.

But uprooting those students and putting them in that environment also meant that they needed some support in a lot of ways. It was not simply the academic tutoring, but it was also having people who understood their backgrounds and could help them navigate what it was that was happening to them. As I said when I got uprooted at age eight, all I was told was that I was in a special academic program, and they were going to send us to another school. I did not realize until years later what the whole thing was about. Now, it was a select program similar to ABC in that we all had been tested. And so, they had decided that we would all do okay in these environments.

But in any case, so Project ABC did that and the students lived together. I think there were, I don't remember, five or seven, the number exactly in the House in Andover. There were two resident tutors, Dartmouth students: myself and a classmate. We rotated off every semester, a new pair will come. Or somebody could stay more than one semester, that person, but I only stayed one semester. We got course credit for it; we were given education course credit. Then there may have been some other course that we could have gotten credit for writing up the experience or researching the experience or something I don't remember. The House had resident parents, a resident family. So, in this particular case, there was a family of four: a husband, wife, and two sons that lived in the house as well. So, it was a controlled dormitory environment where the students had 24 hour access to assistance. Then those students when they graduated from high school, all of those guys were encouraged to apply to Dartmouth, several of them did. Others chose to go to colleges closer to where they were originally from, to go back home. And then, in the summertime those students were in Hanover. The Andover students came up to Hanover for the summer and stayed in the dormitory and so on. Then received extra tutoring and assistance during the summertime, as well as an opportunity to just enjoy Hanover life.

JOHNAKIN: So, did you ever see students that you had tutored at Dartmouth later.

TALLEY: Yes, yes. One of them. Actually, two of them, I saw them because they were a few classes behind me. And one of them has set up a small zoom group, and so we meet every two weeks.

JOHNAKIN: That's so cool!

TALLEY: And continued. It was interesting because he was a math major and went into a life in computer science. He and I talk about that to this day. Yeah, I see them. I'm in touch with them.

JOHNAKIN: So, it sounds like this community was pretty important to your Dartmouth experience.

TALLEY: Oh absolutely. It defined my Dartmouth experience. One of the things that I grasped that Dartmouth, that I had already had an insight into because of the high school that I attended and the middle school in northern Manhattan, was the difference between the available resources in many rural southern communities, black or white, and certainly in low-income Black inner-city environments. The extreme of that was food fights at Dartmouth. [laughs] And I see this look on your face like what?

JOHNAKIN: [laughs]

TALLEY: Again, as I said, you get this all-male environment and things happen that don't happen, I guess, in an environment that looks more normal. But there were occasionally food fights that would break out in Thayer Hall. And the idea to me of someone throwing food—I never was comfortable with the idea of someone being, in the media, someone being hit in the face with a pie. Just the idea that this is a waste of food. So, I'm back to saying you know, there was this abundance of resources that I saw at Dartmouth. And the classmates that I was able to meet at Dartmouth then, at that early age, I understood the gap, wealth, and resource gap in this country.

So, I decided, I was going to dedicate my life to doing whatever I could to take the powers that Dartmouth gave me and bring that back home. I chose to do it intellectually; I would bring the knowledge back and follow a career in education. But yes, the Project ABC, the Afro-American society. This was also you know the height of the Vietnam War. There were so many things going on politically in the country. I would say that all of those activist activities define my experience for me.

JOHNAKIN: Were you ever a part of any protests on Dartmouth campus?

TALLEY: Oh one. There was one year where, I was a part of it and I'm sure it was an anti-war protest. Students may have taken over Parkhurst. And I was out on the streets in support of that demonstration. And then I was part of the demonstration when George Wallace [inaudible] and when William Shockley came to speak.

JOHNAKIN: How did you feel about that? Personally, even today we have college groups inviting speakers that don't necessarily align with my views. And I have felt a little [pause] well angry about it. And, like, I just want to know, like what that felt like to be like this is kind of your home, Dartmouth your home, and they're bringing.

TALLEY: Well, I regret letting my emotional feelings, my emotional reaction, intervene. I was again, I was young, at the time. In hindsight, I think I would have liked to have let it proceed and observe. So that I could better understand my schoolmates. Who are these people who agree with Shockley? Who are these people who agree with George Wallace and why do they agree with him? I think when we're that young, we're still subject to being influenced, and I think that it's possible to have dialogue and even heated debate with each other as students. And I wish I had done a little bit more of that.

Because I think that what we did, certainly for Shockley, who came there to make the case that black people are genetically inferior. So, in my opinion, what better ammunition could he leave with than to say "See this: they don't even have the intellectual ability to sit and listen to a discussion. They're in the midst of an academic powerhouse and they would rather make noise than to have an intelligent discussion." I just think that it played into his hands. Then the second thing is, I would have liked to have had a greater discussion with the Dartmouth administration and Dartmouth faculty. What is your point here? What were you all doing here? What are you all going to do to bring a counterpoint? It should have been the college's responsibility to present the counterpoint speakers for each of these cases if it's going to be a true open education environment. I think what happened was certainly to me and the rest of us was you know: here's ol' racist New Hampshire and Dartmouth. I think we just took the attitude that the College and most of the other students supported The George Wallaces and the Shockleys.

JOHNAKIN: So, was that the overwhelming feeling, that most of the student body of Dartmouth was racist at the time?

TALLEY: I think that that was to some extent. There were confederate flags that flew Dartmouth. There were a couple of students who flew Nazi flags at Dartmouth.

JOHNAKIN: Oh my gosh.

TALLEY: There were swastikas back then. The Dartmouth Conservative Society was alive and well, and the Dartmouth Review was coming on strong. And certainly, Dartmouth alumni writing in the magazine. Boy, they made their views very strong, that we shouldn't be there in the first place. I think we felt like there was a majority support. Then there's the Manchester Union Leader and you have to consider the political environment in New Hampshire at the time. The Manchester Union Leader was a very conservative paper. You know this whole New Hampshire concept of live free or die. I think we just felt like we were in the Upper Valley. That we were just as far north of the Mason-Dixon line as if we were in the deep south.

JOHNAKIN: That's interesting because I would say the attitude on campus today is more like surprise when you run into racism or intolerance. It's kind of like whoa, that's not expected, rather than it being the norm so.

TALLEY: Well, I think that's Dartmouth's evolution. This interview is about Black lives at Dartmouth, but I understand that in November, some of the female board members are going to talk about 50 years of co-ed education at Dartmouth. Dartmouth, in many ways at that time, Dartmouth was very white, male, tradition, entrenched at that time. And so, everybody else was seen as an intruder into that club. You keep in mind that this was also a time where the school mascot was a Native American. The caricatures of Native Americans abounded on campus. When the move came to remove the Native American symbol, as the mascot, there were Dartmouth alumni who, in their own naiveté responded that Native Americans ought to be proud [laughs] that the College will adopt them as a mascot. [sighs] Anyway, yeah it was that kind of environment.

JOHNAKIN: How did you feel like Greek life played into that?

TALLEY: Into…?

JOHNAKIN: Into systematic racism?

TALLEY: I don't know. I really do not know. I was a member of [The Brotherhood of the] Tabard and Tabard was a very liberal, open organization. It had formerly been Sigma Chi, the national fraternity

Sigma Chi. Tabard pulled away from the national organization because of its racial policies. There were a couple of other fraternities that were assumed or known on the campus to be openly racist, but I never interacted with any of them. There were really only two fraternities that I feel comfortable saying I knew anything about. And that was Tabard, where I spent all of my time, and then Beta Theta Pi. Beta house was athletes, and I had a lot of friends in there from the football team, so I never really felt uncomfortable over there. The kinds of things were going on in the fraternities at that time, things that I didn't know about, or the things that I did know about or still [pause] It was a demeaning kind of attitude towards anybody outside of the white Dartmouth tradition: women, locals. It was also kind of a sense at that time of arrogance on the campus that we were all far better than the Townies.

JOHNAKIN: I was surprised when I saw that you had joined Tabard. Only because, in my research preparing for this, I found out that in ‘63 there was a big controversy where Tabard refused to let a Black student rush. And that spurred change, but that was, in my research, one of the only fraternities that came up on paper as being racist.

TALLEY: As I said, it's interesting. Now I don't know whether, I'm assuming since I came up as Tabard that in ‘63 they were already Tabard instead of Sigma Chi. But it would be interesting to know where that was in that transition, how long they had been Tabard and not Sigma Chi. And what were, who were the driving forces on campus in that decision to move from Sigma Chi to Tabard. It may have been that the College had done something or said something to fraternities about being on campus and recognized if the fraternity charter has any kind of racist clauses. It could very well be that the shift from Sigma Chi to Tabard when it occurred was purely political, to maintain a position on campus while the members of the fraternity still maintain that tradition. But what needs to be bared in mind is that with fraternities and the college enrollment, there's a turnover every single year. So from ‘63 to ‘66, which is when I went in, certainly, a lot of people potentially had left and other people had come in. And it may just very well be that the sentiments within a fraternity were beginning to shift in the direction that they did.

Because before I even joined Tabard, I had posted, Dartmouth used to have a ride board in the Hopkins Center where one could put postcards up if you're looking for a ride home during the break. I had gotten a ride as far as I guess Poughkeepsie, New York, or something like that, and then I boarded a train. But I got that ride from a guy who I then rode with a couple of times my freshman

year, who happened to be a member of Tabard. Great guy. So again, I think that that transition was taking place.

JOHNAKIN: Did other Black students at Dartmouth like rush frats, was that a common thing?

TALLEY: No, no, no that was not a common thing.

JOHNAKIN: Did you get any flack for that?

TALLEY: No, no. What I did is I ended up living kind of a dual life, which I had done much of my life anyway. My time at Tabard was I would have to define it as social time. It was a place to go for football weekends, home games and everything else. It was a place to watch television and hang out. And then I had my, what I would consider my work and serious life, with mostly Black students and the Afro-American Society and everything else. I managed those well.

JOHNAKIN: Did you keep up with the purely social parts of Dartmouth after you left?

TALLEY: No, no. Now when you say, keep up with them?

JOHNAKIN: Like participate in alumni events for Tabard?

TALLEY: Okay, no, no. I graduated in ‘69 and then I came on back to Dartmouth in the Office of Institutional Research and Counseling for a year ‘69 to ‘70. Then I taught there from ‘70 to ‘71. So, I finally left Hanover in ‘71. But by the time I left in 71, I pretty much felt like I was never coming back. It was cold and stressful. That had been a cold and stressful six years. All I was thinking about was heading to South Carolina.

Okay, so that was one interesting experience. So anyway, I did not go back to Dartmouth for 10 years. I didn't even really keep up with any Dartmouth alumni except my roommate from Massachusetts Hall. And then 10 years out, I think the Black Alumni Dartmouth Association may have had a reunion. I was there for some reason; I do not even remember why I was there. But I had this experience, where I was in Thayer Hall, I had gone to Thayer Hall for lunch. Or if I had not gone to Thayer or I was certainly returning from that area of the campus. I was walking out towards the Green and the bells began to chime on Baker Tower, and it was the exact same melody that had played every single day of my Dartmouth life, at the time for classes to change. Then students came streaming out

of Dartmouth Hall, Baker Library, all of the academic buildings that surround the [Dartmouth] Green. They're coming on to the Green, crisscrossing the Green. So, as I left Thayer and stepped across Main Street, I began to look around. Just like Pavlov's dogs, thinking I'm going to see some of my friends, I'm going to see some of my friends like I always do. And there was not one familiar face 10 years out. And I had this twilight zone experience that said you're a dead man, you're invisible, you've come back in time to visit a place that doesn't exist anymore for you. And I even spoke to some people, nodded and people I kind of looked at me like. Even the attitudes of Dartmouth had changed in that 10 years. I'm nodding and people are looking at me like, “why are you nodding at me? I don't know you.” That felt so bad that I think it was probably at least another five years before I went back

In 19—I guess, this was somewhere in the early ‘80s very early ‘80s, I got an invitation. [laughs] I got an invitation to go to a Dartmouth alumni gathering in Henderson, North Carolina, up near Asheville, North Carolina. So, my wife and I get in the car, and we head on up into North Carolina for this Dartmouth reunion. It's going to be held in this country club. And so, I get into downtown Hendersonville, and I stopped at a garage. This is pre- GPS days. I stopped in this garage and there's a mechanic underneath a car. I already told my wife, “I don’t see any Black people around here.” So, this mechanic’s underneath his car and he pushes out from underneath the car, looks up at me, and he pushes back up underneath the car again. And from underneath the car, he says, “What can I do for you?” I gave him the name of the country club that I was looking for. He pauses a minute and he says, “That's where you're going?” I said yes, and he tells me basically straight ahead, eight traffic lights, make a left, so on and so on. We go, “Okay.”

We arrived at the country club. We park and get out. Some people are heading in, and we start up this long, wide stairway up into the building. I’m met at the top of the stairs by one of the employees. He looks at my wife and I, and says “Can I help you?” I said “Yes, we're here for the Dartmouth reunion.” And he says, “You're with the group that’s here?” I said “Yes, sir, we are.” he says, “Just one moment,” and he turns around and he goes inside. A little while later, he comes out with one of the hosts and they're very cordial, when we go on in. The staff is pretty icy. I told my wife, I said, “You know what has happened.” She said “what?” I said, “When they sent out the invitation, they didn't know we were black. Never crossed their minds, and we are probably the first black people who have ever sat at this dining table in this place.” The Dartmouth folks

were very hospitable, they kept checking on us to see if we were okay. After we left, I got a couple of phone calls to make sure everything went just fine and we assured them, yes, it was fine. The following year, the reunion was moved somewhere else. And we decided we weren't going anyway. and then we never got another invitation after that.

So, I never really got involved. I met one Dartmouth alumnus here: great guy, a local attorney. There's another one who's a dentist. He and I became friends with each other and discovered we were Dartmouth alumni. But beyond that, I only stayed active in the Black Alumni Association and some of their reunions.

JOHNAKIN: So, pivoting a bit to talk about your time after graduation, but while you were still working at Dartmouth, can you talk about what that experience was like and how it was to shift from a student to a faculty member?

TALLEY: Sure. You know I look back on it now, and I'm somewhat fascinated. I remember, and this is another thing I share from time to time, Leonard Rieser was Provost at the time, may he rest. I walked into Leonard's office, and he said to me, “Tell me why we should hire you for this position.” Now mind you, though I had been accepted to Harvard for my graduate work, I had not started that work at Harvard. I chose to apply for this position instead. So, I looked at him and I never blinked because I I told him exactly what I was thinking. I said, “Oh, you should hire me because I'm a Dartmouth graduate. If I were applying for this position any place else, you would probably be one of the first people to say that I'm fully qualified as a result of my background to do this.” And he laughed. He said okay. So, I was notified within a couple of days that I had the position.

And for me, it never occurred to me that there was anything unusual or odd about my age at the time and the students that I would be working with. So many things had happened to me in life, to make me grow up. So, I felt fully that I was taking this position as an adult and working with college students, young people. That was the way I did the job. I immersed myself with the faculty, I felt like I was a member of the faculty. I remember the College Employment staff. I go back to my experiences with Bill Walsh in the computer center and faculty that I worked with in the Sociology Department. Many of whom I, by the way, maintained a relationship with since we're all still living there together in the Hanover area.

For me, my focus then was on trying my dead level best to make sure that every single thing that I had learned through experience being an undergraduate at Dartmouth, that I could pass on to the incoming students as quickly as possible. Dartmouth at the time, did not have any advising system in place. When I arrived in the fall of 1965, it was up to me to decide what classes do I want to take, what do I want to major in. We were handed the ORC, Organization, Regulations, and Courses, and you just pick what you want, and go do it. Nobody kept track of are you on course to graduation, are you on course, how are you doing in your major. Nobody paid any attention to that. It was always assumed that the student had a support structure, typically your parents and many parents were Dartmouth alumni. It was just assumed that all of that was in place and that long before you arrived there as a student, you knew exactly what you wanted to do, you knew exactly where you're going in life, all of this had already been planned out for you. That freedom was a little bit too much freedom for me, because I made some bad choices. It was a very rewarding experience to work with those students and share with them what I knew.

It was very rewarding to work with faculty and administration at the College at that time. As I said, John Kemeny was President. I did not know at the time that he was also an alumnus of my high school, from back in New York City. All I knew was that he was very supportive, and we were on a first name basis and things seemed to be going really well. I thought that's just normal. You know, everybody else kept saying Dr. Kemeny, and I always said Dr. Kemeny in public, but it was always John in private. Overall, it was a highly rewarding experience that set the stage for me to end up in a career in education. Although that wasn't exactly what I planned to do, but when that path began to unfold on its own, it was not something that I resisted.

JOHNAKIN: So, you were around to see the advent of the Black Studies program and then the class taught ended up being in the Black Studies program, correct?

TALLEY: Yes, yes.

JOHNAKIN: Okay, so can you just tell a story of how that all went down?

TALLEY: Sure. The Black Studies program, again, was one of the demands placed on the College. Because, as students, we wanted to take classes that we could target towards what it is that we plan to do, then, in the future. Those of us who fit that activist mold at the time, which was pretty much everybody. You know, probably only 40 or

so students in all the classes combined. The college agreed to set that program up and house it in what was then Cutter Hall. We kept referring to it as The AAm, the Afro-American Center and I'll usually end up constantly referring to it as just The AAm. So, Robert G. McGuire, class of 58, was hired to be the director of that program, Mick was his nickname and we always referred to him as Mick. I find it interesting to this day, I've raised little questions here or there, that very little is said about Mick's contributions at the time. Mick was killed in a car wreck, not too long afterwards. I think somewhere along in the early '70s, down in the lower part of South Carolina, while attending some events and activities related to civil rights. And that became something that was questioned for years. His car allegedly ran off the bridge in [inaudible].

But in any case, Mick set that up. Under Mick's guidance, the Roxbury program and Jersey City program was set up. He also set up a program that sent some students to Sierra Leone in West Africa. He was responsible for bringing in notable speakers from the Caribbean, people who were experts in the Pan-Africanist movement and liberation activities on the African continent and in Caribbean countries. It was a steady stream of those folks coming in, under his leadership. Some of the students who were taking courses in the Black Studies program then became residents of The AAm. I think there was room in there for maybe about seven students to live in there. [pause] Then, in addition to that, the musicians were not necessarily a part of the Black Studies program. The music department was doing some initiative of its own, so they were bringing in faculty. Robert Northern was the one I most remember, because he later became known as brother Ah. And Brother Ah was teaching in the music department, while I was with the black studies program here and I became very close. But the goal, then, was to take the academic power of Dartmouth and focus it on issues relevant to concerns and the future of the Black community.

JOHNAKIN: And so, what was the class that you ended up teaching?

TALLEY: It was a class on community development and organization. The students that took that class, some of them were then selected to go and stay in Roxbury and work at the community center. And then we continue to bring in information that those students were gathering in the community, and then we would set up class projects to take on a problem that the Roxbury Center for Inner City Change, they would take their problem and make it a class project. And for grading assignments and so on, the students were

responsible for coming up with sets of possible solutions to be implemented for that.

JOHNAKIN: Sounds really interesting. Okay, I think that's just about all the questions I have as for your time at Dartmouth. Did you have anything else that you wanted to add about Dartmouth, in particular?

TALLEY: I'll just stay on record here, saying that I think Dartmouth at that time [pause] because of the attitude of the students who were there and that included the fact that we as students were recruiting other students - I think Dartmouth had an opportunity and still does to have a really significant multiplier effect. On the one hand in a truly free and open and egalitarian academic spirit, one admits students for the students benefit and what the student's going to get out of it. The focus is on the student. But I think that there are too few places that have a commitment that says that we're going to bring in people who are going to have a multiplier effect. That if all you're really interested in is your future and what happens to you and how much money you can make and how well off you can be, that's not what we're about. We're about people who have said we're going to take our Dartmouth experience and our Dartmouth education and we're taking it back to places in need. Taking it back to the places that we came from. I think that at the time, when we were doing that, it was well appreciated. It was happening, but it was largely under our control as Black students. I think a period in time came, where the College no longer saw that, or maybe in college never did see that as part of its mission or responsibility, and, as a consequence, potentially that opportunity was lost. The focus then became on bringing in the students who were most academically prepared for Dartmouth most able to pay for their education, who are most like other Dartmouth students. Those students, I think, were perfectly willing to graduate from Dartmouth and go out and work in mainstream America. The issues that poor people and Black people face were not really their problem. They had never experienced it and they were not interested in becoming involved.

JOHNAKIN: So, are you saying that Dartmouth, in a couple ways, took some steps backwards, in that it stopped focusing on those recruitment efforts?

TALLEY: I would say yes, I don't know that I can say that that's a step backwards, because Dartmouth was focusing on the recruitment efforts only in response to numbers. Only in response to let's have a population that is somehow representative of the national population. I don't think the post-graduation outcome was an issue.

If post-graduation outcome becomes an issue, Dartmouth is in a difficult spot here, because as an institution that depends highly on financial support from alumni, who do you bring in? Do you bring in somebody who's going to go out into corporate America or elsewhere in the world of finance and become wealthy enough to contribute a lot of money back to the College? Or do you bring in someone who goes back to some rural area and impacts hundreds of thousands of lives, making a positive social and economic impact, where they are? But they're not making enough to give more than a few hundred dollars a year to the College. Again, I think those two become conflicting forces and then it's a lot easier for the College to just go with whoever alumni are sending to them and select the most likely to graduate and least needing a support.

JOHNAKIN: Have you, after returning to South Carolina, have you been involved with trying to get people from South Carolina to go to Dartmouth?

TALLEY: Not at all. I did very early in the late 70s, early 80s. But not since then. I've really had my nose to the grinding wheels on things that are happening locally.

JOHNAKIN: So, you moved back to South Carolina in what year?

TALLEY: 1976.

JOHNAKIN: Okay, and then around what time did you start working? You got your master's in education at Clemson, correct?

TALLEY: This was interesting. I got back to South Carolina in 1976. And the racial situation in South Carolina at the time was such that I had a better chance of being employed here if I was simply a Black male and not a Dartmouth alumnus. The Dartmouth education was going to be a distinct handicap, for a lot of reasons. First and foremost, it's a far northern degree. Secondly, it suggests to potential employers that I think that I'm better and smarter than they are. And finally, it suggests that I'm not going to stay on the job anyway. So, I came back and I didn't even think about pushing my Dartmouth degree. I had a lot of ideas about what I wanted to do. We had family land. Some of my relatives were building and I decided I was going to go into real estate acquisition and development. I knew that I couldn't get a job in that area, but I would do so with my own funds and money that I was able to raise from Dartmouth classmates or schoolmates. So, my decision was I was going to go to the local technical college and I was going to apply to enroll in brick masonry. And I was going to get a job as a brick mason's helper.

And the idea was going to be that, while I'm out there, carrying these loads of bricks back and forth, I was going to be studying, watching, listening, and understanding how do these builders get the funding that they do to build these houses. Where did the housing plans come from? How did they do this? Then, once I understand it well enough, I was gonna go out and start my own building company first and hire some of the relatives that I had. I had plenty of relatives working in the construction industry.

So, I marched off to the technical college to enroll in brick masonry. The College was small at that time and so part of the admissions process involved me meeting with the Dean of Students, who was a Black man from this area. So, after I'm telling him what I want to do, he says you're gonna have to take some placement tests. I said, "What kind of placement tests?" He said, "Well, we have to find out what your math, reading, and writing skills are." And I laughed and said "Well they're all just fine. I already have a college degree." He said, "You what?" I said, "I have a college degree." He said, "From where?" I said from Dartmouth, and he said, "You graduated from Dartmouth? Why didn't you say that!" And I said, "I don't tell anybody that." He said, "Well you don't need to be taking classes, you need a job, are you working now?" I said "No, I'm not working." He said, "Well, you want a job?" I said, "Well, yeah." And he said, "We need a math teacher." And I said, "Well, okay, but I still take my brick masonry classes?" He laughed and said, "sure, and you can take them for free!"

He took me to meet the President and two days later or something, I was hired as a math teacher there. And the rest became history. I never got to take the brick masonry classes. I started teaching math at nighttime and then a year later, they promoted me to the head of that department. Then two years after that they hired me into a dean's position to head all of the federally funded job training programs. I never got to take the brick masonry class. I continued to teach there for 40 years, finally moving over into the electronics engineering program and spending the rest of my career there.

JOHNAKIN: How was the experience teaching students from South Carolina?

TALLEY: Oh, it was fascinating because South Carolina ranked at that time number 49 in the nation academically. So many of the needs that the students had were really fundamental. I mean basic mathematical needs and, and so what I enjoyed was doing with those students what my mother had done with me. And that was teaching them shortcuts, the fact that when you add in your head you don't add the same way you add on paper. You start with the

highest value digit first. You add the hundreds first and then the tens and then the ones if you're doing it in your head. So, you don't end up carrying things, there's nothing to carry in your head. And all other kinds of tricks and shortcuts because my goal was to get those students, first, to find out that it was easier than they thought it was. And then, and then let them have some success. The second thing that I enjoyed was coming up with just a slew of practical everyday problems that they can apply these arithmetic skills to and then later the algebra skills to. So, I fully enjoyed that.

While I was in that particular program, I also had a group of French-speaking students who had come to us for English as a second language and because my French from Dartmouth, I was able to interact with them. That led me to a long-term friendship with the plant manager at Michelin Tire here. Where I'm going is that dual life continued, where I'm teaching on the campus with my colleagues, but I'm socializing with plant managers and supervisors on the outside. But again, it was extremely, extremely, extremely rewarding and I would say that the most rewarding part of all of it was that over those years, I would say, more than 80% of my students remained in the area. They weren't going anywhere. I got recruited by Clemson University to go teach at Clemson and do computer programming at Clemson. I accepted that and then later before the move came, Tri-County [Technical College] counter offered the salary, and I withdrew that acceptance. But it occurred to me that if I went to Clemson that I would never see most of those students again. The Clemson faculty relationship with their students is completely different from our relationship with our students. The joy of it was that over those years, I actually ended up having occasionally in class a son or a daughter of one of my former students, and in the most extreme case towards the end I had a grandchild of a student. But the fact that I see them even to this day. I have some of my graduates who send me Father’s Day greetings and things of that sort, so it was uniquely gratifying. It's the story of teaching in a small town.

JOHNAKIN: I totally get that. My mom is a teacher in a small town and had that same experience.

TALLEY: In addition, I was teaching at a technical college. We were highly, highly influential in the local economic development. Major corporations located here as a result of the kind of resources that we could provide them in terms of training resources. Very, very high skilled, we have a lot of automated facilities that are in our area. The focus on which I was teaching was automation: electronics and automation systems. So, I have the joy, in addition

of seeing those students all the time, was realizing, joyfully, that they were making more money than their instructor. And not being unhappy to let them know that. This is what they got launched to. I get that gratitude and it just keeps paying and paying and paying.

JOHNAKIN: So, what are you doing now? You've retired, correct?

TALLEY: Yes. You know I talked about the winding track I have from Dartmouth, and I left out a part. After I left Dartmouth, I went back to New York City within the intent of earning some money to come back South Carolina and build. So, I did not serve in the military. I got drafted my senior year at Dartmouth and had a football injury that got me classified as 1Y, so I was exempt from active duty. But my father was a very staunch individual when it comes to manhood and bravery and things of that sort. So, I always sensed that my father felt like I did not go to Vietnam because I was afraid. That I didn't go to the military because I was afraid. So, when I got back into New York City, I decided I was going to show my father that I really wasn't afraid of conflict and everything else. So, I joined the New York City police department as an auxiliary patrolman. I was on patrol in the South Bronx. Back in those days the term Fort Apache had a precinct and I was right adjacent to Fort Apache precinct in 42nd. This was that Black Alumni of Dartmouth, Black Student at Dartmouth drive. What I felt like I was going to do was make a difference in policing on the streets. I was going to show that one can police in the south Bronx and Harlem the same way policing is done in small towns. You know the people, you're respectful to the people and so on and so forth. So I continued to do that till I left and ‘76 and came back to South Carolina.

But now I, possibly as a consequence of that, I serve on a local police and community relations team. I have been doing that for several years. I do consulting in factory automation systems here and there. One of my former students has his own company doing automation installation, so he'll call me out of retirement every once in a while, to come work on some problem that they're tackling. Even if it's a math issue that they're trying to program, I'll come back and do that.

My other love that I hadn't even when at Dartmouth was automotive mechanics. That’s another story that to me is interesting. My father had a cousin when I was in undergrad had a cousin who owned an automobile—used car dealership in Toledo, Ohio. He gave me a car my senior year. So, I brought the car back to Hanover. and put it behind Tabard. But at that time financial aid students were not allowed to have automobiles. So somehow it was discovered that I

had a car, and my scholarship was pulled. I wrote a letter to the College making an argument that I didn't think that that was fair. The assumption must be that if you have the money for the car, you could put that money towards your college expenses. I said but students can have the most expensive stereo systems in their room. We were not allowed to have cooking equipment at the time, but a student could have the most exquisite and expensive room furnishings, and nobody's going to say pull their scholarship. I said that obviously that this automobile is some sort of a status symbol and therefore it's targeted and singled out. I have somewhere around here a copy of the letter that I got back where the College was abolishing that restriction. I also said in my letter that I was writing that for future students. Because I'm on my way out, it's not gonna affect me.

The point was I fix my own cars. So, I was able to work on the car. I repaired cars for other people in the fraternity. And so, I maintain a lifelong love of automotive mechanics. The other thing I do now is my son in law is an avid collector of classic European cars, so I do all his work, work on my own cars. And that kind of keeps me busy and I'm getting ready to set up a small operation where I'll be doing restoration on antique Mercedes.

JOHNAKIN: Super cool. I think that's all of the questions I have. Actually, I do have one more. I just wanted to know how you're feeling now after having this conversation, after bringing up all these memories? Have you realized anything that you didn't really know before? Has this made you feel anything?

TALLEY: No. That might have happened, if it were not for the fact that maybe a year ago now, not that long ago, I told you that there's this occasional zoom call that’s moderated by one of the ABC students who was in the house that I tutored. He asked me to come on and talk about some of the same things we're talking about. And he asked “What's your story? We knew you from Dartmouth, we knew you from the ABC program but how'd you get there? And, and what was it all about?” So, I’ve taken this walk and one of the things I’m going to be looking forward to now is getting a copy of the audio and sharing it with my children. One of the things that I’ve said I do want to do, and I just can’t get motivated to do it, I wanted to write an autobiography for them. Because I realized that there are so many things about me and my past that my children have no earthly idea of. Certainly, all of the things that happened before they were born. My first child, by the way, was born, while I was still at Dartmouth, which was 1970. I was probably the youngest, not only the youngest faculty member at the time, but I was probably

the youngest father in the class of ‘69. This particular discussion is reinforcing rather than a first-time stimulus. I've spent a lot of time reflecting on my life. I’m 73 now. I've had numerous close calls with death. Now with all my children grown and grandchildren I sit and I look back and I ask myself what decisions did I make in life? Because there's no doubt, I’m one of these people who's all about personal responsibility. I don't care what anybody else did, that it's their fault that I'm here or I'm there. They may have had something to do with me being here or there, but somewhere along there, I had to make a choice and make a decision either to go with it or resist it or whatever. So, I look back over all the choices I make and ask myself, which ones were the good ones, which ones were the bad ones?

Dartmouth is a big piece of that. The class of 1969 did a class survey, maybe for our 10th reunion or 25th or 20th or somewhere along in there. They did a class survey and they posted results and I discovered that I was in the bottom 3% in income and that was very discouraging. I sat there and I thought, even though somebody's got to be in the bottom three, I thought wow you know? And I would look at other classmates that I interact with to this day. And I asked myself why didn't I take the financially rewarding paths, the opportunities that came down? Other people who know me say, “Eh, you wouldn't have been you. You wouldn't have had some of these other rewards.” Are you familiar with the game called Careers?

JOHNAKIN: No, I’m not.

TALLEY: All right, well, we played that as children. I'm pretty sure it's Careers and not Life, it’s one of those two games. But anyway, the game begins with a scorecard where there are three columns. There's stars, hearts, and dollars. You put a number in each of those three columns and the numbers have to add up to the same. 60,000 So you could put 20, 20, and 20. You decide how you want to do it; you distribute that 60,000 among those three columns and then you start the game. And the first person to get all three of the numbers that they put, to earn all three of those wins. During the game you choose career paths and certain career paths when you go down them, they have lots of stars or lots of hearts or lots of dollars. If you get your 60 all in dollars, but you had another 15 and hearts and stars that you haven't earned yet, you still lose. So, it was a force to get you to think about what you're doing in life. The relevance of that is I have had hearts and stars like mad.

You know I've had other successes: I was a NASA research fellow while I was doing my graduate work at Clemson. From there, I was selected by the National Science Foundation to be a program reviewer, so I've spent years reviewing other people's programs and their proposals to the NSF. I was put on national committees to set up standards nationally for vocational and technical education. There are dozens and dozens of other things that I think about that I was put in a position to do that again impacted education and student outcomes on a nationwide basis. So, the reflecting on this, one of the things that it has done for me, as it has also made me committed, though, to encourage younger students, when I get to talk to them to really be thinking long range. Whatever it is that they say they're going to do, for me to keep asking them the question why. Why are you going to do that? What do you expect to be the consequence of that? What do you expect to be the outcome of it? Because I know that I did not at the time, really, really, really think it through.

I'll share this one other thing, and these other things, keep popping on but it's things that I've shared over the years. When I graduated from Dartmouth, I had the degree in sociology. I did not want to be a sociologist. I had no interest in being sociologist. I had no interest in graduate work in sociology. I still loved math and computing. And I never applied for a job in math or computing solely because that wasn't what my degree was in. I had no one to tell me at the time: “Oh that's completely irrelevant. You are one of the few people in the country who can program like you do. And you'll be hired on that basis alone. Go to IBM. Go to some of the other major programming companies.” So, I did not do that, I missed that opportunity. Years later, while I was still at Tri-County, I got an invitation from Dartmouth to apply for the position as the director of Project Impress, the same one I told you I had been working in the lab. I did not even respond. I decided eh, Dartmouth is just sending me this to be kind. They're thinking I might see the ad somewhere and wonder why I didn't have an opportunity. So, I didn't even reply and about two years later I got a phone call, I was on the phone with the former director. He found me in South Carolina, and he asked, he said, “Ron, why didn't you apply for the Impress directorship?” And I said, “Well, Ed, it's because I didn't really think that I could do it. I thought the College was just being polite.” He was quiet for a while and he said, “You're the only person who could have done it. There was nobody else in the world who knew the program like you do.” So, where I'm going with that is now, as I reflect on stuff over the years, I've realized that I had abilities and assets and powers that I never knew I had. And so, I try hard to get younger students to realize you know more than you think you

know. You have more abilities than you know you have. You get your confidence level up and go.

JOHNAKIN: That's good advice. Did you have anything else you wanted to add?

TALLEY: I think that's it other than thank you all for doing this. Maybe now after this or in another setting, I want to understand a little bit more, as I probably should have before we started, about the motivation behind doing these. And what the College expects the outcomes to be, what the College sees as the benefit of having these in their archives. And I know obviously it's a great opportunity for you all, the students, to get to do this, just the interviewing skills and the ability to put together narratives that can be archived. I made that comment about what it was like being on campus 10 years out and realizing nobody knows you're here, nobody knows who you are. It is a little reassuring, now over 50 years out, to know that what I believe as the sacrifices that I made. And they were sacrifices. They were sacrifices in the sense that I had been accepted to go to Harvard for my doctorate. I decided that first year that I would postpone it and work at the College. Harvard sent me back a notice that said “okay, come next year.” The following year came, and I took the teaching job at Dartmouth and Harvard responded, “We can't postpone it again. Reapply.” And my attitude was that’s no problem. I got in before, I'll get in again. At the end of that second year, I was ready to leave New England and I did not apply. I had the sociology department head at the time that I had applied to Harvard, he had helped me write my recommendation, so I had a full ride at Harvard. He assured me that they were going to let me do the same thing I was doing with them, using the computer all I wanted to use and everything else. He made a statement to me, he said, “If you don't go do your doctorate now, you won't do it.” And I thought that he doesn't know me, he doesn't know me, and he was right. So, in a sense of the sacrifice, once I left Dartmouth I married and had children. It was 1976 before I even went back to graduate school and I ended up doing two masters courses and finally a doctorate course and never finishing the dissertation, because of the pressures of family and job. So, I say that to say that it was a sacrifice, and it's good to know that it meant something. It was worth something.

JOHNAKIN: Yeah, it was definitely worth something. I think this project is, I hope it's empowering to you to know that there are people at Dartmouth who care about what you've done and the sacrifices that you've made. And it really did have an impact, like, you know I don't think that this project would be happening without the work that the Black

students put in years ago. So, thank you so much for talking with me. This was really enlightening.

TALLEY: Well, thank you, thank you. Have a great semester ahead. Maybe we'll even stay in touch, and you will tell me something about some of the things you're doing.

JOHNAKIN: Yeah. All right, I'm going to stop the recording now.