

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH HAROLD L. WINGFIELD

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for the

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TS: Harold, let's just begin by asking you when and where you were born and maybe a little bit about your experiences growing up and schools you went to and such as that.

HW: That's really funny. I was born in Danville, Virginia.

TS: Oh, I thought you were in Washington, Georgia.

HW: I grew up in Washington, Georgia. I was born in Danville. I don't know anything about Danville. I lived there for a brief period of time, and then I was brought to Washington, Georgia, where I grew up with my grandparents. At that time, I graduated when Georgia was on the waning years of segregation, and I graduated from the Wilkes County Training School in 1961. I went off to Howard [University].

TS: Now, Wilkes County Training School was still the black school?

HW: It was a black school. I graduated during the days of segregation. Now it's called Washington Central or something. All the schools have been merged.

TS: But everything was kind of the Booker T. Washington mode at least of naming it a "training school?"

HW: Yes, I don't know of any black school that was named after a person during that time period. They were called training schools across the state, if I remember correctly. I guess I was one of sixty-nine or seventy students in my class, and there was a small segment of us, about fifteen or twenty, who got a chance to take off—and I had some really good teachers. One of my favorite that I consider the best teacher I had was a woman named Ms. Essie Taylor Bell who was my math instructor. We had algebra, geometry, trigonometry, probably introductory calculus, differential equations, and perhaps elementary introductory computer math. There were about fifteen of us in this kind of, what now would be termed for those math courses as "college prep," maybe even Advanced AP courses. But no such thing existed. She just taught these courses to the fifteen of us. Out of those fifteen most of us went off to college. I graduated in '61, as I said, and went off to Howard University in Washington, D.C. where I experienced urban life in Washington and had a good time.

DY: What was the date now?

HW: September 1961 I was a freshman at Howard.

TS: '61. You're the same age I am. I started college in '61.

HW: Yes, I'll be sixty-four in September [laughter].

TS: I guess you are older than I am. I'll be sixty-three in September.

HW: I have socks older than that [laughter]!

DY: You both have September birthdays?

HW: I guess.

TS: What day?

HW: 22nd.

TS: I'm the 17th.

HW: But I went to Howard and where, I guess, somewhere in-between being totally independent and out of the way of everybody who always used to look over me when I was younger—when I look back, I wasn't that good of a student at Howard. I played a lot and had a lot of fun. I was a pre-med student wanting to be a neurosurgeon because I despised the thought of working with people other than when they were not saying anything to me. I just wanted to operate. But while there in my sophomore year, I did take a series of tests, as I was trying to figure out in what I was really interested. Somewhere I got pointed in the direction of either history or social sciences or in the area. So I said, okay, but then I left Howard, worked in Washington for two years. During those years some of the young black students that are now famous—Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown—I met a lot of them. Some of these people were my classmates.

TS: John Lewis?

HW: John Lewis was at Fisk [University], but at Howard it was Stokely and Rap and Ed Brown, his brother, and a whole bunch of other people that most people would not know. Cleveland Sellers—who is now a professor of English at the University of South Carolina at Columbia.

TS: They were all in your class?

HW: Some of them were classmates. Some of them were just people that I came to know that were involved in a local civil rights group on campus. It was called the Nonviolent Action Group—NAG. It was a college-affiliated group of people who were friends of SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] organization, at that time. I remember my first demonstration was at Howard, when they were constructing a

gymnasium. Howard is the largest predominately black institution in the country. It's also a land grant college, and much of its funding comes from the federal government in those days, and I assume it's probably still true today. Somehow the Student Government Association got wind that—they looked at the construction people and there were no black people working in the high steel skilled jobs on a black campus. So I can remember the demonstration going out and marching and picketing around the gym and those kinds of things.

TS: Who were you actually picketing, the administration?

HW: We were picketing the construction company that was building, because their suggestion was that they could not find any qualified black people to work in these high steel walking areas.

TS: There were probably black-owned construction companies that could have done it.

HW: In the '60s around Washington, they may have been able to find somebody, but this was a white construction company. But anyway we demonstrated, and we were relatively successful because we were laughing because a few days later they found black people walking the high steel areas. We wanted to say, "I wonder where they found them, but they're up there working now." So that was my first demonstration that I got involved in, and it was really pretty much successful. That sort of got me interested in politics and being involved, and what was happening during the course of the '60s.

TS: Does that say anything about the administration at Howard that it took the students to point out that there weren't any black workers on the construction site [laughter]?

DY: That's a good question, Tom.

HW: I don't remember that we were picketing the administration because James Madison Nabritt, who was the president of Howard at the time, was one of the team of lawyers with Thurgood Marshall and all those people that were involved in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. I can't remember his brother's name, but his brother was president of Texas Southern [University], I think at the time. So I don't remember anything being directly—I'm sure the administration was aware that the demonstration was taking place because within a reasonable period, just a very few days, there were black people working in the construction site and walking high steel, which is a very high skilled, dangerous occupation. So that was my first demonstration, and I only marched maybe once or twice during that time period. It was a short time period, but there were so many students, Howard had about 8,000 or 10,000 students at that time, and to have students marching and demonstrating—although a lot of the people I got to know, as a result of getting pulled into that. It was kind of fun.

TS: How could you not go into political science after that?

HW: Right. That got me interested in other things. While I was in Washington, I was somewhat involved with rent strikes. [I] did some demonstrations in parts of Maryland and Virginia, so that sort of led me to my field of Political Science. But anyway, I left Howard, and I worked in Washington for two years, and I stood on my feet as a food clerk at a grocery chain called Safeway.

DY: Oh, Safeway is the chain in that area.

HW: Right. I was standing on my feet eight, ten, twelve hours a day, and I realized that was not what I wanted to do the rest of my life, so I decided to transfer. My sister was graduating from Fisk. We both started college at the same time, [and] we were both kind of honors students, I guess, at the time we were graduating during that time period. She went to Fisk. I went to Howard. She graduated on time, and I didn't. So I transferred to Fisk after two years of working in Washington, and began my career there. By this time, I was becoming a more serious student. That's what I always tell students today, "Don't tell me the excuses; I know them all." I never accuse students of never studying. I just tell them the next time they do, stand closer to that textbook when they do. Because I remember those days when I blamed everybody except myself for my not being able to perform better than I did in the early days of my career. So I went to Fisk and started becoming a more serious student. Also at this time, this was at the height of the Vietnam War. I started getting, "I bring you greetings from the President of the United States," draft notices. So I went to Fisk, and I had enough credits that I transferred in, I think, as a sophomore, and I started doing reasonably well. But every semester I would have to stop to fight the draft. I would get a notice for draft induction. So finally, I think at the beginning of my second year at Fisk, I decided that this is enough, this is too stressful. So I asked my draft board, which was in Washington, Georgia of all places, if they would allow me to complete that semester, then I would accept induction the following January. So I did. I always laugh when I hear students and young people saying, "I would never do this. I would never do that." I can remember people saying, "I will never go in the military. I will never be drafted." I had a sort of a philosophy then, and I still have it, that you cannot say what you won't do, you can only say what you haven't done. There are some decisions that you can't make until you have to make them. When I got the draft notice, I thought, "Okay, I can evade, go underground, move to a big city and hide out in New York, or some place, for the rest of my life, and be afraid of getting caught, or I can leave the country as some people were doing." I thought, "Well, I don't have any skills, if I go to Canada, if I go to Europe, I have no skills. I have a couple of years of college under my belt, but what could I do to support myself?" So I just simply made the decision that I would accept the draft, so I did. I went into the military. I spent one year, nine months and fourteen days in the army. I used to have it down to the minutes and seconds.

TS: Where were you stationed?

HW: Fort Benning, Georgia, basic training; Fort Lewis, Washington, advanced infantry training; Fort Sill, Oklahoma, officer candidate school. I left officer candidate school

before I graduated, and then I came down on orders, and I knew I was going to get sent to Vietnam, but I didn't get orders for Vietnam.

DY: How did you miss that?

HW: Well, they assigned me to a unit as a clerk at Fort Sill [Oklahoma] after I left OCS, and I used to sit around all day reading army DA regulations, Department of Defense regulations, and all this kind of stuff. Anyway, I came down on orders after I had been there for a few months, and I had 183 days left in the service by the time I had to report. So I reported to Oakland Army base for transportation to Vietnam, and I talked my way out of it. I won't tell you how I talked my way out of because it's sexist. I'm about six feet, imagine me, six feet, all muscle, all my uniforms were OCS tapered, and I talked a staff sergeant female into not letting me go to Vietnam and she had that decision, so that was sexist. Don't put that in "there" [laughter]!

TS: You can take it out later. What years are we talking about?

HW: Nineteen sixty-seven I was drafted. I went in March of '67. I got out in January of '69. I took an "early out" to go back to school. I came down with orders for—and I was supposed to be shipping out, and when I reported to Oakland I reminded them—I think at that time the ruling was you didn't have to pull an overseas tour of duty, particularly in a combat zone, with 180 days or less left in the military. I had 183, so I talked my way out of it. I got stationed in Oakland, and my job was sending other people to Vietnam. That taught me something that at some point in life you are going to be charged with making decisions, and you may have to become impersonal. You can make the decision knowing that if you're going to send them there, that person may get killed. My job was to get them booked, get them all ready when they came to us, and then they would ship out—that I couldn't get involved in their personal lives. I can remember I signed initials "on emergency"—somebody would say, "I want to go home and get married to my girlfriend," or some kind of excuse like that, and I would initial something. I was reminded by my first sergeant, one day, that if I kept putting my initials on those kinds of things that I was going to be at Leavenworth making little ones out of big ones because some of these people would be going AWOL. So at that point, I just became really very cold and impersonal and made the decision.

DY: Did you have any moral or ethical qualms about Vietnam?

HW: Well, again, I was opposed to the war, and that was why I debated whether I was going to accept the draft or what I was going to do. I remember demonstrating against the war even before I was drafted. Yes, I was opposed to the war, but I decided I would go. One of the reasons I accepted the draft was because somewhere in that time frame Muhammad Ali, formerly Cassius [Marcellus] Clay [Jr.], refused induction and lost his—and I can remember the discussions when I was in the military. I used to tell them, if I must have a reason for going to Vietnam to die it's because someone who was stronger than I could refuse, and I don't mind dying for that reason. At that time, I'm not sure about why the war was going on, but if I must give myself a reason for being in the military and being

drafted, that was acceptable to me, that I die for other people who are stronger than I, philosophically, emotionally, to be able to make that decision and be willing to pay the consequences of those decisions. So I decided I would accept induction, and so I did. Amazingly, I don't regret it. I don't regret the military. I still feel like when you walk into my closet at home, all my hangers are still probably one finger width apart, and I tend to be very organized and disciplined most of the time [laughter]. I can be really nuts some times. Some of the people I met and some of the experiences I had, while in the military, were also part of growing up. So, by the time I got out of the army and I went back to Fisk, I was a very serious student [laughter]. Because I can remember telling young people, and I tell them here in my classes, all the stuff that you've done and all the things that you're thinking about doing, all the stuff that you are dreaming about doing, I probably have done. When I went back to Fisk I became a relatively pretty good student.

DY: And you were a non-traditional student then.

HW: Well, I was twenty-four or something like that. They didn't have non-traditional students, but there were other veterans that I knew that I met that were coming back to school. My dormitory director had been to Vietnam. He was a vet. That was always good, because there was somebody around that if I wanted to talk to someone older, someone who was close to my age, I could always talk to them because there weren't those self-help, assistance organizations. . . .

DY: Student support services?

HW: That were available at that time. But I could go talk to him. I could go talk to a couple of other people that I knew who were veterans. They had been to Vietnam, although I didn't go—we were called Vietnam era veterans. We're all the same kind of thing.

TS: Oral [L.] Moses was there about the same time as you, wasn't he?

HW: Yes. I went in and Oral showed up, I think. I went into the army and I think Oral was in the Air Force too. He came after I did. We were never there at the same time, but we even still, sometimes today, sit around talking about the people that we knew who taught there, and it's always kind of fun. We run into a guy who is a Fisk guy who applies for a job, or we run into them some place, that's always kind of fun.

TS: I'd like to back up a second and [ask] about Washington, Georgia, and the school that you went to. You're talking about how it was still a segregated school. Did you feel as though you got a solid education for going on to college?

HW: The amazing thing is that I think that I did. Also, I'm on the school board now—we'll get to this later—but I watch parents whine and bitch and moan and groan and complain because the temperature in the classroom, that the air-conditioning system goes out and it's seventy-five or eighty degrees, or higher. I go back and think about when I was growing up and I can remember the potbelly stove when I was in elementary school and

the old, high-ceiling building with no insulation. We'd get like several tons of coal that would be shot underneath the building in the fall of the year. That may be all the coal that we would get for the entire winter. Before school was out we'd all go out into the woods and gather wood, and our students would come in, in the morning, if they got there before the teacher, and make a fire in the stoves, and stuff. We used to go to the saw mills and get saw dust, and go to a service station and get old, burned motor oil, where people change their oil, and pour it on the floor and use the saw dust to suck it up. We used to do this about once a year. We had no cafeteria. But your question is, did I have a quality education. I think, yes, and sometimes I think black students today miss that. I had no-nonsense teachers. Most of my teachers were college educated, but some of them were not. But even those that were not were really good at what they did. But most of my teachers were college educated. I'm sitting here now with my shirt outside of my pants, and I walk around Kennesaw now with my shirt out—if I went to Ms. Bell's class with my shirt outside of my pants, Ms. Bell would tell me, "Now Harold, just go right on down. . . ." This was when we got a new school in 1956, a new building, when Georgia built a whole bunch of cookie-cutter schools all over the state for both black and white students. She would say, "Now Harold, just go right on down to the boys' restroom and tuck your shirt in because you know Miss Sarah"—Sarah is my grandmother's name—"you know Miss Sarah doesn't want you coming to school looking like this." I knew that and there was no such thing as talking back. Teachers were revered in my community, and I think that's one of the things that is missing in education. If I talked back to my teachers in school—not everybody had a telephone, but we had one. My grandmother would know it when I got home.

TS: What is Miss Sarah's last name?

HW: Wingfield. My grandmother. She would know it before I got home. She would say, "I hear you were doing this at school today." And there was no such thing as, "I didn't, my teacher is lying," as students would do today, no, no. I never really thought much about that, but now I realized that was a great value. If I was on my way home from school—and we walked to and from school everyday—if there was a fight, and I got involved in a fight, and one of the neighborhood women would come out and break up the fights, slap me on the back of the head, spank my behind and send me on home—you know, my grandmother's farthest thought was going to be that she was going to sue her for touching her grandchild. By the time I got home, she's already sending up the line. My grandmother said, "I hear, not only did you get into a fight, but so-and-so had to punish you." The idea was I would get punished again.

DY: Sure you were. She was out picking the switch when you came in.

HW: And if I talked back, if I showed disrespect—I hated it when they'd make you go get them! "Go get the switch!" We had a strap that my grandfather made, it had a wooden handle on it, "just go get the strap and bring it here." You knew what was going to happen. But I never read Plato or I never read Shakespeare, to my recollection, but we did read some. I can remember black history week, and now it's a month.

TS: But at least in your school you had a black history week.

HW: Yes, it was a black school, so it was all right.

TS: Which you wouldn't have had if you were going to an integrated school.

HW: I wouldn't have had that if I were going to an integrated school at that time. I just think there was nurturing and caring from those teachers that I think black kids don't get now. Those teachers in my community that I grew up in, and in my family, and all of my experiences during that time frame helped to prepare me for the larger world I was going to face, and gave me the energy to. . . . My grandmother said, "If at first you don't succeed, try again." I remember if I got "C's" and we brought the report card home, if I got C on anything, my grandmother would make my sister and me—we'd sweat the whole weekend because we'd have to take it back to school on Monday, and they'd have to sign it. The furthest thing from my mind was trying to forge my grandmother's signature—one, because her penmanship was far better than mine. My grandmother had great penmanship. She had like third or fourth grade education, but she had great penmanship; my grandfather, his penmanship, was just incredible.

TS: What was his name?

HW: Mingo—Mingo Judson—M.J. Wingfield was my grandfather. I dedicated my dissertation to them. My grandfather died when I was still in high school. My grandmother died after she lived to see me get out of the army and go back to Fisk. I went back to Fisk in January, if I remember correctly, and she died, I think that fall. She didn't live to see me graduate from college, but she did see me get out the army, survive the military.

DY: But she did see your sister graduate?

HW: Oh yes, she went to that. They told a story about my grandmother. It was my grandmother's first airplane flight and she got all dressed up—and I refuse to get dressed up to fly; I fly like a bum—gloves and everything. They had tea on the plane, and she loved it. I thought, give me a break! But I used to love to hear those stories because it reminded me a lot of—my grandparents were my—I think all of what I am I owe to them, who I am and whatever I may have achieved or will achieve in the years remaining in my life. I dedicated my dissertation to my grandmother—and my psychiatrist [laughter]! I had writer's block. You know what writer's block is like.

TS: You're able to speak of this as a political scientist, but it seems to me that what I'm hearing from everybody is that there's almost nostalgia about those last years of segregation.

HW: Those years, yes. Let me tell you something, my grandparents—this is back to my discipline—my grandparents were one of the handful of black registered voters in the county where I grew up. My grandfather, among his many "jack-leg professions," as my

relatives sometimes referred to it, he was a notary public and he used to spend a great deal of time helping people, I remember, in the '50s and '60s, documenting their birth so they could get social security cards, so they could prove that they existed. This was still during the days when most black children were not born in hospitals and there was a record kept in the back of a Bible that people would record these things, and he would help them. I used to read the newspaper as a kid, and to this day I do not allow people where I live to read the newspaper before I do. Because if I didn't read it before I left for school in the morning, when I got home I would start on the front porch going all through the house picking up the various sections to put it back together, so I could read it. As I got older I started reading it in the morning before I left for school, and I used to watch the news. I used to listen to them talk—I remember before television when my grandmother would listen to the radio at night, and there was always the news and the various shows that were on, but knowing that my grandparents were registered voters, knowing that they talked about politics and government, particularly my grandfather, probably had a larger influence on me than I'm only at this stage in my life beginning to realize. All of that was very important to me, now that I look back on it, because all of that has had an influence on what I became today.

TS: Just one other follow up on going into the military: I was under the impression that if you were in college you could be deferred back then. But, also, I interviewed David Hankerson, County Manager for Cobb County, who was in Burke County in the '60s; and I guess he volunteered for the draft while he was in college; and I think his take was that all the white kids of any influence in Burke County ended up in the National Guard and blacks got drafted.

HW: Well, by the time—I graduated high school at 18 and I was gone. As a matter of fact, if I added up all the days I might have spent back in Washington, Georgia, since that time, I doubt if it would equal to a month since I left in 1961. Two months at best. I received eight draft notices; and after I got number eight, I decided, they're going to label me a deserter or a draft dodger here in a little while, and maybe it also helped me to make up my mind [laughter]. But I got the college deferments when I was in school and all this kind of stuff, and that wasn't a problem. But my grades were a problem. I can remember my draft board bluntly said to me, although maybe I had a dream about it, I don't know, but they said, "If you were a serious student you would have graduated by now. Therefore, welcome to the army," something of that nature [laughter].

TS: So it had more to do with your grades than being black?

HW: Well, otherwise I would have graduated from Howard probably. When I say I wasn't a serious student, I wasn't a serious student in the first couple of years. I can remember social things that were really fun. I discovered bars at eighteen years old, and I can remember opening and closing a few of them [laughter]! Being there when they opened and being there when they closed them later in the morning. But it was a matter of being undisciplined; thinking that you're disciplined and then all of a sudden, there's nobody looking over your shoulder, nobody asking you a question about what you do, that you kind of go bananas. So I kind of went overboard. Plus, I started by getting involved with

some of the groups around campus, and it was interesting. I mean, I studied, but I didn't study. I'm like a lot of students today. It's nobody's fault but my own, so I don't have a problem with it now. I can accept the responsibility. Then, I can remember flunking a trigonometry course, and I said, "Obviously it's the professor's fault because he's from India and he speaks with an accent." Many of the things you hear from students today, the same excuses, "He speaks with an accent." My attitude was trigonometry is trigonometry. It doesn't matter what language, if you can read you can understand it. It was undisciplined laziness, so I don't blame anybody but myself. But amazingly I wouldn't trade them for anything. I would not want to go back and undo them because during that time period that was a part of my developing into becoming more responsible myself, because I had to accept the responsibility for it. Therefore I did.

TS: So you graduated from Fisk in '70; did you go straight out to the University of Oregon?

HW: Straight to graduate school.

TS: How did you get to Oregon?

HW: I sat down with my mentor at Fisk, he's now deceased, Dr. Tandy Tollerson [III]. He was the head of the department. I didn't know what I wanted to do. It was one of those things, "Okay, you're coming up on your senior year; what do you want to do?" "I don't know." Like students today, I had no idea. He said, "Have you ever thought of graduate school?" "Sounds okay to me." I really hadn't thought about it. A lot of my friends at Fisk were going off to law school, to Harvard. So I decided I don't want to go to law school; I know too many students who are going. Some had gone in the years that I was here—people I know—so I don't want to go to law school. So I decided that graduate school sounded interesting. Then he asked me where did I want to go. I had been stationed in Washington; I had been stationed in California; and I liked the northwest." So I said, "Some place in the northwest, Washington, Oregon, California, some place like that." He said, "Okay, here's what we'll do. We'll apply to a bunch of schools, send and get the catalogues." So I sent to Washington, Oregon, Berkeley, UCLA and probably another school in California, UVA, and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—we're talking about schools in political science. We sent and got those, and I got accepted at Oregon. I got accepted in Berkeley, but I suppose I wanted money and they didn't give me any at California. [I got accepted at] the University of Michigan and a bunch of other places. But I decided to go to Oregon out of all of them because, ah, California [was] not far away and I liked northern California, so I went to Oregon. The decision was made. I was accepted at the University of Washington in Seattle and the University of Oregon. It came down to these two. So we sat down, and he said, "Which one are you going to go to?" I said, "I don't know." So he said, "Let's look at the professors who teach in this department and see where they got their degrees." So he went to the University of Oregon and then he went to the University of Washington, and he saw that there was one professor whom I later got to know at the University of Washington who got his Ph.D. from the University of Oregon. I think he was the first black Ph.D. coming out of Oregon. He was Trevor Chandler, I think, I'm not sure, but he

went to Washington, so I decided I would go to Oregon. He said, “You may as well go to the school where that person, you would likely take classes from, got his education as opposed to going there; you can get the people who taught him.” So I chose Oregon and I don’t regret it. One of my best friends died last year—Oregon was interesting because I think there were five or six black graduate students in the master’s/ Ph.D. program, and this is beginning in 1970 when I showed up. Out of those six, I think it was six, everybody finished except for one guy. He got his master’s, but he didn’t get his Ph.D. When I got there I met this core group of—I remember I was living in a Holiday Inn and the first thing they said, “We’ve got to get you out of there.” So these students packed me in the back of their cars and took me around and found an apartment. It was a furnished apartment. “Okay, we’ll loan you these sheets until you get your stuff sent in from home, and of course, you’ve got to have a good stereo system, so let’s go shopping.” They took me around [laughter]. These are most of the black students, the handful of black students. All of them are really top-notch people, a woman named Carolyn [S.] Williams who was the next person to get a Ph.D., and she has her own consulting firm in Washington, D.C. She was at HUD, I think, during the Carter administration. The person I mentioned that died, Woodrow Jones [Jr.], Woody was one of my really good friends in graduate school. He went on to become dean at Texas A&M University in the College of Arts and Sciences, whatever it’s called there. But we all finished and I can remember a few years ago, my dissertation committee chairman, a guy by the name of Daniel Goldrich was retiring, so the university put together this seminar of things that we could travel to and get reimbursed for. So all of us except one guy showed up for this thing for him—this kind of symposium dinner. It was a really nice thing—the last couple of days in Eugene. We were talking to the department chair and we found out that after a guy named Calvin Harris, he was one of the oldest guys when I got there, Calvin had gray hair when I showed up, and he was the last person to finish . . .

DY: In your little cohort?

HW: In the group of—and there have been no others since that I’m aware of. No other African American graduate students in the whole political science department. I can remember them talking about students, and if I run into any—the amazing thing is at Kennesaw I haven’t run into too many political science majors. Even those who are political science majors want to go on to law school, as opposed to going on to graduate school, and that’s really hard sometimes. I enjoyed my graduate school experiences and I really grew up there. That’s where I think I became an adult. That’s where I was in charge of my own life, paid my own expenses and everything. It was a good time in my life for me. I laugh sometimes now when I’m talking to my aunt or anyone. I tell them that I probably lived better as a graduate student than now, and I earned basically less money. I became assistant manager of an apartment complex, and I never paid any rent. At the end of every year—another young friend of mine—he was an undergraduate who died recently, he was a political science major in Oregon—he and I used to clean all the apartments and paint them if they needed it, student apartments, all students—you can imagine what they looked like! Cleaning the bathroom at the end of the year! His specialty was kitchens and my specialty was bathrooms, and then we together cleaned the rest of the apartment because sometimes it would take two days to clean both of those things. But the idea

was, we'd do that, or paint them or shampoo the carpets, and we'd earn enough money to pay my rent for the entire year. So I would never have to worry about rent most of the time I was in graduate school. And the odd thing is that I rented a two-bedroom apartment furnished. At that time they had furnished, fireplace, dishwasher and all that kind of stuff for \$230.00 a month. So you see how things have changed today. And I was right off campus, walking distance and everything. I never owned a car, never wanted a car. I bought a bicycle and I used to ride—Oregon had bike trails and if you rode in the streets of Oregon on a bicycle you were a vehicle, so you would ride it just like you were a car. I've seen people, in those days, get pulled over by a cop and ticketed for speeding or for blocking a crosswalk with your bicycles.

TS: University of Oregon was about the center of the universe for long-distance runners back then in those days.

HW: Steve Prefontaine. I remember when his car turned over one night after a race up in Hendricks Park in Eugene. But that's not why I ended up going to Oregon to graduate school. There were no black professors at Oregon when I went there. One came in later, but he didn't stay very long. I think I had left, but maybe after a couple or three years he left. There was still a bunch of good professors that I got to know, and I would match my education there with anybody. I think Oregon was ranked like sixteenth in the nation in my discipline at the time I chose to go there for graduate school.

TS: Was it a shock after having a whole career in traditionally black colleges to go to a place that was overwhelmingly white?

HW: That's a good question. It was a shock if I walked downtown in Eugene in those days, because I never saw any black people and most of the black people I saw on campus were athletes, some of them were athletes. There was a professor in the English department named Ed [Edwin] Coleman. Larry [Lawrence R.] Carter was on my dissertation committee. He was in sociology. Those were the two black professors that I knew of in the Social Science area at that time in Oregon. I think they were the only two black professors at the university at the time, although I'm not sure. But I got to know both of them well, and Larry was on my dissertation committee because you had to choose somebody from an outside discipline, so I chose Larry. But to answer your question, I don't think I really thought that much about it until somebody asked me about it once; did I ever get lonely for black people? I think my response was something of the nature of, "No, I don't recall, I don't think I get lonely for black people. I just get lonely." You know [laughter]? I don't think I'm just lonely—because I could talk to my relatives. To show you how much I didn't get lonely, I guess, or got past that point, I came home Christmas of my first year of graduate school, and I didn't go back for five years, and never thought about even coming home at any holidays or anything after that. I don't like to write letters and I don't like to call, so my relatives always knew that if I called I needed money! I used to tell them, "If I don't call and I don't write, as long as the police don't call, you may assume that I'm healthy." Because there was a core group of people, I mean, we studied together, we took classes together, not just the black kids, but I was also drawn into a group with white students. Some of them I've managed to keep in

touch with. The managers of the apartment complex, the father started college with his last son, he had three sons, and the father graduated and the last son didn't, and then the father went on to get a master's degree. But we all were friends in the apartment complex, and after about the first couple of years—because I was there from '70 to '76—we'd all cook once a month for about six or eight apartments.

DY: How nice!

TS: Did you leave your political activism behind by the time you got to Oregon?

HW: No. I think, I don't recall doing too much, being too politically active in Oregon in graduate school. But I do remember the one person who did not get his Ph.D., Charles Minor, he was a Vietnam veteran—in those days I can remember demonstrations on campus and the ROTC building, with two houses right on the edge of campus, and my apartment complex was in the next block. So there would always be demonstrations out there and they would always be throwing Molotov cocktails trying to burn the building down, but they had these heavy mesh screens so they could never get anything into the building. So they always lit a fire underneath a wooden sign that said, "Army ROTC" or "Air Force ROTC." Then in those days the campus police did not wear uniforms; we knew who they were, but they did not wear the standard uniform in Oregon. The undergraduates would have just gone ballistic if they had allowed that kind of stuff to happen. But in reference to my political activism, Charles and I were like, "Oh, they're demonstrating again." Political science department is on the top floor of the tallest building on campus, Prince Lucien Campbell Hall, and a bomb goes off in Prince Lucien Campbell Hall, and they blow up a main water line, or something, and Charles and I were like, "Oh, nobody taught them how to use explosives" [laughter]! You know, you've got to go look for the main support structure if you're going to bring down a building." We were laughing a lot because we were probably sitting around drinking and saying, "Look, they can't even blow up a damned building!" But no, I don't remember demonstrating or doing that much politically. I remember talking about it a lot. It was a very activist time period around campus anyway. But I don't remember being that active. I think I was still being a good student in those days. My political activism probably waned as I began my career when I started to work, and those kinds of things.

TS: What did you do your dissertation on?

HW: Affirmative Action in Higher Education. I did a case study on the University of Oregon.

TS: What did you find out?

HW: It was really funny, that they were just as bad as everybody else [laughter]. You asked me to think about a dissertation that I defended in '82. I left Oregon in '76 ABD, a brutal mistake that I would never encourage any prospective person, particularly if you're going to teach, never leave ABD. I collected all my data, did all my analysis, everything, all I had to do was write the dissertation, the analysis, construct tables from the data. But you take a job and you sign a contract and you commit yourself to doing the best job possible.

Then you find the easiest thing to put on the back burner is your own work. I committed to myself that every time I would move, I would carry all of my research data in the trunk of my car with the thought that no one's going to get this. If I die, it goes with me. If I'm killed in a car accident I wanted it to burn up with me, or something. But I went from California to Tennessee—I taught at Tennessee State University for my second job. California was one year. They wanted me to stay, but could not get another permanent tenure track position in the department.

TS: Where in California?

HW: Sonoma State University. They wanted to keep me, but no one would give them a line position. I replaced a guy who went to the Communications Office at the White House, on leave for a year, or something like that. So I got a phone call one day, asking me if I would consider coming to Tennessee State, so we talked. I said, "Okay," and we talked about money, and I said, "Okay." So I drove all the way back across country to Nashville, which I had not been in since I left Fisk. I taught at Tennessee State for a year, and that was the one and only predominately black institution where I've taught. The funny thing is that, Tennessee State, when I went there that year, was under a court order. They had to merge Tennessee State and—I think it was the University of Tennessee, Nashville. They had to merge the two into one university, and all the arguing and fighting about which campus it was going to be, and those kinds of things, and who was going to be department chairs. But it was an interesting experience for me. I guess I also had some bad experiences at Tennessee State. We had an Indian professor, and some people in the department were supposed to do some research for NASA. We were all invited out to dinner. I can remember she didn't wear her sari, but she wore a linen business suit, I mean, with being black, and somebody cast some aspersion and made some negative comments about her, coming from a black [professor]—because I think everybody else in the department was male; no, there was one other person that was female—coming from the head of the department and some male professors. I wrote them [a memo] and I guess that's when I started writing e-mails that were rather blunt. I told him something to the effect that we could not be saying this about other people. She's a colleague—I don't know whether I used the word colleague in those days—but she is a colleague in the department, and she deserves to be treated with respect like the rest of us, particularly because I was ABD and I think she had a Ph.D. So we started basically communicating by memo, and I learned early to keep copies of everything that you write. So I left and went back to Oregon, and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do because I had not bothered to job hunt during that time frame. So I stayed a year, [and] rented a house. A friend of mine totaled my car, so I took the money from the car, paid rent for a whole year, stocked up all my cabinets in the house and everything, and of course I was going to write and didn't write; another one of those "being lazy" stuff. I went to work later on for a friend who owned a restaurant. Cooking is my hobby, so I cooked in the restaurant for a while. Then I got an offer to go to Arizona State in Tempe for a year, so I went there and that was a relatively good experience. Then I stayed there for a year and came back to Oregon, and then I got an offer to go to the University of Rhode Island in Kingston. It was a joint position in Black Studies or African American

Studies, and political science. I managed to teach four years at the University of Rhode Island because I went there in '80—I think I defended my dissertation in '82.

DY: So you got it written?

HW: Yes, many days—we talked about this the other day. Dr. [Rosa] Bobia and I were talking about this with one of our friends. “Yes, I remember getting a letter from my department suggesting that if I didn’t finish by ‘X’ date that I was going to have to come back to the University and take more class work.” So this is what you can do when you’re under pressure. I left my car, stereo, television, all that stuff in Rhode Island and flew to the University of Oregon in June, rented a very small apartment. I write by hand because I can write faster than I can type, even with a computer—and I got a stack of legal pads and I started from sentence one. And I wrote. As fast as I wrote, one of the secretaries in the office said, “I will type for you,”—the draft stuff—so she typed for me. I wrote my dissertation, defended, in time to go back to Rhode Island for the fall. That’s what you can do when you put your mind to it. I had no distractions. I didn’t tell a lot of people in Eugene that knew me that I was coming back. I told a few, “Don’t call me. If I want to go do something I will call you, because I have to write.” I only got a phone because I wanted to be accessible to my family if anybody wanted to get in touch with me. And I wrote. And I wrote, like with everything that I’ve ever written. My master’s—it was called a bibliographic essay at Oregon, but it was a thesis. A part of my dissertation program—many people had comps. We didn’t have comps at Oregon, either written or oral. What we had was I had to write a major paper beyond my master’s that had nothing to do with the topic. So then I did that because my master’s thesis was on the black churches and mobilizing power in the black community. So I wrote a paper for that, and I had to design and teach a class. For the class and paper you had to do a prospectus, and put together a committee for the paper, defend it and do an oral presentation on the paper. You had to put together a prospectus for each further class you had, write up a syllabus, and get a committee of faculty members to serve on it. You had an oral examination before and at the end of that class. One of the best things I learned during the course of that class—I used to wear dark glasses twenty-four hours a day and chain smoked—this is in the day when you could smoke in class—and they videotaped me teaching a session of the class, and the last thing was a critique. My professors said to me, “Okay, Harold, great class, a lot of energy, but we can tell when you are not interested when a student is saying something.”

DY: Even with your dark glasses on?

HW: Well, I had to take off the glasses because I was teaching this thing.

DY: Oh.

HW: I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “When you’re interested in what a student is saying you look directly at them.” There were windows in the classroom, and he said, “When you’re not interested you look out the window, or you look someplace else.” He says, “Okay, that’s good.” Then he told me, “Whatever you do, stop using that cigarette

when you talk because you beat them over the head—because you got it in your hand and you're going like this and the cigarette is in your hand, and it's like a club" [laughter]. "Put the cigarette down in an ashtray, or something, but stop doing that. Other than that, it was a great class." Those were two things I learned. I guess the point for those who teach—how to make students feel that you're interested in what they're saying, even though you may not be [laughter].

DY: Do you think you do it now?

HW: I still think I don't. Also I learned later not to make eye contact with people too much because I've been told—one of the things I run into with the students here, that I run into in my career, is that I'm so intimidating because I learned to look people directly in the eye and lock eyes. I can remember once I was teaching a class at the University of Rhode Island with about 300 people in a giant lecture hall, and there was a kid that was sitting about three-fourths of the way up in the classroom that sort of slanted down to me, like one in the science building, and I locked eyes with this kid and I must have scared the "hell" out of him because I never saw him in class again. It's almost when I locked eyes with the kid I almost saw that he was thinking about what I was saying, that he was really paying attention. It's like I crawled around inside his head, but I don't know, I never saw the kid in class again.

DY: And, of course, you didn't know his name.

HW: And I couldn't figure out his name because I lectured. I lectured two days a week, and I had TA's, so I never really knew who he was. So I learned later not to—and as a matter of fact, one of my professors—Tollerson—at Fisk, when I was supervising some research in my senior year, he told me, never interview anybody. I said, "Why?" He said, "Because your tone of voice tells them what answers you want, and you get them." So I've never really interviewed anybody for that reason. Some people say I'm so foreboding that it bothers them, that they're intimidated by me or something. So I no longer make eye contact with people, unless I'm negotiating a contract, then I get serious [laughter]! But I just kind of back off from that because I don't want people to say that I'm trying to use that as some kind of tool. Let me tell you this right away; I teach because I enjoy it. I teach because it's fun, and I made a commitment to myself a long time ago that I would leave it when it becomes a job. Everybody says, "I've got to go to work," but the day that I wake up and feel that, "Oh, I've got to go to work," it's time to get out. But as long as it's fun and as long as I feel physically able, never mind the politics of what we do and all that kind of stuff, I feel that I'll enjoy it. I still have fun in my class. Some days I walk out—I had a class last Monday, and I thought I just had too much fun today. This couldn't have been for real.

TS: It sounds like you could have gone anywhere you wanted to go given the places that you've been; what brought you to Kennesaw State in 1985.

HW: I left Rhode Island because, the head of the Black Studies Program, Melvin Hendrix, and the head of the Political Science Department, Al Killiea—he's retired now—but they

could not get a line position from the university, so I left. I had also taught in a class at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth part-time. I used to commute out there a couple of days a week, but I left Rhode Island and I thought, I'm going to swing through Georgia and stop off and visit with my relatives, and then I'll go back to Oregon because I really like Oregon. I call Oregon home, I guess. I thought, I'll go back to Eugene and rent an apartment, or house, and get settled and then do the job-hunting thing. My relatives said, "Well, as long as you're here, why don't you just stay here?" So I decided, "Okay, I'll stay here." So I decided to stay in Georgia, and then in the process I started looking at corporate jobs and education as well. What happened is one day I think, I don't know whether it was Toby Johnson at Morehouse [College], or somebody that I ran into who knew the Vice Chancellor for Service and Minority Affairs in the University System in Georgia. I cannot remember his name. But he was in that office in '85, so somebody had referred me to him. So I called his office and made an appointment and went in and sat down and talked with him, and he said, "Oh yeah, I'm going out to Kennesaw College in a couple of days to meet with Dr. [Betty L.] Siegel, the president. So I'll take a copy of your vita, and I'll give it to her." So he did, and that way it got passed down the line to Dr. Willoughby Jarrell, who was chair of the department [of Political Science] at the time. I think that was in the summer or fall of '84, and then in the spring of '85 I get this phone call from Willoughby asking me if I would come out and talk to her about teaching part-time. So I came out and talked to her and talked to Dr. [George H.] Beggs who was dean then. I came in, and I think I taught one class in American government in the evening, part-time.

TS: This is spring quarter?

HW: Spring quarter of '85. Some time during that time frame—because I think Pete Silver [Joseph H. "Pete" Silver, Sr.] had gone to the Board of Regents. He was the only black professor in the department, and he might have been the only black professor at Kennesaw. No he wasn't; there were a couple of others. But I know he was the only black professor in the department. I think I used his office at night, so I would have a place to work and see students. I met him, and he and I chatted and I got to know him pretty well, as well as you can. You meet somebody quickly, or a few times, and chat when you're on the run. But that semester ended, and Pete was at the Board of Regents, and he was going to decide whether he was going to stay or he wasn't going to stay, so then I was asked if I would consider a one-year, full-time, temporary position.

TS: So you replaced Pete.

HW: I replaced Pete. That one-year temporary position led to a full tenure track position, and this coming fall I will be starting my twenty-second year here. This is the longest I've been any place in my life [laughter]. This is longer than I've been settled in one spot in my entire life.

TS: Why do you think that's so? What's kept you here all the years?

HW: What's kept me here is, there's a cadre of black faculty, we now call ourselves the Black Faculty Caucus. Pete was also responsible for my staying even after he left because I used to talk to him and those of us who were here, would always talk to him about problem or issues that we had, or something. But I met Dr. Moses and Dr. Bobia. Dr. Ken [Kenneth P.] Gilliam had come, I think, the year before me. Then I ran into people like Diane [W.] Wilkerson, who used to be here. And Julia [M.] Collier in the admissions office. Terri Thomas [Terri F. Arnold] who was secretary to Roger [E.] Hopkins at the time. But this bunch of people—and there was a professor in Psychology named Rodney [W.] Dennis.

DY: I remember Rodney. What happened to him?

HW: He died.

DY: That's right!

HW: Somehow we coalesced together and even now we wonder how did this ever get started. We became a major kind of support system that we developed where we'd get together and talk and share recipes and formulas on how to deal with this problem or that problem. Many times it was always nice to know that somebody else already had these problems that you were now having that you knew. Because of that support, year after year after year, has now led to my being a tenured, full professor, going into year twenty-two.

DY: Do you find new black faculty are coming into your group, or are they all just absorbed into their departments, or what?

HW: Yes and no. There are those who don't associate with the group; there are those who do.

DY: Are you welcoming? I'm sure you are.

HW: Oh, yes. But one time there was a divide that was here at Kennesaw. There were two groups of black faculty according to the edicts of higher echelons, let's put it that way. That's the kind of thing where people were encouraged not to associate with those "trouble makers," and I guess we were the "trouble maker" group—but to associate with this other group. For a long time that divide kind of kept the mass from really getting together.

DY: Put a wedge in-between you all.

TS: What you're finding is the "bad" black faculty stuck around a long time.

HW: Yes. In fact, most of us are still here.

DY: You are tenured, full professors.

- HW: We're the old people who were here when we arrive now! That's how we look at it [laughter]. We are. Among our ranks, now, are some of the most senior professors on this campus. I would never have imagined that my first year.
- TS: That you'd be here this long, and that the rest of you . . .
- HW: I'll give you an example: we got an option to choose retirement, and I moved from the state system to TIAA-CREF because I still wasn't sure whether I was going to stay. I don't remember at what point I made the decision I was going to stay. It's just that because of this network and support, and because I've been really lucky. I've gotten pretty good support from my department chairs. If I wanted to go to conferences, if I was doing something of this or that, I would do it. It was okay. I edited a newsletter for a national black group called NCOBPS—National Conference of Black Political Scientists—for a number of years, because it was something my department was okay with and the dean was okay with our doing it. So I think essentially because of that support network, I stayed.
- TS: How organized was the black caucus?
- HW: It was about as disorganized as it is now. We have Co-Chairs, Dr. Bobia and I, and we have a Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Moses, and Ann [D.] Smith is kind of the . . . well, she's retiring in December. But Ann was like the new faculty liaison person a few years ago, because that's somebody who can reach out to these people, particularly at the time we asked her to do it. I think she was the associate dean of the College of Education or assistant dean, and it was pretty easy. She would have access to who is coming and going, and things like that. So now we're organized in the sense that we try to have at least one meeting during the course of every semester. One meeting a semester, and then we have an annual retreat every June. We started going to Zion Baptist Church [in Marietta], which is historically tied to Kennesaw, particularly with reference to the Black Community, and the Black Faculty that's been here for a long time, so we go there. We have an all-day retreat. The last one we just had this past June. We had some new faculty that were just coming in. They hadn't even been on campus yet, but they were coming in and had heard that we existed. We have other people now, and I think particularly for the first time since I've been here, this coming fall there is something about us that will be put in a packet that will go and be part of the orientation.
- DY: For all new faculty.
- HW: Yes. The orientation part that says something about the organization and the offices and that sort of thing.
- TS: What do you do at the retreats?
- HW: Our objective is to let people talk about the things that they've been involved in. The amazing thing we had this year is that people get up and they tell you the kinds of stuff that they've been involved in, and you realize how much research and writing, how much

this, how much that, what kind of position, what things people are doing, and you share that information. The amazing thing is it was really nice this year because people from the black community were also there. They got a chance to find out—this is what these men and women are really doing. They could see how involved they are in so many other things. So that's one of the things that we do. We also get reports from people in various departments in various colleges and the kinds of difficulties or the kinds of problem; or what's going on in the various schools and colleges, because we like to know about these things because many times we can be very successful if we know about problems that occur. I think our objective is to try to create an environment that's acceptable to people who come to this campus. If there are problems, we like to know about them ahead of time because some of us have been here a long time and it's always nice, it's good for new faculty to know, yeah, some of the complaints you're getting are old. Here's how we deal with these things, here's how some other people have dealt with these kinds of things. If you're having these problems let us know, if you're having these kinds of difficulties, let us know. I can remember now that the in-coming president, Dr. [Daniel S.] Papp is saying, "We're going down to the "three-pronged" again—scholarship and publication, teaching, and service," and when I first came to Kennesaw you could choose your two. The advice that we used to always give each other is to do all three, because your committee might decide that's not the one they want to choose, it may be the other one. And we talked about issues of tenure and promotion, the kinds of things that they need to do and the kind of involvement that they need to have in their department. They need to be involved in their college and they also need to be involved in the university. We tell them that, because the process toward tenure and promotion has been modified somewhat. There are the department committees, there are the college committees, and at one time there was a university-wide committee. If you're not known in your college and you come up on a college T&P committee, nobody knows who you are.

DY: But they've cut that now.

HW: Right, but the idea is you need to get there. Even still, it doesn't hurt you to make contacts and see people you can say hello to, so people know who you are. So we talk to them about that sort of stuff.

TS: So you're really mentoring.

HW: Yes, I think that's what has kept a lot of us here, because there hasn't been the money and sometimes it hasn't been the atmosphere or the climate. In many cases, it has not been the most supportive and nurturing climate for a black professor to exist at Kennesaw. I think, if I can digress for a minute, diversity at Kennesaw for a long time meant that we want a black person to come, but we want them to sound like us, and we want them to think like us. To borrow a phrase from the '60s, what they were looking for and what they seemed to almost insist upon was the "Oreo," a person who was black on the outside, but white on the inside, like the cookie. That's what we used to call that in the '60s. No matter where you were educated, you bring with you your entire culture and your history with you when you walk into the classroom. I'm always amused when

students, if I'm talking about civil rights, they'll say those are the black issues, and I'll say, "No, they're civil rights issues." But because I'm black—and I remember I used to go to high schools here in Cobb County, I guess I did it for about three or four years for Black History Month. They invited me to come during black history month to talk about the civil rights movement of the '60s. After awhile it dawned on me that, I'm a political scientist, they never asked me to come in and talk about the presidency, political parties, urban government, U.S. Congress, those things that I teach. They asked me to come in and talk during black history month to talk about civil rights in this country. After awhile I just stopped doing it, and it was a good decision for me because I became aware of that I'm only getting invited to come to these classes—they never said, "There's an election coming up, come in and talk to my class about the electoral process or elections or parties or that kind of stuff in this country." I haven't been sought after, nor have I attempted to do this any more.

DY: Good for you. It's a way of marginalizing.

HW: I decided I don't want to do that any more. But again, the whole nurturing, mentoring thing, I think that's one reason that many of us are here, is that we can get on the phone at night and talk to each other. I can remember the worst experience I've ever had at Kennesaw, well, I had a couple, was during my early years here when someone met the president some place and this person was related to a student in my class.

DY: I know this story.

HW: This person told Betty that I was obviously too liberal for Kennesaw, and so all of a sudden I find myself being asked to come to this meeting, and you learn how when you're invited to a meeting you never go alone! But I had a friend of mine, one of my former students, who is an attorney from Rhode Island, so I called her and we talked on the phone and she said, "Notify them that you'll be recording the meeting. Go out and buy yourself a voice-activated tape recorder." So she said, "Put it in writing on advice of counsel you will be recording the meeting and take a witness." So I went to this meeting and I sat and I listened to them tell me that I was too liberal for Kennesaw. I also listened to the Vice President of Academic Affairs at that time tell me that I expected too much of Kennesaw students. I said, "I've never heard of such a thing."

TS: The vice president or the dean?

HW: I don't know whether it was George Beggs or Ed [Edwin A.] Rugg, but . . .

TS: One or the other.

HW: One of the two—that I was too liberal and that I expected too much. I'd never heard of such a thing. Somewhere in my files, I have a tape-recording of the meeting [laughter]. In essence, what I did was, I said, "I can't deal with the stress of dealing with this." So I hired an attorney, J. Hugh Henry; he was the attorney who represented Jan Kemp who sued the University System of Georgia.

DY: Yes. I testified for her.

HW: So I hired him, took all of my files and stuff down to his office, talked to him about it, and he did what he did and told me to go back into the classroom. Somehow, I think he went through the attorney general's office, or I don't know how they did it, but it just disappeared.

TS: Save the tapes for the KSU archives some day.

HW: Yes, I still have them.

DY: Good point, Tom.

HW: I'll tell you something else for the KSU archives from something that we did as a black faculty. We had three conferences on Blacks in Higher Education that we did at Kennesaw, award-winning conferences—both regional and national award-winning conferences. All those papers and all that stuff, I gave them to Bob [Robert E.] Williams in the library. I don't know what they did with them because I used to keep them stored under my desk and in my file cabinets.

TS: They are in the KSU Archives [Georgia National Conference of Blacks in Higher Education records—4.8 cubic feet].

HW: Yes, because he said they'd put it some place, but that's the history of some of the earlier activities of the black faculty here at Kennesaw. It was a learning experience for me.

DY: Do you feel like that energy is still on campus, Harold?

HW: Negative energy?

DY: No, good energy that you were talking about, this mentoring group. . . .

HW: Oh, as far as we're concerned? Oh, yes. We have the Friday lunch bunch, I refer to it as the Friday lunch bunch gossip, therapeutic session because it's a place where we can come and talk and sit. You can laugh, you can cry, whatever you feel like doing, but you can vent if there's something that's going on and you can share it with somebody. I think if you talk to many of my black colleagues, particularly those that have been here for awhile, they would tell you that group, the ability to just to know that it's there if you don't avail yourself of the opportunity, or if you do go, that that's a contributing factor, that's helped keep people here.

TS: Are the problems that new faculty have the same today as they were when you came, or are they different?

HW: I would think the problems are the same. The problems are the same; how they surface may be different. I used to say this, and I still sometimes say this to my class that America is a racist, bigoted, sexist, homophobic, anti-elderly, anti-ugly anti-fat society, and it's a whole cultural process that's still going through the growth stages, and I think those things surface periodically at Kennesaw from time to time for faculty.

TS: Didn't you used to tell classes that you were those things, too?

HW: Oh, I am racist, bigoted, sexist. Unlike most people, I admit those are flaws in my character, and I admit that they are there, and I work vigorously every day to not let them surface. Race in this country can never be solved. The race problem in America is never going to be solved until everybody admits, yes, the problem exists, now let's talk about what can be done about it. I used to always think I remember when we were talking about planning a fourth conference on Blacks in Higher Education, again, an administrator said to us that the diversity issue is solved, there is no diversity issue.

TS: Who said that? You don't want to say?

HW: [laughter]

TS: I can't imagine anyone saying that, that's why I'm wondering.

HW: Yes, "Diversity wasn't an issue." And mind you, we did these conferences with no funding and no assistance, no funding from the institution. We got nothing out of it. We did it on our backs.

DY: You financed it through people. . . .

HW: Grants—one year, I got a \$25,000 grant from AT&T.

TS: I'm trying to remember, I attended one that was either Georgia State or a hotel down in Atlanta.

HW: The first one was at the Marriott and another one was the Hilton, and I'm trying to think if there was one other. I think we tried them downtown because this region of Georgia still has a reputation that precedes it and . . .

DY: They don't want to cross that river?

HW: Yes, the great Chattahoochee. Sometimes it's hard to get people—they may not want to come to this area. I remember going to a conference in Savannah on the Black Caucus of A.C.E. (American Council on Education). Pete Silver was involved in it when he went to Savannah State [University]. I was staying at the Westin, and they were flying the flag that had stars and bars on it. These are well-educated people, and they told the manager, "We don't have to be here, we can leave. Take the flag down. You've got a choice." So he took the flag down.

DY: Smart business sense.

HW: Yes. He took the flag down. “No,” they said, “We’re not going to be in a building with that flag flying on it. You must understand what it means to us. We can understand what it may mean to you, but you’ve got to understand what it means to us.” So they took it down. And sometimes I think Kennesaw is still that way. Every now and then, I think black faculty and black students and students of color have problems at Kennesaw sometimes, and sometimes they suffer as a result of that because they don’t say anything to anybody.

TS: You’re saying metaphorically the Confederate flag is still up?

HW: Yes, with the attitudes of people. I used to love to get phone calls every now and then, “Kennesaw is in Cobb County, Cobb County is conservative, and therefore Kennesaw is a conservative university.” I said, “Really? I never heard of that, but that’s interesting.” You know that people call and say those kinds of things to you. I am glad to see that I no longer get the kinds of phone calls from parents wanting me to explain to them why their children got this grade or that grade in my classes. I don’t get those any more. One, I would never talk to them anyway. I wouldn’t talk and I would say, “I’m terribly sorry, I can’t talk to you about your child’s grade. If your child is having a problem, you talk to your child, or have your child bring the two of you to my office and I’ll listen to what you have to say and what the child has to say.”

TS: What’s the act? The Buckley Act [Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (Buckley Amendment)]? The privacy, you couldn’t talk with them anyway without. . . .

HW: Exactly. I don’t care how old their child is. [In] the university system in this state we consider the child an adult, and so therefore, you have to talk to your child. Yes, but I still think there are some problems at Kennesaw. It’s almost tantamount to when I listen to people talk about that whole kind of “the illegal,” and rather than call them undocumented immigrants, they call them illegal aliens, which I think is really strange. It’s kind of fun when I like to remind my students, I say, “Well, obviously you should go study American history, you’ll find out they’re only coming home. Think of the southwestern part of the United States mostly used to be in Mexico, so they’re only coming home.” And they never even thought about that. A lot of times with reference to a problem when I’m talking about race, I would tell students, “Look, go study your own history. If you are Italian or Irish or Greek or Pole or from any of the Slovak countries or anything other than probably English or German in the early stages of this country, if you came to this country, you lived in ghettos. The same kind of crowded conditions that you would now cast aspersion on for Latinos, who may rent a house and twelve people live in it and they work in shifts. Go back and see if you can find out some ancestral history. And I love this whole immigration thing that’s going on now because not all the white people who came to America as immigrants came here legally. Not everybody came through Ellis Island and certainly not all of you came on the Mayflower. There were black people on the Mayflower too. Somebody had to cook!” I jokingly put it that way.

But sometimes I tell my class, “You need to go study your own ancestry and then we can talk. Get past the name that you have and go back and see if it was the original name that was signed in, even if they came through Ellis Island.”

TS: Or the name before they changed it at Ellis Island.

HW: Yes, because at Ellis Island, if they couldn’t pronounce it and they couldn’t spell it, you were whatever they wrote down, and that’s who you became. And if you kept your ancestral history, then you would know later generations—but go back and see if they shared that history. One of the most fascinating things about my upbringing when I was a child is that not too far from us were a couple of old ladies. One was Lila Butler and the other was Miss Abbie Hulein. They both must have lived there long before my early teens. They must have been at least a hundred years old and this was the ’50s, which meant that they were probably slaves.

TS: From the 1850s, ten years old when slavery ended.

HW: Neither one of them had electricity in their house or heating. They used to wear the bonnet and long dresses and everything, and at that time black people didn’t have lawns. They swept their yards with brush brooms. They would go out and get straw and make their own brooms to sweep the floor. It was three or four feet long. But we could not talk to them; we had to treat them with respect. But my grandmother, on every holiday and even on Sunday sometimes, she would send both of these women dinners, and my sister or I would deliver them. The one thing I look back on now is, wow, no one ever thought of taking what you have me talking into now, a tape recorder, and say, “Look, just push this button any time you feel like talking about what your childhood was like, what your life has been like, just talk into it. And let me know when the battery stops, and I’ll come back and put some more batteries in for you.” Because that was first-hand knowledge of slavery.

TS: Sure.

HW: Now that I’m an alleged educated person, I realize that was right at my fingertips, and it just went like water passing through my hands, because I don’t ever remember anything, other than, “Good morning or good evening,” that we ever said anything else to these people. My grandmother could go sit and talk with them. She wasn’t anywhere near their age, but she could go and sit and talk to them. It’s an irony now that I look back at it now, and I was that close to finding out what life was really like for someone who existed during that time frame in this country. Talking about existences at Kennesaw that made me remember that bit of information about my own upbringing and how sometimes it’s necessary to remember where you came from. I’m very proud of my history, my family.

TS: What years were your grandparents born?

HW: That I don’t know. I don’t remember those years.

TS: Did they ever talk about the old days?

HW: No. Where I grew up children were seen and not heard, and I can remember the only time my grandmother ever slapped me in my face was when I must have been about ten, eleven years old. One of the people her age came to visit, and they were sitting in the living room talking. I came in, was playing around on the floor, and my grandmother said, “Go outside and play.” “No, no, no.” My grandmother, she’s like me, I don’t like repeating myself. She said, “No, go outside and play.” The third time was with the back of her hand across my face, and I somersaulted on out the door. All I was doing was going from mouth to mouth as they were talking, and my grandmother said, “Go outside and play,” like, “You should not be here.”

TS: Oh, they didn’t want you to hear.

HW: No, you were not supposed to be around when they were talking. So I never knew what they were talking about.

TS: So they were kind of sheltering you.

HW: Well, I don’t know what they were talking about. My grandmother died when she was eighty-something and my grandfather died when he was ninety-something, and they were my parents. I never talk about my mother or those kinds of things, but they were my parents. I am who I am because of them. I have one sister who has a master’s in business administration.

TS: Now, was she the same age as you?

HW: She’s a year younger than I am. There was no such thing as pre-kindergarten, but they had something like primer, it was something like kindergarten or something, but I don’t know what they call it. It was the grade before the first grade.

TS: The primer is the textbooks that they started with—McGuffey’s Readers.

HW: I got a chance to go because I was six. My sister . . .

TS: What’s your sister’s name, by the way?

HW: Sarah Frances Wingfield.

TS: You were six and she was . . . ?

HW: I was six and she was a year and a couple of months behind me; she was born in November. She cried—that’s the tale my grandmother used to tell—because I went to school. In those days, everybody knew everybody. My teachers stopped by because the elementary school was up the dirt road behind us. So they would stop and talk and be at

your house for dinner. You couldn't get away with anything. You met them at church. Everywhere you went, they were there. My grandmother knew the principal. His name was John Henry Jackson, and his son was one of my classmates, so my grandmother talked to him, so my sister got to go to school. My sister and I are great sibling rivals. Some people don't think we get along too well because of the sibling rivalry. I confess she was higher up on the honor rank than I was. My sister and I, we've always been—we're very smart. No, I take that back. In those days, no one ever told you that you were smart. I still to this day have no idea what my SAT scores were.

TS: Or your IQ or anything.

HW: Or IQ. Then you'd really think you're smart. They didn't make the mistake of telling me. Don't tell me I'm smart; I know everything already. So you made sure you didn't do that. But my sister was always smarter than I was. She always worked harder than I did, but we studied together, that small group of people that were in high school, we used to have party-line phones, and we used to study together. The Ms. Bell I told you about, her son Franklin was in my class. We'd go to her house on Sunday, and she'd set up a blackboard in the living room. We'd be going through math problems, and working on them by telephone, and she would throw us out at 11:30 or 12:00 at night, and say, "Go home and go to sleep. We'll finish this up in class tomorrow morning." But the woman just gave so much. And that's why I will always consider her the best teacher I ever had. But, my sister was always smarter than I was, and she graduated with honors. She went on to Fisk and graduated, and then she entered the graduate program, I think, at Boston University. But for some reason she decided to leave school. I don't know whether she ever got her master's in history, or not, but she came back to Atlanta and got her masters in business administration from Clark Atlanta [University]. Then she decided she wanted to learn French, so she moved to Paris and learned French. Then she came back to Georgia, and she decided that she wanted to move to Africa, so she picked her country, did a lot of research. She decided she wanted to learn the chicken business from the ground up. So she packed her stuff up and moved to Dahlonga and started learning the chicken business from the ground up. When she'd done that, she spoke French, and she moved to Cameroon, and she's been there for over twenty years now. She may be coming home for a visit. But the amazing thing is, and I always look at it and think well, she's not getting rich in her business, she's not making a whole lot of money in her business, but she went through a marriage and a divorce, and she's doing exactly what she wants to do. My attitude is that it's her life, she's happy. I can't judge those kinds of things, so I will be happy for her. So we get along a lot better now that we're both old.

TS: Well, Lovett [Z.] Elango [professor of history, emeritus, who retired back to Cameroon] will have to look her up.

HW: Yes, she knew Elango's wife, who at one time had something to do with agriculture for the government or something like that. But she's doing what she wants to do, and she's happy, and I think that's all my relatives, or particularly my grandparents, would have wanted for us. We're not hurting anyone and we're enjoying what we do and we're happy with it.

- DY: Obviously you've done a lot of good and continue to do a lot of good.
- TS: That's a good transition. You won the Philip Preston [Community Leadership] Award in 2003.
- HW: I'm involved technically in a lot. I'm involved in less things now—every year I keep saying I'm downsizing and I'm going to not be involved in all these things. Politically, I'm active. I'm an elected official. I was just last Tuesday night re-elected to my fourth four-year term on the Polk County School Board. I've never had any opposition so this is my fourth time, and my thinking is this will be my last. I really did not want to run for re-election a fourth time, but some of us on the board that were up for re-election made a pact to run together.
- TS: You're talking about this election this past Tuesday?
- HW: Coming next January, I'll be starting my fourth term. And I have been everything from vice-chair to chair.
- TS: And nobody's ever run against you?
- HW: Nobody's ever run against me, ever. I wouldn't know what to do if I had opposition. Well, the first time I was all prepared, I got the issues and I'm all ready, I discussed education and all this. Ah! I went to a forum and someone asked me about farming. Farming? I don't know. But I've never had any opposition, whatsoever. But that's okay. I enjoy it.
- TS: Do you run countywide?
- HW: No, we run by district. My school district is under court order to be by district. Something happened and there was a suit some years ago before I came to Polk County that resulted in the school district being divided into nine districts countywide.
- TS: So there are nine on the school board?
- HW: There are nine people on the school board, and we all run by district. We always want to talk about it, and I think the one reason that I am the only black on my school board—I am the only black elected official in my entire county. At one time there was a city commissioner who served for one term and has never been re-elected and then there was a county commissioner who served for one term, and he was not re-elected either. So for almost twelve years, I've been the only black elected official in my county. And I succeeded a black on the school board.
- TS: Is there a concentration of blacks in your district?

HW: Everybody thinks there is, but there isn't. My district is predominately white. But my district is carved up in a way that is basically poor people, black people, white people and the brown people in the town live over there. As I told them, those are two nickels they can rub together and live over there outside my district. And a lot of people think it's a predominately black district, but it's not. It's a predominately white district.

TS: But it's a predominately poor district.

HW: Economically poor. I live with my aunt who is a funeral director.

TS: I was just wondering, with your liberal reputation at Kennesaw, I can't imagine you not speaking out on the school board.

HW: Oh no, no.

TS: I think it's remarkable that you haven't had opposition.

HW: Someone told me no one wants to run against me [laughter]. I'm an elected official at the local level. This is for the party. I serve on the Government Operations Committee of the Georgia School Boards Association. I serve on the State Committee of the Democratic Party of Georgia. I'm a county party official. I chair the County Democratic Association. So those are my kind of political things. I've been a delegate to the Democratic National Convention, and when Clinton was chosen in 1992, I was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention that year. My ambition used to be to serve on the Democrat National Committee, but I've decided that's one of those things that you must wait until you're damn near dead before you get considered to get there.

TS: Or give a million dollars to the party.

HW: You stand in line with all the people ahead of you, so I've given up that ambition.

TS: How many Democrats are on the school board?

HW: Seven.

TS: Seven of the nine are Democrats?

HW: Seven of the nine are Democrats. I live in a predominately, Democratically registered county, and most of the elected officials run at large—city commissioners and county commissioners; most of them are still Democrats. There are now a couple, one or two Republicans here and there. We have a couple of Republicans on the school board.

TS: Because the county is too poor for the Republicans to have moved in?

HW: Oh, no, the growth is coming. The school system—we're the first to feel it, but the growth is coming. They're building subdivisions, some of those first-time homebuyers.

Starter-ups in the \$115,000.00 to \$135,000.00 range up to now, you see a \$400,000.00 house going up. You realize that they're not building these houses for people who live here. They're building these houses for people who are going to move here, and these people are going to work in the metro and commute back and forth.

DY: Right—bedroom communities.

HW: Yes. And that's what everybody tries to avoid. I used to tell a couple of people I knew on the county commission, when they were still there, I used to tell them, it's too late to worry about the growth now, because the time to worry about that was fifty years ago. It's here; you should get ahead of it and try to direct it. Otherwise, it's going to run over you.

DY: Right.

HW: It's too late now. But, yes, all that growth is coming in, and with that will come even more. One of the young guys on the school board was one of my former students here at Kennesaw, who ran as a Republican—we run by party, as opposed to being at-large and non-partisan. Every now and then somebody wants to challenge it. It is kind of fun being the only black elected official because any time there's anything that comes up that's going to threaten or have some impact on blacks' ability to vote, I always say, "Oh never mind, I'll get a call." Then they say, "What do you mean?" I say, "Well, somebody from the Civil Rights Division at the Justice Department will be giving me a call, and the question will be, "How does doing "A" impact on the black vote?" A few years ago, they wanted to move a voting precinct from one area of town where it's been to another area of town that was further into the white community. Of course, there will be black people who cannot get to that part of town. They can't manage to get here, so we're still there. I get all those kinds of questions. There was a big, huge thing going on a few years ago where there was a big push to go to at-large elections, and I said, "Well, I like by-district." People ask me why, and I said, "Because it's the small group people. They can hold one person accountable. They know who their representative is directly. They voted for him. They can go to talk to him if there's a problem. But at-large, you may get all the people coming from one area of town, and one of them represents you and you have no idea who those people are."

TS: Well, the at-large is one of the red flags for the Voting Rights Act of '65. That was one way to dilute black voters.

HW: Dilute the black vote. That's the first thing that I got. You know, then all your people over there decide you're going to vote for your neighbor, so the number of black votes is smaller. So I said, "Look, I can win an at-large election. It's not about me." I'm saying this right now because I don't think Polk County has made it to this point in its own psyche that it is quite ready to fairly elect a black person based on their qualifications and the ability to do the job and not let the color of their skin get in the way. So therefore, I am still for by-district elections. I think the person who is likely to replace me may not

be black. It may be a Latino because they're becoming a larger population moving in. Some of them are business people.

TS: Are they registered?

HW: Some of them are. Some aren't, but many are. But they haven't coalesced in that political subset, but it's just a matter of time, they will. And while black people are doing nothing, they will be—because, if I don't run, they'll say, "We don't have anybody else to run." I say, "Look this isn't a career; you people don't pay me enough for this. Fifty dollars a meeting is not pay, you know." That's what I tell them. And besides, at some point I decided that I made as much of a contribution as I can in that area.

DY: Right—time for new blood, new leadership.

HW: Yes. Let somebody who thinks differently and sees differently than I do and try to move on to the next level. I served in every capacity. So as an elected official and as a school board member, I get to lobby at two levels: I'm a member of the Georgia School Board Association, the Governmental Operations Committee, and we put together a legislative agenda for the school board associations—almost all of the school districts of Georgia are members of it, and we put together an agenda of educational things that we lobby for at the state legislature. Once a year we go down and lobby personally where we go down and meet our own state representative or state senator, and talk to them. Then I also lobby at the national level for education. So far, for probably about the last eight to ten years, I've been appointed to the Federal Relations Network of the National School Boards Association where once a year I go to Washington and we attend a conference, and we spend an entire day on Capitol Hill meeting with our Congressmen and Senators on issues of education. Those kinds of things I like to do. One of the fun things I like to do now, I've been selected as a Zogby [Zogby International] poll guide, so I get the Zogby poll. About every two weeks, I get a new poll coming in. So I get to do that. Periodically, the National School Board Association publishes a magazine kind of communication thing. They'll come out with a short survey on issues and stuff on education, so I get that every month and I do that every month as well. So I get a chance to get my say-so in at those kinds of levels. Those I really enjoy—the school board has been really fun because it's gotten me in contact with a lot of people all over the country and has given me some experiences that—I mean, I ran for vice president of the Georgia School Board Association, I guess about five or six times, and then decided, ah, don't want to do it. Because somebody came to me—remember my personality—and said, "It's not that you can't do it, Harold, it's that you are so direct and you scare the heck out of everybody" [laughter]. I said, "Okay." But I still like to participate in it, and I like being involved. I love just meeting and talking with the people, I just enjoy that.

DY: And you take that real world experience into the classroom.

HW: Oh yes, that's one thing I do. People talk about electoral politics and I say, "here's how theoretically . . . now let me tell you how it really works" [laughter]. I went to lunch with one of my students I guess a couple of hours ago, and he's leaving for law school in

California, and we were talking, and I say, “You know, I was just telling my aunt, if I was twenty years younger I would consider sitting down and writing a book on small town, rural politics [laughter]. Right now? Eh!”

DY: You might want to do that when you retire.

HW: I keep thinking, small town, rural politics; theoretically here’s how it’s supposed to be. Now let me tell you about how it’s really done, tell people about that and elected officials and campaigning, and that kind of stuff. It’s just really funny.

TS: You need to write a book. What about with your experience on the school board? Every time somebody writes in the newspaper they talk about how awful the schools are. What’s your impression of the quality of public schools?

HW: The amazing thing is there was an article that came out in the *New York Times*—I read it on the Internet—if I’m on campus everyday during the school year I get the *New York Times* every day, but it was sent to me by another one of my colleagues. What he says is that they are both equally bad, private schools and public schools, in the real world of things, kids don’t know math, kids can’t write, they have problems and difficulty with English, in using the language. So I think there are good public schools. I think there are bad public schools. I’m not very fond of No Child Left Behind, which is a program put out by the Bush administration, because it’s under-funded, first with a whole lot of mandates that came out—I don’t like any of those kinds of things that demand that you do something and then you don’t put your money where your mouth is. The federal government still has yet to live up to its full obligation for funding public education; it needs to do that. And money is not the answer, but if you want good teachers you should pay them, and if you want teachers to stay in education who are good, you should pay them, and you should pay them so they can afford a decent standard of living. Therefore, I think there are good schools and there are bad schools. I’m a product of public education, and I’ve always been a critic of education, period, but I think that public education is good. It depends on, again, if you live in a poor, rural—here’s a bit of news: I serve on the Consortium for Adequate School Funding in Georgia. I serve on its board of directors. We are suing the state of Georgia. Right now it’s made up of 51 or 52 of the school systems in Georgia. Most of them are rural school systems. There are school systems now that—voters like to complain about their taxes—and school systems are governments by constitution in the state of Georgia, and the only source that the school system has where we can get money is by raising your property taxes up to twenty mills in the state of Georgia, and that’s not a lot of money. Rural school districts: there are some in Georgia that have about maxed out, that and they have no money. There is no place for them to go. The state has to step up and live up to its obligation in funding the schools. And that’s in the constitution of Georgia that says they are responsible for that, so we’re suing them. I tell people now, if I am a part of this effort and what little bit that I might do, and if it is successful, it will surpass any and everything that I have ever done in education. I can’t think of any greater reward than to know I was a part of something that generated a catalyst that ended up in getting schools adequately funded in the state.

DY: Justice and equity.

HW: That's one of my political, and one of the things that I really enjoy doing right now.

DY: Harold, I want to ask you a question. I'm so struck by your background and your education and Ms. Bell and your grandmother and, you know, it takes a village. What's happened in the rural areas? You don't expect that in the suburban and urban, or maybe you do in the urban, but everybody is spread out in rural areas.

HW: Rural America is no different than any other part of the country these days because there was a time when nobody had television. There was a time when very few people even had radios.

DY: I see what you're saying.

HW: All the communications and everything that goes on in Atlanta, happens in Polk County or a rural county in South Georgia. It happens almost instantly—instantaneous communication. And you'll find the kid in rural South Georgia will walk around with his butt hanging out of his pants just like you'll find from the kid walking the streets in an urban community in America, any place.

DY: But has the extended family also disappeared in rural America?

HW: Yes, the extended family, the sense of community has disappeared across America. When I grew up my community was a part of my upbringing, and my neighbors could chastise me. My neighbors could tell me I was wrong and let my grandmother know it. I remember sometimes my grandmother might have had a doctor's appointment and she was late getting home. My sister and I would come home from school and my neighbors—both of them are dead now— would say, "Go in the house and get your chores done." Because there was always something you had to do when you got home from school. "Get your chores done and when you get through with those come on over and bring your books, because you know you're supposed to be studying."

DY: Maybe get out of your school clothes too?

HW: Yes, oh, definitely get out of the school clothes. There were Sunday clothes and school clothes, and then there were the clothes you wore around when you were doing nothing else. "Then come on over here and wait till . . . because you're not going to be staying in that house over there by yourself and getting into trouble." So it was amazing like that. There was something I can remember about that relationship between my neighbors and my grandmother. Both had TV's—I remember the first person that went out and got a TV, a little tiny TV screen, was a school teacher, Ms. Mamie Philips. We'd go to her house—all the kids would crowd into her house and lay on her floor watching this little tiny screen. It wasn't as big as that computer screen. It was probably seventeen inches, but it looked so tiny, and we would all lay down on the floor watching it. And of course, at 11:00 everything went off and she would throw us out. If it was a weeknights, she

would tell us to go home then. She said, “Go home early, you know you’ve got school, tomorrow’s a school day, go home.” You wouldn’t be there if you hadn’t done your homework because you wouldn’t be allowed to go up there. In my house there was no such thing as no homework, even when I was a senior. Okay, if you’ve gotten all that done, you can start early on the next thing that’s coming up. But that sense of community, I don’t know why it disappeared in this country, but it has. Nowadays people are afraid. I think neighbors are afraid to say—neighbors no longer know each other, therefore their children also don’t know each other, and they’re afraid of being sued if you say something to someone’s kid, if you touch someone’s kid. I never thought anything about if my neighbors hugged me. I never thought about anything if my neighbor spanked me or punished me because I did something wrong. I can remember not speaking to a person, an older lady, when I was walking down the street one day, and she told my grandmother. “Harold came by and he acted like he didn’t even see who”—she was sitting on her front porch on a rocking chair—“he acted like he didn’t even see me, he didn’t speak.” My grandmother gave me a piece of advice, “Speak. She’s older than you are, she is an adult, and you speak. It’s just the polite thing to do.” All of that’s gone from communities, and I don’t think we’ll ever be able to recapture it; that’s the sad thing. And I don’t know where this phrase came from, “It takes a village to raise a child,” but that community. . . .

TS: It’s an African expression, isn’t it?

HW: Everybody keeps saying it’s an African expression.

TS: Oh, you don’t think so?

HW: I don’t know if it’s an African expression, I’m not sure. But if that’s the case that’s fine too, but we’ve become a society of individuals—we raise our children to be individuals. The interesting thing I find is that we raise our children to be individuals, but we don’t raise them to be independent.

DY: That’s a good observation.

HW: I’m so tired of . . .

DY: Helicopter parents.

HW: Yes, I am so tired of this. I’m talking to a young black kid in Cedartown now, who supposedly is going to Jacksonville State, but has announced to his mother—one, I don’t think he’s going to go; two, I don’t think if he goes he’s going to survive; but three, he’s announced to his mother he has to have a car to go to Jacksonville State. When I was growing up, I wanted a car; now kids expect them. And they expect to dress just like everybody else. Parents spend so much of their time giving things to their children rather than being involved in the lives of their children. That has brought about a disconnect between what’s going on in their children’s lives. I’ve read stories of people during the winters, when there are blizzards and fathers and mothers are trapped in their houses and

they can't get out to get the train to New York for work every day, and all of a sudden the kid that they knew as a baby is now sixteen years old. They can't even talk to them because somebody else takes care of them; somebody else feeds them while you're out there earning money to give them things. I used to be involved in Polk County with the juvenile justice program where I would come in and talk to groups of kids. One of the most disappointing things in the world—I used to try to mentor, but I gave up because it was so defeating to listen to a thirteen year old telling you that they can't wait until they turn sixteen so they can drop out of school. You know at that point that they've already made up their minds. Two men in Polk County who are instrumental in my still being somewhat active, trying to be active there and both of them are now dead: one was Odell Owens [Jr.] who I replaced on the school board, he was a retired school teacher; and the other was a guy named Unis Darden. He was a non-college graduate, but a successful black businessman in construction, and he did a variety of things. But they were two of the people who all went to city council meetings, county commission meetings, and those kinds of things. Sometimes Unis would come to the house on Saturday morning and we'd sit and talk about this very same thing, about children and families, and he used to ask me, "What are we going to do about all of these young people?" There are more black males in the jails and prisons in this country than there are in all the colleges and universities and that number is increasing in jails and prisons, not decreasing. He's asking me, "What can we do? What can we do?" I had a very sarcastic reply, and this is the arrogantly, blunt me. I said, "One nine millimeter round at the base of their brains would put them out of the misery that we know they're going to face, because when they get to thirty-five years old they're going to run into a giant wall in which they will not be prepared for life."

DY: If they live to thirty-five.

HW: Right. Well, if they survive the drugs and all the other stuff, they're going to end up in prison or dead. But they're going to be angry that somebody let them. "Why did you not make me go to school? Why didn't you do this? Why did you let me be a drop-out?" They're going to find out at thirty-five years old, you don't look too cool walking around with pants with your butt hanging out. And the kids who are that age, if that's the way they still dress, they're not going to want you hanging out with them anyway. You've become the old guy, and they're going to become very angry. And I used the expression "one nine-millimeter round, execution style at the base of their brain," and he said, "We can't do that!" I said, "I know we can't do that. But there's no way we can convince them about the future that they have because they have a pocket full of money."

DY: Don't you think they're symptomatic, though, and isn't this kind of the "canary in the mine?" Aren't we pathologizing the canary or the child or the young man; they're symptomatic of the culture.

HW: It is, but white kids, Latino kids are doing the same thing. They all can't wait to drop out, particularly; they can't wait to get out of school. Some make it, some don't. I don't know what the answers are to dealing with the family and getting it back, but one of the things we say in secondary education is that in every conference that I've gone to and

listened to all the experts say we need more involvement of parents in the education of their children. The funny thing—this is so strange as a school board member: between pre-K, kindergarten and elementary school, you can't turn around without bumping into parents; they're there. But boy that kid gets to middle school and gets a driver's license, and all of a sudden they don't want the parents around, and the parents give in. They won't go to PTO meetings or PTA meetings, very few are involved with those kinds of things. The most terrifying thing I could ever imagine as a kid was that I stepped out of my classroom and my grandmother would be walking down the hallway; I would know that my life is about to end. Something got so bad that my grandmother had to come to school. That was never something that my grandmother would have put up with. Because I tell students, "If I had talked back to my parents the way that some kids talk back to their parents today—I'll call the police officer, I'll call DFACS if you touch me"—this is what my grandmother would tell me: "Okay, look, here's the phone. Dial it now, because your hand is going to be broken after you finish dialing. Dial 911, and then call the police. Tell them to bring an ambulance because we're going to have to stop by the hospital." I can imagine my grandmother saying to take my fist out of your mouth and my foot out of your behind, because you are not going to talk to me like that in my house." My grandmother would probably never have had to say that to me, but that's what I would envision if I had ever talked back to her, if I had ever in any way tried to threaten her. I respected my grandmother too much to do that, or any adult, when I was growing up, in that fashion. Somehow that is not being passed along to children, respecting elders, respecting your parents, listening to them. There was a kid that grew up in my house, with my aunt and me. He's now doing pretty good in California in the corporate business community, and I used to tell him, "Do what I said because I said so and I don't have to explain that to you. I don't want to be your friend at this stage of your life. I'm the adult; you're the child. I don't want to be your friend." I think one mistake is parents spend too much time today wanting to be—mothers say, "My thirteen year-old daughter is my best friend." I say, "Give me a break, she's thirteen. If you're confiding all your private life in your thirteen year-olds, that's not the business for your child. I think that's the one thing that's contributing to it. They want to be liked by their children. I told Barry, "Look, if at thirty-five you like me, okay. That's fine. But right now I have to make the decisions; you don't get to make them. That's my responsibility and it's your responsibility to hate me, to dislike me, to be mad at me, that's fine. I will sleep okay." And we laugh about this sometimes now. But I think some of that is missing now, in parenting. And we have too many children having children having children too.

TS: Well, I suspect we're just hitting the tip of the iceberg on all the things that you do. We've talked about your school board experience and the Democratic Party, and obviously you've been mentoring—Big Brother and that kind of thing.

HW: Involved in my community with mentoring and that kind of stuff.

TS: And also mentoring at Kennesaw State with the Black Caucus, and so on. What are you proudest of, of what you've done?

HW: What am I proudest of? I've never been asked that in my entire life. What am I proudest of? I think I'm proudest of, I guess, I'm the only person in my family with a Ph.D. I'm not the only person in my family that is college educated. I have an uncle that was a doctor and those kinds of things—but I'm the only person of all of my family thus far, and that's all of my cousins and everybody that I can connect with, that has a Ph.D. So I'm very proud of that. I guess I'm very proud of my family. It's not so much I'm proud of me, I'm really very proud of my family.

DY: You see yourself as a product of your family.

HW: Yes, I'm a product of my family. Well, my familial environment, I'm a product of. I'm proud that I think that my grandmother and my grandfather—although my grandfather died relatively early, when I was eleven or twelve years old, but my grandmother lived to see me go on to college, I think that my grandmother would be happy at what I do and what I have become with my life. That is what I would be really proud of, and I think that she would. I'm happy with my educational success. I'm happy at my political success, if you want to call it that. I'm happy with me most of the time, but again I think the most proud thing would be to think that my grandmother would be pleased at what I've become and what I've done with my life and what I've tried to do in small ways to help others. That's it. And teaching—I think that's what I'd be most proud of.

DY: You've helped in large ways and in ways that aren't even visible to you yet, because these students grow up and go on to do wonderful things.

HW: There's nothing like getting a phone call from a student who says, "You know, I hated your classes, but boy did you get me ready for graduate school, or boy you got me ready for writing in law school." You complain about studying, you better take your head off and screw it back on and make sure it's right because law school is a take-no-prisoner type situation.

TS: You talked once about having to have an attorney for a meeting with administrators; do you feel that Kennesaw has honored and respected the kinds of things that you've done?

HW: No [laughter].

TS: I was thinking mainly with regard to service.

HW: No. I received the Preston Award, yes, and I've won other service awards. I hate plaques. I always tell people, don't give me plaques; give me a check [laughter]. But I have plaques and certificates and that kind of stuff. But do I think Kennesaw has appreciated me or not just me, but some of the things that the black faculty have done since we've been here, the answer is no. I am looking forward in my remaining one year, two years, five years that I am here, that I want to see others benefit from what we tried to do. I think the equity in salary things that we always talk about—I'm still waiting for that adjustment to try to catch up with me. But no, overall, I do not think that what I, or the Black Faculty Caucus as it exists today, has been really appreciated very much on the

campus. Because sometimes it's been uphill and a struggle to almost making an effort to discredit us and push us out of existence by people in the administration. I think that was a bad thing. Yes, that's how I feel about it right now.

TS: What about the intellectual life at Kennesaw? How would you describe it?

HW: To give an example, the caucus is where I sort of feed into that, when you talk about scholarship and research. Rosa and I were balancing the conference thing we talked about the other night, and something else that she's trying to do that we were talking about, and so I said, "Okay, put me down as a consultant and pay me," just jokingly! But Kennesaw still has a problem that it has to come to grips with, and that is we are still looked upon as an institution of commuters. There are people in my department now that I don't even know that I may pass that I still don't know because I do a Monday-Wednesday schedule and they do a Tuesday-Thursday schedule, and never the two shall meet, except for those who come to a department meeting maybe once a month. Still you just see them, but you don't really know them, so there's not been much intellectual or scholarship interactions, for me at least, no collaborative stuff that I've seen from within my department in interests or anything. Perhaps that's because I chose the service track as opposed to the research and scholarship track, and sometimes I kick myself for having done it because when I came here I really liked to write and now I've gotten lazy. And people tell me they read my letters or when I write something that is really great, that I'm a good writer. I had classes in creative writing when I was in college at Fisk.

TS: But it looks like your scholarship could grow out of your service.

DY: That's exactly what I was thinking.

HW: It might. It's just a matter of—at some point I have to sit down and decide that I want to do it, and then if I make that decision—I've always done most of what I wanted to do. If I set something as a target—I decided I was going to get a Ph.D. and nothing was going to stop me; no matter how long it took I was getting a Ph.D., and I wanted the traditional Ph.D.

TS: But you needed a deadline to get there.

HW: Well, it had to be a threat.

TS: Maybe you need a threat to get into writing.

HW: "You're going to die tomorrow, so you better write" [laughter]!

DY: Well, you've decided that maybe you're not going to run again.

HW: I'm not going to run again in four years, and that would free up time for other things—writing? I've made that decision already. Sixteen years is enough.

TS: You could write about local politics and that would be interesting, rural, local politics.

DY: That's right.

HW: Rural, local politics in Georgia.

DY: I'd sure love to read it.

TS: But your feelings on intellectual life, even though you're not doing a whole lot of writing right now, what do you hear, what do you feel? That it's different for black faculty than for white faculty?

HW: I'm trying to figure out how much of it really exists for white faculty, how much interaction and intellectual discourse and discussions that really goes on.

DY: You have to hunt it out with individuals.

HW: Yes, most of the meetings that you have are "meeting" meetings and if you see people . . . my intellectual stuff comes when I go to conferences and I listen to panels and I sit there and say, "I'm not going to ask any questions; I'm not going to make any comments." And then I find myself in the midst of a discussion. I'm always asking a question. I have black colleagues from all over the country, but when I go to the National Conference of Black Political Scientists meetings, some people say, "This is better than the big one, the American Political Science Association, because it's really great the kind of feedback that you get when you do things."

TS: But you're saying that there may be a lot of intellectual life going on, but we're not talking to each other.

HW: That's it. I know that people are doing research. I can remember, they had "brown bag" things going on, but they're not very well attended. Because I'm one of those persons who says, "Don't send me an e-mail saying "A" is going on the week after next," because I'll write it in my calendar and I won't think about it again if you don't remind me. Let me see what it's about. Well, I don't want to talk about international politics. If it's something else that's interesting, I may go. Rosa was very good at, "Okay, you've got to come to this, you've got to come back to hear him." I love those kinds of things. One of the most enlightening intellectual things was I used to be faculty advisor to Chautauqua [Lecture Series] here.

TS: That's right, we haven't talked about that. That used to be really important.

HW: I used to be faculty advisor to Chautauqua, and Chautauqua in those days was the student-funded organization that brought cultural and intellectual speakers to campus. It wasn't for entertainment. We brought Bill Cosby, Maya Angelou, we had scheduled B.B. King but he cancelled out, Jesse Jackson, Maurice Sendak—a whole bunch of people. The psychiatrist Alvin Poussiant, a whole bunch. Writers, Jaime Escalante, the

Latino whose life story was the basis for the movie, *Stand and Deliver* [1988], where he taught those kids calculus in L.A., and all that kind of stuff. We brought those kinds of people, and it was great just to watch students interact and meet those people and be able to have dinner with them and talk to them and watch their presentations and the audience and people who came. That was really good, and that was one of the things I used to really enjoy at Kennesaw. But then it became something now that I would not want to be bothered with. But I enjoyed Chautauqua, but we need more of those kinds of speakers being brought to campus. I would stay on campus if somebody was speaking. I would stay on campus for a lecture, or come down even when I'm not teaching on a day, come down to some of those activities. And there were discussions afterwards while that person was here and you discussed their works and some of those kinds of things.

TS: We haven't done as much of that lately as we used to do, have we?

HW: Yes. The biggest thing we do now is the book club. I love to see a book club. I know Dede does those things, and I have so much fun when I go to those.

DY: Yes, they're great. We're going to have more of them.

HW: If you read a book and we see the movies and we talk about it, it's just fascinating. People [come] from all over campus and you get all these different perspectives and you think, wow, I hadn't thought about that. And you have these things, and if everybody's read the book and you talk about it and I just sort of love to listen to everybody—and throw a little hand grenade into the discussion [laughter]! Wow, you know, you go home, it's almost like going to a conference and you come home really fired up and the juices are flowing. You're like, "Wow, that was really good," because you don't see enough of that type of exchange. Somehow I don't see that kind of interchange. Like how many people interact with people in the business school? Can you get any of them over there to interact with anybody about something else? Or in the hard sciences, can you get them, because they're over there and we've become so big that we are now spread so far out that we're becoming disconnected from each other as an institution.

TS: They have their Tetley Lecture Series that the business people go to and nobody else does.

DY: That's unfortunate.

HW: Rather than reaching out to everybody to come to these kinds of things.

DY: Well, my connection with the sciences is Army [Lester].

HW: Yes, being available.

DY: I was in a discussion with Army today. That's my connection with the sciences, so again, I think some of that's growth.

HW: I've served on every possible committee—I've been Chair of the College Senate. It was the College Council, and it became the College Senate the year after I left, wasn't re-elected.

TS: You chaired it one year.

HW: Yes. I was a member of the College Senate and Faculty Council for the Senate. I can remember those things. I've served on every search committee imaginable. I've served on tenure and promotion committees, at every level.

TS: You were even on the search committee in the history department last year.

HW: Yes. I've been on search committees, even outside of my discipline, but beginning in the social sciences. But I've never served on a dean's search or a president's search yet. Those are the only two I've missed, so I've done all of those things at the institution. At some point, I don't think I'll ever want to be involved again in faculty governance kind of stuff, the College Senate, the College Council. I think that at this stage of the game for me it is best for those who are going to be here longer than I. They need to be much more involved in it than I should. I remember [former Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences] Linda [M.] Noble had like a council of old folks, and we sat around talking.

DY: Oh, senior faculty. We did a May-mester day on that.

HW: Yes, it's like where the old folks sit around and talk about the old days [laughter].

DY: Well, our new President Dan Papp is interested in having senior faculty as an advisory group.

HW: Good.

DY: He said that.

TS: I don't remember being invited to the council of old folks.

DY: I'm sure you were.

TS: I don't remember it.

DY: It was last May.

HW: That was last May. I did that one, but Linda had done one once when she was dean where she had some senior faculty.

TS: I guess I wasn't senior enough.

HW: Oh come on, you're more senior than I am [laughter]! But I think we just met once or twice, and then nothing ever became of it. There are some issues that I don't want to talk about any more. There's been enough talking and research, like diversity and all these kinds of things, these fights we keep having.

TS: Right. You don't want to discuss it any more.

HW: I don't want to talk about it any more. Go open the file cabinet, dig out the recommendations that were made, implement two or three, and then call me. Let me see you implement something as opposed to saying, "Let's go talk about it." No, we don't need to keep rehashing the same arguments and coming up with the same recommendations year after year after year because we're still not doing anything. That's one thing with Kennesaw, sometimes, Kennesaw used to give me the impression that they feel that a problem of a black faculty member has been resolved if somebody has listened to that black faculty member.

DY: That's right, Harold. Yes.

HW: You know, "Well, it's taken care of now, we've heard you, we've heard your problem, now go on back out there and do your work." That's a climate that needs to be broken immediately. When people come with genuine concerns, there's an expectation of some follow up, if you raise an issue with them, and I'm not sure whether that's taken root here yet. I hope that it has. But I can remember in the old days it was like, "Okay, we've listened to them now; everything is over." If there's a crisis, let's talk about it. "Now it's over." That kind of stuff, that's it.

TS: Well, we've enjoyed talking to you today. You've given us some good perspectives, I think, about your career and Kennesaw State.

HW: Thanks. It's been fun for me for me because it makes me reflect. I've probably talked about stuff that I haven't thought about in a long time.

DY: That often happens when people do these oral histories. It's a very reflective process. Thank you for your time.

HW: I look forward to seeing the results of the entire work when you guys are finished, to see what happens with it.

TS: Okay, great. Thank you very much.

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