

#7 INTERVIEW OF BLACK STUDENTS ENROLLED AT WASHINGTON AND LEE

1. *Have you decided upon a college major?*

If yes, what?

Yes, pre-law, But that can be anything, so I was thinking about Mass Communications and Journalism. I'm not sure quite what my concentration will be, because I know you have to do a concentration. It sounds a bit like Sociology or History.

But this is your freshman year, so--

Yeah, I don't know.

2. *(If the answer to question 1 is no, skip #7.) What is your grade point average (GPA) in your major field?*

3. *What type of degree are you working toward at Washington and Lee?*

BA

4. *What is the occupation or profession you want to enter upon finishing your education?*

Ultimately, I would like to be a lawyer. But I want to be a journalist at some point. Where I'm from, there is great possibility of combining both.

5. *Do you plan on working toward an advanced degree at some time after finishing your undergraduate program?*

yes

6. *While growing up, did you attend or were you personally active in church? Yes, I've always been.*

If yes, please give the denomination, and the type of church activities in which you participated.

I'm a Pentecostal. I've always been involved in Sunday School programs, and we had a very active young people's program. We do what we call exhortations, a form of preaching, you preach as long as a normal Sunday sermon, something like that.

To each other?

For a general audience. It's like giving young people a chance to actualize themselves, overcome shyness, that sort of thing. Being articulate.

How would you characterize your church involvement in Lexington?

It's not the same denomination, but it feels practically the same. It's the First Baptist Church.

It's very good.

How much involvement do you have?

I just usually go on Sundays, because I just started, actually. I didn't realize that it was so near. I thought that all the churches would be very far. So I've been like going last semester actively.

7. *How would you compare your level of participation in extra-curricular activities in high school and at Washington and Lee?*

High school--I had a very active role. We have a very active Drama Club, Debating Club, Speech, and usually Internal National Festival every year with song and dance. I've been doing a lot of that, so I'm used to it. I had a lot of responsibility, because they have a senior student

association, and they have a head, it's like a prefect association, discipline, that sort of thing. And I was appointed the Head Girl, so I had a lot of responsibilities.

You were the head of the other prefects?

Yes. It was good. It taught me quite a lot. That I found is very helpful here, because you have to say what you mean here, because people don't understand you. Not that there is a necessarily a language barrier, but it's your accent and that sort of thing. I found out when I got here you have to really be forthright. That can be tricky sometimes.

And are you involved to the same degree in extra-curricular things at W&L?

I just got here. So far I've been actively involved in the International Club, Intervarsity, it's a lot of fun. Those are the two main things, because it's different. I really can't afford to be doing too many extra-curricular activities. I need to get settled in my work. That has been a lot of challenge to me. It's not that the work is harder than what I expected. Different things are demanded of you, like typing papers. In high school I didn't have to do that. So a lot of my time has to go into things like that.

8. *How did you learn about Washington and Lee University?*

My guidance counselor--it's the same thing as a college counselor here. They have stuff on the American colleges that are really respected in the Caribbean. W&L is really on the top of the list. I really wanted a liberal arts education. I didn't want to do just one thing for the whole four years.

So mostly your counselor at the high school.

Yes.

9. *To what extent were you assisted during the admissions process by an alumnus of Washington and Lee?*

Not at all.

10. *Did you visit the campus before you matriculated as a student?*

Yes, after being accepted, I came in April for a prospective student's thing and got to see the campus..so beautiful, especially the Lee Chapel. It's so pretty--the colonnade.

Got to know some students at that time as well?

Yeah, a lot of students. And I was so happy, because a few of them have actually been on my dorm.

Other prospectives entered and are now in the same dorm?

Yeah, they all came. It was like prospective weekend--a lot of parents were there. I had already made up my mind I definitely wanted to come to W&L. And they wanted to come too. A lot of them did.

Is there anything more you'd like to say about your reactions to your campus visit?

People were very warm. It really seemed like a college family. I guess it's because it's a smaller college really. People are interested in getting to know you. I really like that.

10a. *Was W&L your...*

There was a University of [the West Indies?] So that was my choice if I wasn't coming here. I was accepted for that one, but I really wanted to come to W&L.

So W&L was your first choice even over that one?

Yes.

10b. *About how many other colleges did you apply to?...*

Four others.

10c. *How many other colleges accepted you?*

I was wait-listed for the others.

11. *What made you decide to attend Washington and Lee?*

Liberal arts.

The West Indies is not a liberal arts school?

No, it's not. You have to be--for example, if you wanted to do medicine, you'd go straight into medicine. So you'd leave high school and go straight into medicine. A lot of people like that. But, I happened to be one of the youngest in my high school, too. A lot of people are usually 19, 20, so they don't really mind. But I was 18. Like I had turned 18 in May before I came here. I was 17 in high school. And, I really wanted some more time to ultimately decide on my discipline.... cause I know what I really want, but --

So the fact that it's a liberal arts school was the major reason?

Yeah.

There's a list here. See if anything jumps out at you.

Financial assistance too, because. I'm the last child in my family. In the last years we've been having a lot of difficulty. My dad has glaucoma and he has been doing surgery and that is very, very expensive. And that kind of consumed family funds. Even this week my mom called and said he had to go back to the hospital and do one more, just when they thought it was over. He has been that way for quite some time now. So I really--I didn't know what I was going to do. College anywhere is expensive, and I knew it was going to be a burden, because my brother and sister were not in a position to be really help me, so this was really one of the reasons too.

12. *Once you decided to enroll at W&L, what was the reaction of friends and relatives?*

It was my decision. It was going to be a long way from home and would take a lot of getting used to. So it was my decision. I think a lot of that helped when I actually came in April.

Because then they were able to ask me, even though it was a short visit, what do you really think?

Your family came to visit? Or when you went home?

When I came to Prospective Weekend in April. That was really a chance for them to ask me "Do you really want to go?"

Your parents were asking you?

Yes.

And when you really decided that you wanted to go, how did they react then?

They were happy, cause I was happy.

Were there negative images about W&L that made you think seriously about not coming?

No. I can't think of anything.

13. *Once you were enrolled, did you find the University to be as you had expected?*

Yes.

If the school differed from the way it seemed when you first heard about it or visited the campus, please describe how it differed.

No, because I don't think I had an image of the university here as a whole. I wasn't expecting anything. Just ready to deal with it.

14. *Please describe what you consider to be your greatest challenge at Washington and Lee.*

It's difficult to say. Academically, it has been getting used to the difference in the system.

Getting work ready, not classwork. Getting it done the way they want it, it's very different. Even now we're just different. We spell words differently. It's just really confusing sometimes. Expressions are different, like different meanings that you have for them that we don't. That has been my greatest challenge so far. Once I get used to that I'll be OK.

How have you dealt with it?

The faculty is very, very helpful, giving a lot of assistance as far as typing and stuff, as far as getting

15. *How has your academic performance at Washington and Lee compared with your performance in high school?*

Last semester was the lowest I've ever performed in my life.

In terms of grades?

Yeah. But I think it's the adjustment. I feel better about this term already, so far. I'm really excited about this semester.

16. *What academic resources have you used at Washington and Lee?*

Writing Center, study skills course, talking to my professors, language lab in French, tutors, computer lab facilities. They appoint tutors for you in computer science.

Do you have suggestions for the development of these or other facilities?

I think it's probably hard to say. Different people have different problems. But I think once the realize you have a problem you are helped, whether it's on an individual thing...

17. *What factors contribute or contributed to your selection of a major course of study?*

Interest in the particular academic discipline,
In your case Journalism and Law.

18. Have you changed majors since you have been enrolled at Washington and Lee?
If yes, please describe that change.

No.

19. *If you saw a person or group of persons lying, stealing or cheating would you report it as an honor violation? Please elaborate.*

You have to.

So you feel like it's part of the system?

Yes. It's automatic, I guess.

20. *Do you find Washington and Lee professors easy or difficult to approach?*

They are just accessible. It's not a matter of easy or difficult, but once you state your particular case they []..

Have you been able to establish close working relationships with a member or with members of the W&L faculty?

The deans are helpful if you have a particular problem.

21. *What has been your experience at W&L with regard to social life?*

Big difference. Social life is kind of geared in terms of that.

In terms of?

Fraternity parties, drinking, that sort of thing. But you can get around it, because you don't have to do things that you don't want to do. It's not forced on you. It's just different and I guess once you understand it you know where you're at. I attend fraternity parties, but you don't have to drink if you don't want to drink. It's new to you.

So you've attended fraternity parties?

Yes, but I still don't drink.

What about other aspects of social life?

The International Club has a lot to offer in terms of that, so you can get involved in that. And Intervarsity. There are a lot of other things to do....and all those nice things. The Lenfest has nice things sometimes. I don't have a lot of time either.

But your experience has been very different. What's it like at home that's different?

People don't out set out to drink. It's very disturbing here. I've gotten used to it. I think what happened is like when I first came and people used to get drunk and bang on your doors on Saturday night, it used to scare you. That was awful.

Does it still happen?

I guess everybody's just kind of used to it. I think they were just happy when they came. "Oh, we can drink" or something like that. Used to get drunk and pound on your doors. It was very disturbing.

And now you're saying you're used to it but it's still happening?

It's still happening, but I'm kind of used to it now. You don't jump up and get scared when you hear them banging. You just go back to sleep. Back in high school I don't remember seeing anybody drunk. But it could be that the drinking is not really 21 as it is has. We do have a drinking age, but as long as they're not drunk and driving, there's no problem. In an obvious teenager was caught with alcohol, somebody would check how old you are. But if you would finish up a beer, no one would really stop you. Our parents usually serve wine at Christmas time or international public holidays. Wine is served at the table. So it's like part of our meal.

It's not like something you've been waiting for a chance to do all your life. What sort of social gatherings are there at home that are different, other than the fact of alcohol. Are there social gatherings, different kinds of gatherings? The social life, is it different?

We don't have fraternities and sororities.

What do you have?

Parties.

How important to you is alcohol at a social event or social engagement?

Not important.

How important to you are drugs at a social event?

Not important, not done, especially in my family. Not done.

Have you observed the use of drugs on campus?

No.

22. *What experiences, if any, have you had with Greek organizations on campus?*

The girls in the sororities seem very nice. They're very nice to me. I decided not to rush, but they're very nice just the same.

23. *Evaluate your experiences with regards to athletic teams/athletic facilities/and physical education classes.*

I haven't had much experience.

24. *How would you characterize your opportunities for "dating" while enrolled at*

Washington and Lee?

I haven't thought about it. It hasn't come up.

How do you feel about the opportunities?

I guess you don't think about it unless it comes up.

So it really hasn't been any sort of question or issue.

25. *Have you ever considered transferring from Washington and Lee to another college/ university? No*

Why/why not?

I'm happy here. I just need to adjust some more. But I'm happy.

26. *Have you had a paid job on campus (including work-study)?*

Yeah, I do work study.

If so, has this influenced your level of satisfaction at W&L?

Yes, because you get to know more people. It's a good way to get to know people, because they're coming to the office, you get to know a lot more members of the faculty. It's really exciting.

So you feel like you belong a little more and you know the people?

Yes.

27. *Would you be willing to recruit other students for Washington and Lee either as a student yourself or as part of an alumni program? Please elaborate.*

I definitely have a positive view of W&L, so I really encourage other students to come. It's a different experience. I guess it's different for everybody coming to college at all. It's just different, but it's good.

Now we ask some background information:

28. *In what geographical location did you grow up:*

Jamaica

*In what type of **area or community** did you spend most of your growing up years?*

I was born in an urban area, because I was actually born in the capital. But then my family moved to what is considered the country area. That's where I went to high school and stuff.

29. *Describe the type of **high school** you attended.*

Rural

Predominantly

Black, but I guess you shouldn't call it that. Jamaicans are a very mixed, very diverse, people of Indian origin or Chinese origin or even white origin. But I guess everyone has kind of grouped us into Black.

So it's both mixed and black in different ways, different definitions.

30. *Please give the kin relationship(s) between you and family members in your home when you were growing up.*

My mother and father, my grandmother, and I have one brother and one sister.

31. *What was the highest level of education achieved by your parents, guardians, or others with whom you lived when you were growing up?*

My mom is a college professor. My grandmother was a primary school principal. My dad is a building contractor.

So your mom has a college degree, and an advanced college degree?

She has a .. and an MA

Does your grandma have an MA as well?

No. I think from that age, there was some British thing you had to do for certification. I don't really understand it. It's changed now.

32. *As compared to other W&L students, how would you characterize your overall social class position (based on parents' education and family income)?*

That's hard to say. I have to admit that back home I didn't have to deal with that. This is a new thing. I guess in terms of everybody else here, poorer than. At home we were basically just normal Jamaicans.

So there are people who are lots wealthier and people who are lots poorer?

Yeah, I guess we have people who couldn't afford a high school education. But at least my parents could afford that. College is much different, you know. A lot of people don't go to college. Actually about ... percent. At home we separate college and university. College, you can get a diploma. That's usually what college is about. University is something where you can get a degree. We have a lot more people who go to college and just get a diploma.

Is the diploma in a particular trade?

You could use that diploma to go on to a degree. It's not like a high school diploma. It's a college diploma. Something in between a degree, but it's not a degree.

We have that. You go to what's called a community college here. It's a 2 year. So you're defining yourself as poorer than most W&L students.

Much poorer.

How do you think this has affected your experience?

Not at all,

33. *In general how do you think about yourself first at Washington and Lee -- as a member of a particular racial/ethnic/national/gender group, or as a student?*

As a student. I guess the Jamaican experience is much different. You haven't had to deal with color, being a minority, that sort of thing. I just think of my self as a student.

34. *How homogeneous do you believe black students are on this campus? In answering please consider racial identification, political perspective, and/or social class position.*

They do tend to stick together. Not excessively so, really. I think I really haven't had close relationships with them to make an assumption. But they seem like that to me.

Seem similar to each other?

Yes.

35. *How similar or different do you believe blacks and whites are on this campus? Consider the same categories that are mentioned in number 34 above and add any other factors that you deem important.*

I think they both have had a different experience. Black students on this campus seem to socially have a different agenda than whites do. Battling with a kind of past - rules (?), that sort of thing. Something that Caribbean people handle differently. We're all Caribbean. It's just totally Sdifferent. I'm not sure I understand it, really. It seems that they have a totally different agenda.

Can you describe what it looks like that agenda is?

It's more like they're still coming to terms with the black and white issue. The issue of race, that sort of thing. ... comfortable with it, which is quite different. We come from somewhere where race is not an issue. When I see a white person, it doesn't really like register. I'm not used to being grouped in terms of black race. I'm used to being grouped in terms of where I'm from, like we have parishes, so you're from that parish. Even our dialect is a bit different. Like I sound different from the others here. It just happens to be one of those things. So you're grouped - like someone would hear your accent and say, "Oh, that's where you're from."

36. *Do you believe the size of the black student enrollment at Washington and Lee is adequate or inadequate?*

It depends on what's their goal really. I guess if you want to make it diverse, then you'd need more black students. It all depends on what the school really wants.

What would your goal be for the school or yourself?

It's hard to say. It didn't really matter to me, and it still doesn't.

So you're saying that you wouldn't particularly have a goal in relation to that at all?

No.

Do you believe the number of black professors is adequate or inadequate?

Doesn't really matter.

Do you believe the number of black administrators is adequate or inadequate?

Explain.

It doesn't really matter.

37. *Should the university offer activities designed to bring new black students together?*

I guess it would be nice. I guess it would just be like one more other nice thing that is at W&L.

It's fun when we come together. We have different experience. Everything else is different.

You do the same. Other international students are there. People from Hungary, China, everybody comes together. Our backgrounds are different. Different things come out in different ways. In terms of that kind of association, it would be good.

Do you have any suggestions for how that might happen?

I think things like what we're doing now, like when we have evening abroad and that sort of thing.

Has the Chavis House played a role in your life at W&L? Please describe.

Yeah. Sometimes we go there and spend time, watch TV or something.

So it's played a little bit of a role.

Yeah.

Has the Minority Student Association played a role in your life at W&L? Please describe.

I'm not actually a member of the MSA. I plan to become. Automatically I joined the I Club almost. Then I really don't have more time for others. As soon as I get really comfortable in my academics and stuff, I'll probably do it.

38. *Do you believe that it is important that courses in the humanities/social sciences include recognition or study of works by persons of color?*

If there are notes of a person of any color at all, then you would need to recognize them. I don't think I'd distinguish them as black or white, whatever.

Just make sure the best is recognized?

If you think works by persons of color should be included do you think the recognition was adequate, inadequate, or excessive? Please explain.

That's a weird question.

Some of these questions come from feedback from persons in other years. So it's a question that has come from some people that may not have meaning to you particularly.

It sounds like there was something in the past - like was there enough.

Yes, in your experience with the classes you've taken, was there enough, too much?

Actually, it seems pretty good, because I'm doing sociology this term. We're doing different religions, like marginal religions. A lot of that comes up and it's actually an issue we're trying to understand more. It seems that way to me. I probably would be able to say more after a year here or something. So far it seems pretty ok.

39. *How would you characterize the climate in the classroom for you [as a black student]?*

I'm usually the only black person in my class.

So how's the feeling among people?

People are really excited about you - ask where you're from, that sort of thing.

So it's been good?

It has been good.

40. *What is the role of the Office of Minority Student Affairs?*

I guess if you had a problem, that sort of thing, you would be able to come to them. They can deal with different issues. They seem pretty accessible.

Have you had any interaction with them?

What exactly - how far does it extend to the people you have to deal with? I'm not sure.

It's Dean McCloud and her office.

I guess the whole application process and getting your I-20 or whatever to come. And helping to study. And if you're having a problem and you need a tutor, you could go to her.

Does she have anything to do with the study course that you're going to be taking soon? You said you were about to take a study skills course.

That was Dean Manning.

How can the role of this Office be improved?

Seems ok to me.

41. *From whom do you receive the greatest emotional support on campus? Do not use name(s), but please describe the person(s) in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and position (i.e. fellow student, faculty member, administrator, staff member). If appropriate, include more than one individual and describe the type of situations in which the person provides emotional support (i.e. personal, family, religious, etc.)*

I would say my friends really. I interact with them on a day-to-day basis. We're also ... each other. Some are black, some are white. It doesn't really matter. Together they all make you feel at home.

What percentage of your friends are black, what white, and what international?

My immediate friends here, they're all international. It just happens that some are black and some are white.

42. *Have you experienced any discriminatory behavior on campus directed against*

yourself?

No.

Leaving aside behavior, do you sense racial tensions on campus beyond what exists in the larger society?

It's hard to say. I must admit that people did not know how to approach me when I first got here. They didn't know what to say to you. Once they overcome that, they treat you no different from anybody else. In my dorm some of the girls didn't know how to - they'd say hi and nothing more.

So how did you overcome that?

I guess I just said hi, too, or something. And seemed pretty relaxed.

43. *Aside from the Honor System do you believe that the student Executive Committee, the Student Conduct Committee or other University judicial committees treat black and white students equally fairly?*

I haven't had any reason to doubt it.

44. *Do you believe that the honor system is applied in an even-handed way to black and white students?*

It's the same.

45. *How would you evaluate student publications (i.e. the Ring-tum Phi, the Trident, etc.), the student radio and television stations with regards to opportunities for black students to participate.*

They're good.

How would you evaluate them with regard to their treatment of news about black students?

I don't think they discriminate. They report whatever there is to be reported. That's my impression.

46. *Do you feel that black students at Washington and Lee today have problems that are basically different from, or basically similar to those of whites? Please describe in what way you feel they are different or similar.*

I think we were discussing that earlier. It's like they (African Americans) have more tension. *So their problems are a little bit different because of what you were saying before - the social agenda, blackness in their culture.*

*47. Sex Female

*48. Age? 18

*49. Year in college? Freshman

*50. Cumulative grade point average [as of Fall 1996]?

*51. How do you identify yourself in terms of nationality? Jamaican

52. How do you identify yourself in terms of race?
Black. This is one of those new questions that I've been asked.

53. Are there additional comments you wish to make about any aspects of Washington and Lee?

It's a very good institution. I think the faculty is excellent. They've really tried to deal with the different problems that you have. They really recognize that different people have different problems.

Are there any things that you have noticed that you would like to see improved or that drew your attention especially?

I can't think of any.