

**Peter Hopson Interviewed by Michael Montero and Barry Goldenberg**

**Audio Conducted by Christopher Brooks and Observed by Isaiah Armstrong**

**Feb. 11, 2015, at IUME, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY, 10027**

*[beginning of recording]*

**MICHAEL MONTERO:** All right. So today is the 11th of February, 2015.

**PETER HOPSON:** My son's birthday.

**MM:** And--. Happy birthday to your son. And we're here with—

**PH:** --Mr. Peter Hopson—

**PH:** Hi.

**MM:** --in Teachers College Columbia University. I'm Mike Montero. I'm here with Barry Goldenberg, Chris Brookes, and Isaiah Armstrong. And Sandy Campbell. And we're going to interview him.

**PH:** A former student.

**MM:** Peter Hopson. Yes. A former student--

**PH:** Yes. Of Harlem Prep.

**MM:** --of Harlem Prep. All right. All right, so just tell me about yourself. Um-, when and where were you born?

**PH:** I was born in Oakland, California in 1952. Um-. A mixed marriage. My parents were both going to uh-, Berkeley at the time. My father was a Socialist Communist. They were both intelligentsia. Uh-, but they broke up, or my mom and him separated probably when I was two and a half. And I was raised in Brooklyn. So I'm a Brooklynite, uh-, through and through. Pretty much a Brooklynite. And I live in Teaneck, New Jersey, now.

**MM:** Wait, so you grew up in Brooklyn?

**PH:** I grew up in Brooklyn, what is officially Crown Heights. But I was just talking to somebody when I was uh-, somebody I grew up with and we considered it at that time to be Bed-Stuy, cause it was right on--. Well, not the borderline, but six blocks--. Crown Heights is rather small and narrow. But it was on the borderline. But culturally, it became sort of Bed-Stuy. But now, Crown Heights has its own kind of cachet or what have you. It was a mixed area when we moved in there in the mid 50s.

Um-. But by the time I was in Harlem Prep, it was known Little Trench Town, which is a neighborhood of shanty town, within Kingston, Jamaica. Very high uh-, Caribbean population and culturally, it's pretty much--. That's what it is now. Very, very Caribbean, Jamaican oriented, particularly where I came from, which was Prospect Place and Nostrand Avenue.

**MM:** Um-. How was your family life?

**PH:** My family life was rather unique because, as I said, my father and mother separated. Uh-. She actually left him when we were kids, and um-, we were raised by him until he died unexpectedly when I was nine, and his mother. So I was raised primarily by my grandmother. And um-. Don't want to jump the gun, but although I always tested high in IQ, whatever they used back then, I had behavioral problems in school despite coming from an educated background. And being apparently brighter than most. If I may say so.

**MM:** Yeah. How were your parents--. How did your parents feel towards your education?

**PH:** Well, again, my father died when I was nine. Uh-. He was a frustrated writer. And of course he was very into education. And he died when I was nine. My grandmother was a child of an ex-slave. And uh-, she did her best in terms of trying to give a depiction where she was educationally. Of course, she was all for education as opposed to bad things that happened in the street. She would try to read the *New York Times* every day and it was kind of funny, cause she had to fumble over a lot of words. Cause as you know, they kind of intentionally make you want to search to see what the words are. So I would say positive. But not very involved. Because my grandmother wasn't educated. She did day work as long as she was able to physically.

**MM:** So what about your mother?

**PH:** My mother separated from-, left my father, when I was two and a half. And my contact with her was sporadic. She remarried. Um-. She always was part of that intelligentsia crowd in Berkeley, in California, back in the early '50s. My father was one of those people who was not blacklisted. But he was on a list. There was a file on him. You know. Cause intelligentsia. I don't know if you guys know. Especially on the west coast, tended to be very leftist and they were Socialists and/or Communists. But not at all subversive. I don't know if I'm going off track.

**BARRY GOLDENBERG:** No. Not at all. This is, this is great.

**PH:** Um-. So my mom, who's of Scotch/English descent from Cape Cod was, she was at Berkeley on a math scholarship. Um-. But my contact with her was sporadic. And she didn't have any input per se in all my upbringing.

**MM:** Wait. I'm not sure if you said it before. So after your dad died, who were you living with?

**PH:** His mother.

**MM:** Oh. So your grandmother.

**PH:** My grandmother.

**MM:** All right.

**PH:** Bessie Mae.

**MM:** Um-. Could you tell me about any childhood experiences?

**PH:** Such as—

**MM:** Any—

**PH:** Give me—

**MM:** Like that kind of made you the person who you are, like made you realize—

**PH:** Mmm-hmm.

**MM:** --something.

**PH:** That's a little too broad for me, Barry. Can you--

**MM:** Or, or even—

**PH:** --give me a little feathering on that?

**BG:** Or even, when you think about, you know, schooling experiences.

**PH:** Well, again—

**BG:** Education and, you know, eventually in high school.

**PH:** Yeah. I did mention it broadly, but um-, it, it may have—

**BG:** Or where you went to school as well, I mean I probably should have mentioned that.

**PH:** Right. Of course I went to public schools all the time. The--. First--. Well--. (heh, heh) I had a--I had big behavior problems, OK? That might have been because of schism between the parents. My parent-, my mother, again, left my father and myself and my older brother, when I was about two and a half or three. I'm not sure. So um-, I was like very disruptive in class. I guess attention seeking or whatever it may have

been. So one of my early recollections about school was being kicked out of kindergarten. More than once. Once I was staying with my mom temporarily in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. And back in those days, you could actually walk to school by yourself as a kindergarten student. But I went there and was disruptive, got kicked out. I hope I'm not embarrassing you there Mr. Campbell.

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** Don't fall asleep on me. And then, again this was kindergarten in Brooklyn. It was kind of a-, as I recall it, a raw deal 'cause I, I got into a fight with another little kid. But I was kind of goaded into it or something. Whatever. I remember my dad taking me around to the various teachers, kindergarten teachers, to see [laughing while talking: if anybody would take me.] And there was one lady, who was the only sister, named Rose—the only black lady—who took me in. And um-, actually ended up being a-. My father actually ended up dating her at one point. Uh-. First grade, again. I've always had very, very bad problems with authority. And it actually--. Even though I'm 62 years old, and I don't have any experiences to exhibit it in, I--, that's pretty much what my problem is and was. Uh--. I remember in first grade, um-, teacher--. We came in from--. Well, you guys probably don't do this today. But when we came in from the yard, we used to line up in the yard before class? You remember, that right, Sandy? No?

**SANDY CAMPBELL:** No. (laughs)

**PH:** Well--. You would line up in the yard and then, I guess to be counted or whatever. And then you would come into the hallway and stand there in double line formation before you went into the class. And we right off of the stairwell. And it was winter and I was cold because there was a strong draft in that area, we were told to take off our coat. And I refused. And I got into trouble for that. It was the first grade. And uh-. So I had lot, I had a lot of problems although I always tested well. And um-. I got kicked out of--. That was 138, PS 138, which is right down the street from my house on Prospect Place in Brooklyn. Got kicked out of there in um-, I guess the third grade. Again, for behavior only. Uh--. Then I went to whatever--. PS 241, which is the public school next to Clara Barton in Prospect Heights on President and

uh-, between I think Classon and Franklin. But it's a public school there. I was there for about three minutes.

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** Uh--. Never did get math. So I remember having a problem with one-, you know, being told you had to use pencil and I didn't like the way it scratched. So, you know—

**PH:** I, I was like--. I was a real pain in the ass. So got kicked out of there and then actually remembered going um-, for like psychological tests, you know, Rorschach Blots and the whole shit. And then um-, my father uh-, went down to the Board of Ed, to the super-, actually had audience with the superintendent. And I don't know if you know, Barry, about the junior guidance program.

**BG:** I don't.

**PH:** The JG program. And um-, I think it was only in grade schools, but it's--, this now would have been 1960. 'So I was um-, uh-, put into, for want of a better way to say it, JG classes. Junior guidance class. In fact, you can't even find much of it on the Internet. But that's what it was called loosely. It may have had another formal name. But it was for kids who weren't really um-, hacking it. You know. And they weren't like in the special classes, you know, for the special children. But they, in a way, were special because they just--. None--. Most of them couldn't read or, or write or whatever. And here I was, reading at the seventh grade level. In the fourth grade or whatever.

**BG:** What are you doing there? [affirming Mr. Hopson's statement]

**PH:** And so, I mean, but that's where I was. And actually, the junior guidance classes were known for the first--, and this is notable--uh--, instance, I believe, of children being prescribed amphetamines and such. You don't remember that, Sandy? Junior guidance classes?

**SC:** (shakes head)

**PH:** Yeah. And so it wasn't necessarily the school administration that did it. And if I'm talking too long, just let me know.

**BG:** No, no--.

**MM:** No.

**PH:** This could go on and on.

**BG:** Exciting. I'm curious how you get to high school and out...

**PH:** Um-, so uh-. Actually, I guess in a hospital setting, when I was getting the Rorschach tests and all that. [Note: I believe these tests were required by the Bd. of Ed.] You know, they gave a prescription and, and my dad was way ahead of his time. You know, he used to like roast his own coffee and he worked as a longshoreman. So he used to bring his own grains home and roast them. Like he was like Euell Gibbons kind of guy. You know who Euell Gibbons was?

**BG:** I know the name.

**PH:** Right. So he uh-, I guess looked up on it and um-, there was a, uh-, a dish rail on the top of our wall. You know those little ledges? Past the wainscoting. And he used to keep his vodka or whatever up-. Whatever. You know, there was things up there and he put the medicine behind there and um-, said: Yeah. You're going to start taking it after Thanksgiving. And uh-, he died November 20th of '61. So I remember asking about it. You know, cause I wanted to take my meds, you know? It was like a band aid. You know. A kid with a band aid in my mind anyway, I wanted to take my meds. And then everybody looked up there, when I asked about it after his funeral and everything cooled down. No, there's nothing up there.

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** And I found out much later in life that uh-, the kids in those classes were being given, were given stuff like the modern uh-, uh-, the uh-, equivalent of Ritalin and things like that. And uh-, so actually I uh-, [laughing while talking: stayed in that--] class, which was um-, three or four miles away from where I lived. And being that I didn't like crowds, I used to walk there. And I would always get there late, but I didn't care. And there [laughing while talking: nothing they could do me.] So then I actually ended up going to um-, the junior high school cause I graduated from there, special though we were. And right-. I also, as an aside, that was the uh-, the year before I graduated was when they constitutionally um-, forbid um-, uh-, the assemblies from starting off with the prayer, or making you participate it. And I was raised as an atheist. So, uh--. But at any rate, I went to Lefferts Junior High School, which is now I guess I'm. It was PS 61, which is the neighborhood junior high school, and was

placed in the top class. Seven-one. I don't know how they numerate them now-days. But was put in the first class of the seventh grade and uh-, same thing, you know. Behavior problems. Got actually put back uh-. So I guess what I want to say overall, before I get to high school—

**BG:** No, no, this is—

**PH:** --is that uh-, I was—just, you know, whether crying out for attention or whatever it was, you know. So now in the seventh grade, I got put back. And then we were being assigned shop class, which they used to do en masse in the cafeteria. And you kids don't get shop class anymore, right? Like vocational training—

**MM:** No.

**PH:** --or, you know, they would have wood working. Uh--. Do you guys have shop? [to other interviewers]

**MM:** No.

**PH:** They don't do that anymore, right? --ceramics and ceramics was called mud shop. And nobody wanted to get it. And uh-, some kid--, actually he lived down the block from me, he was a little chump. Little guy, too. He was behind me and I happened to have one of my brother's--. You guys don't know about this, either, nice Italian knit sweater. I was borrowing it. And he was on the chair behind me and he kicked me and I say: Yo, man. You know, you kicked me. Put, you know, spot on my stuff. So--. (heh, heh) Then he did it again. So, you know, I had to like choke him a little bit. So I got kicked out now from seventh grade after having been left back. And just got put back into my proper grade. So then I went to uh-. In Brownsville, David Marcus Junior High School, which unusual for that time, graduated in the eighth grade. They didn't go from seven to nine. I don't know if they started at six.

**BG:** Yeah, I don't know.

**PH:** No, I'm saying this particular school. I don't know if it started at six, but I know you-, only went to the eighth grade.

**BG:** OK.

**PH:** And I went there for a half a year. And uh-, of course, you know, the fact that I was, uh-, so far away. I actually had to take a subway there and walk. It was in Brownsville, which I had a lot of cousins in that area, but it was like a foreign area.

And you didn't mess around in Brownsville. But at any rate—um--, the fact that I was very well read. I always used to read a lot. I was a pretty good student. And actually uh-, one of the better students. I got out of there and went to, when they first started bussing in New York City—

**BG:** Oh, wow.

**PH:** --and they started the zone, they started this crazy zone thing. I don't remember how that went. But I ended up going all the way out to the border of Queens and Brooklyn, in Ridgewood. Grover Cleveland High School. And the funny thing was that they would tell the jun-, the guidance counselors and everything, were saying that: Yeah. You're going to go--, what they had, called an academic program. They had high schools then that were either vocational or academic, or often both programs. One leading to a course of--, a trade. And others, you know, prepping you for college. So I was told I was going to be in an academic program. Lo and behold, they wanted to put me into the uh-, vocational program. I wasn't having it. So I had someone who lived in the neighborhood who was a friend of my dad's, act as my mom and go down there and put me into the academic program. So what happens now--. This is high school. Started in the ninth grade.

**BG:** What year was this?

**PH:** This would have been 1966, I think.

**BG:** Starting high school. OK.

**PH:** So, you know, I wanted to take Spanish. They said, no, you can't take Spanish. You can take German or French. So I reluctantly took French. Again, I was a pain in the ass. I started doing drugs at the time. Not heavily. But, you know, messing around, dealing a little bit on the side. Whatever. And uh-. What happens is the teachers' strike of 1968—uh--, was when--. I'm trying not to tell too much to get the story told. Uh-. 1968, the beginning of the school year, it was a big teachers' strike. In New York City. And schools were closed down. And unfortunately, I had started uh-, experience-, I started doing really bad things. Heroin and stick ups and stuff like that. So during that two-month time, right before it ended, actually on Thelonious Monk's birthday, which is October the tenth, I got busted for an armed robbery. And I was 16 years old. I didn't really have a habit, but I thought I did. I had a little chippie it



would have been called. Yeah. I was mainlining. Heroin. And uh-. Got busted sticking up this place that my brother had previously stuck up in cahoots with the girl that worked there. And it was stupid to go back there. But in fact I got busted with a 45 loaded, one in the chamber. So I went to Riker's Island at 16. And--. During my time there, I always tried to get into the academic program. But for whatever reason, whether they knew my school history or whatever, they just would not put me in a school program. So I was pretty fucked. Uh-. And I got out on a writ of habeas corpus. Uh--. Jailhouse written. In fact, there was this guy named Joey Arginseano, from Staten Island. He kept telling me: Peter you gotta take this writ--. "It doesn't apply to me. You know, I had my own lawyer." Blah, blah-. Cause it was a friend of the family who was actually a friend of my dad's who was there when he died. He had an aneurysm playing handball. They used to play full court basketball every day. So anyway, he was actually a guy of note. Jonathan Lubell—he was one of uh-, Kunstler's followers. So I was like: No, man. I have my own lawyer. I don't--. So what happens is there was a-, pretty widely used writ for people who would-, had been sentenced to three years or more--. Am I putting you to sleep, Michael?

**MM:** No. No. No.

**BG:** This is a really interesting.

**PH:** Who had been put-, who had been put to--, who had been sentenced for three years without specifically being notified of their right to a trial. So I got out on this writ of habeas corpus, written pro se, meaning by myself. Uh-, in April of '70. Uh-. (laughs) When I--. My, my grandmother wanted, wanted them to keep me actually. You know, cause I--cause I actually ended up working in the Diagnostic Center, which I had a clerical job. I was actually-, was able to actually go throughout the place limited, on my own, because I worked in this place and I was able to use the phone once in a while. So actually I talked to John Lubell, who was the lawyer friend of the family. And he was like: Yeah. Well, your grandmother's trying to see if—[laughing while talking: I could go down there and tell them not to let you out.] And actually the day that I walked--. My probation officer was pretty cool. I mean, he busted me cause I wasn't going to school. I wasn't working. And he found tracks on my arms. Right? Uh-. Cause actually when I originally got busted, I got out-, John Lubell got me out

on probation and I violated it shooting dope and doing stupid things. He was a really nice guy. His name was Mr. Cooper. He uh-, turned me on to the book *The Naked Ape* by Desmond Morris.

**SANDY CAMPBELL:** Mmm-hmm.

**PH:** But he was pretty cool. So when I went in to see him, just to let him know: Yo, man. I'm OK. I got this. My grandmother was in there, you know, trying to like--. Can you make—

**BG:** Oh my god (slight laugh)

**PH:** --him stay? (laughs) You know, cause she was frustrated. She was, and she was in her--, sixties at that time, you know, uneducated. And, you know, "I have this problem guy" and whatever. So, uh-, but she gave me like two dollars to get a frankfurter or whatever. But anyway—so the thing is, that I skipped over was that--. And so I start--. I found poetry in jail. I still have a collection, a century readings collection from jail, that I got home. Uh-. I was reading Shelley aloud. You know, in my cell, guys thought I was nuts. I found E.E. Cummings while I was in jail, still my favorite poet. Uh--. And I used to just orate, you know and uh--. I kind of started to get the idea that I, I was better than what, you know, the lot I had ended up in. And what happens is w-, we used to get uh-, magazines and such. And Standard Oil of New Jersey, which became Esso, which became Exxon was one of Harlem Prep's sponsors. And they had full page ads in the *Ebony* magazine showing three or four--. I don't think there was any females, but three or four--. I remember the guys with Harlem Prep blazers on, cause they, they, they uh, gave a grant to Harlem Prep amongst others. Coca Cola and Ford were the other big ones. And Chase, I think. Um-. And that was like: Oh, man. Harlem Prep. You know. I'm going to go to Harlem Prep when I get out. [emphasizes by banging fist on table] And uh-, so that was the only thing I had to hold onto. Cause I knew I didn't want to go back to uh-, dealing drugs or robbery or the street. Cause I knew that it was, you know, it was dead-ended. And even though if you could make it, you didn't last that long. And I was like just looking to get myself a nice little clerical job and, you know. I didn't have to wear any more gators. You know, mohair. And fancy Blye shirts, knit shirts. You know, I just knew I wanted to get out and, you know, wear a polo shirt and have

a nice clerical job. But I wanted to go to Harlem Prep. I knew that. That was the thing that I had to hold onto. So when I got out, I went through a couple of things, you know, job programs. I had a job as a—(slight pause) power tool mechanic trainee in the South Bronx.

**MM:** Wait, um-, what, what year did you get out?

**PH:** I got out in April of '70. I started Harlem Prep September of '70. Uh-. I had a job as a power tool, tool mechanic trainee, which I took the number two train, the New Lots train, from Crown Heights to the end—

**BG:** Wow.

**PH:** Then I took a bus and then I walked across southern-, whatever that-, Southern Boulevard or whatever to this place, breaking down these huge power tools. Working in a solvent bath. The whole thing. I did that for I don't know how many weeks. You know. The guy kept saying: “You gotta buy tools, you gotta buy tools.” And I was like: “Yeah. OK. I gotta’ buy some tools.”

[laughing while talking: And then I was uh—]

**BG:** (slight laugh)

**PH:** --Some kind of program. I forgot what it was. Um-. The guy found that I had a good aptitude for patterns of numbers, retaining and repeating them. So I was trying to get like some kind of clerical job. But then what happens is John Lubell, the same lawyer friend, knew somebody -- and I wish I could remember his name -- who had previously graduated from the Prep. And he gave me a later-, a letter of introduction. So I remember that guy calling me back like: Yeah. No, man, you can-- You can get a job. You know. I was like: No, man. I'm going to Harlem Prep.

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** You know, *Harlem Prep* [emphasizing these words]. And so what happens is um-, I went up there. Phew-. Can't remember the day. But it was, you know, the day to get into Harlem Prep. September X, 1970. And it was like folks outside, forget it. Inside, they had closed the door. It was jammed full of people. And Mr. McFarlane, E. Salmon-McFarlane, who was then the Assistant Head, Headmaster happened to be by the door. And I had this letter. And, and what happens is um—

**BG:** From your friend. From the lawyer friend.

**PH:** From the-

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** No, it--. The lawyer friend had defended the son [something that had to do with education, too] of the guy who wrote the letter for. I've forgotten exactly what it was. Uh-. But this guy was pretty hoity-toity lawyer. And he was specifically into uh-, civil rights and stuff. You know. He defended the Minutemen. Huey Newton. All that shit. And um-. So this guy wrote a letter, you know. I went-, took the subway up to the Bronx from Brooklyn. Was interviewed by this dude's father and him. And he was like: Yeah. OK. You look it. Wrote this letter. Gave it to me. I smacked the letter on E. Salmon-McFarlane. And he was like: Yeah, come on in. I was like: Shit!

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** Cause they had already closed it.

**BG:** Yeah. Cause—

**PH:** There was like, you know—

**BG:** --already started kind of thing.

**PH:** No. I mean, like I think the way it worked is that you came in that day and you queued up and you got in and when they were finished that was it. That was the way it way. You know, I mean you couldn't pre-apply and stuff like that. That wasn't the way it worked. Um-. So I got in. Uh-. It was amazing. I mean, it was-. I was phew-. Mind blowing. I guess as I was saying to you before we started, uh-, to say that it was unique is like an understatement that I can't even describe. It was just so dynamic and unique. Not only did I meet Sandy, but I met so many Sandy's, you know?

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** And everybody was like--. They called me--. There was one or two, you know. Mrs. King. You called her Mrs. King, you know.

**BG:** Mmm-hmm. Yeah.

**PH:** You know. (laughs) But—I mean, everybody was like: No, my name is Sandy. You know. My name is Barry. You know, my name is Mike. And um-, there were no walls. You know. There were moveable partitions. You could audit, without officially auditing any class, audit the class. Uh-, give your opinion. You know. They

wouldn't let you get too uh-, animated, but you could argue with anybody. And anybody could argue-. And it-. Anybody could put forth their point. And it was the first time, as I was saying before we started, that I recall teachers actually being more like mentors and letting you--. I mean, they all controlled their class, but letting you participate as an equal with them. And not trying to run the class so much as open things up for discussion, open your mind up and um-, collaborate more so than teach. How was that, Mike?

**MM:** (laughs) I'm wait-. In—

**BG:** That's a hell of a story (laughs) –if I can say so myself!

**MM:** Oh, wait.

**PH:** But that's not even all of though. It's—wow, and it just so happened that I ended up working there.

**BG:** After you graduated, or--?

**PH:** While I was there and after I graduated, which was really cool. Because I came from Brooklyn, you know, it was like an hour ride.

**BG:** Yeah. Yeah.

**PH:** And I don't know if you want this little aside—

**BG:** No. This is, this is fabulous.

**PH:** But what happens is—we had our own little library.

**BG:** At the Prep.

**PH:** At the Prep. Most of the stuff was donated from Manhattan College. And uh-. The sisters who started the place. He [pointing to Sandy Campbell] can remember who they were. And so we had these books coming in all the time. And the librarian, she ran it by herself. So she needed help. And I'm like a bookish guy, I don't know if I-, I didn't say that to you guys. But like, when I was in high school, I used to cut most of the time and I would spend most of that time around the corner from my house in the library just reading. Cause as you guys know, reading is just a fascinating thing. It can take you so many places without you moving, but you're just like, you know, going everywhere. So I used to read avidly. And that's what saved me, the fact that I could read. Couldn't do math for shit. Still can't, and I actually—

**BG:** I can't either, don't worry.

**PH:** --ended up being an accountant. But--.

**BG:** Go figure.

**PH:** But I can't do math. No. Uh—

**BG:** I don't believe that for a second.

**PH:** Well, higher math I can't do. I cannot do. But I have a good memory and good um-, sense of patterns, whatever. I was an accountant.

**BG:** Right.

**PH:** I was doing auditing. But anyway, that's neither here nor there. So what happens is Mrs. -- I can't remember her name -- had me cataloguing the books or categorizing the books before categoriz-, uh-, uh- cataloguing them and stacking them. So she had a husband who was very ill. And he, she had to take care of him for like several weeks. And so then the accountant needed an assistant. And he kept bothering me. I was like: Yo, man. I can't do numbers. You know, like math is not my thing young man. It's just boring and I don't want to do it. He kept saying: "Here, come on and do this." And she wasn't around so he stole me and I ended up in that field. So I'm sorry for the little aside.

**BG:** No.

**MM:** It's fine. This is good.

**BG:** This is, this is incredible.

**PH:** But uh-.

**MM:** I wanted to ask.

**PH:** --I left you hanging.

**BG:** --you um-

**PH:** Sorry.

**MM:** What uh-, like was it in prison that like you realized like I'm not going to behave the way I, I was? Or was it after? Like when was it that you, you—

**PH:** Well, yeah, I—

**MM:** --changed.

**PH:** Cause I al-, you know, I knew that what-, it wasn't right and it, it wasn't going anywhere. It was actually--. I don't, shouldn't pin this on my brother 'cause you might use my name one day. But uh-, he-. And it wasn't his fault that I started using

heroin. But, you know, we used to like get down together and I would always keep telling him, yeah, Mike we've got to stop. We've got to stop. We got-. He'd be like: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So I knew, you know, that there was a better way. But it's funny how you can get caught up. You know? You know, especially us, you know, and, and, and that time was different than it is now. And uh-. You know. The man had his foot on our neck all the time. You know, and so it was rough. And then, you know, my family background and all that shit really made it hard. So it was easy to get caught up, you know? Hey. I never stuck up-, I never snatched a pocketbook or anything. I always stuck up-, I would only stick up a company. But uh-

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** Make it better, you know? But I'm saying, you know—

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** You could get \$1500, \$300 in your pocket as opposed to not having anything. So but I knew it wasn't leading anywhere. But I guess to answer your question, it was distilled while I was in jail because of course I was reflecting on how I got to be there and how limited my um-, prospects were. And as I said, I can't help think that it was intentional cause they did have your file in there. And um-, they just wouldn't let me go to school. And they had a school program in there for GEDs. And I guess it was lucky that they didn't. But yeah, I realized in there that I had to do better, as I said previously. I had uh-, contented myself that I just wanted to have a nice clerical job and be a square dude. I, you know, I didn't want to--. Not that I didn't want to have mohair and gators, but I realized that, you know, that it was limited.

**MM:** --Just wanted to like calm down. And just—

**PH:** Uh-. Yeah. You know. Square up, you know. And just, you know, try to get out of the cycle. Uh-, which is, you know, very vicious. You know, living in the ghetto, you know, was very, you know, gave very bleak uh-, uh-, opportunities. Very, very bleak palate.

**MM:** Yes.

**PH:** You know? So I was like, yeah, man. I just want to get me a gig. Get me a nice clerical job. I ain't got to break my back. And uh-. But like I saw-, like I say, when I,

you know, just Harlem Prep, man. I—It was like something I didn't think I was going to even be able to do, but, you know—I knew, man I'm going to go to Harlem Prep.

**MM:** Could you, could you explain like what made you like really want to go to Harlem Prep? What did you read--, what did you—

**PH:** Well, what happens is I uh-, again, as I said, I came from an educ-, educated parents. And I always read a lot. And actually despite all of the behavioral problems and the many schools that I went to from kindergarten to eighth grade, I dedicated myself when I graduated from junior high school to always try to keep learning and always to learn as much as I could. I really understood the value of education for one's own mind if for nothing else. Not necessarily for advancement, material advancement. But just because I realized that it was important to have that castle, you know, from which, you know, you could peer out and uh-, make things happen within yourself. So I was very dedicated to self education and I might say, if it wasn't apparent from what I said already, even having gone to Harlem Prep, I consider myself like 90 percent self educated. But the Prep really helped me mostly in confidence. Even though I have a, believe it or not, a pretty large deficit in self- confidence. I think that's the biggest thing that the Prep did for me.

**BG:** It seems to be a pattern of a lot of students—

**PH:** --Really.

**BG:** So you, so you, you started at Harlem Prep, you leave Prison. You started Harlem Prep. What was it like you know walking in there and—

**PH:** I'm telling you—

**BG:** --interacting with other students and what--. I mean, you started these classes. What, what made, what about Harlem Prep, you know, built your confidence?

**PH:** Well, the teachers—

**BG:** (nodding)

**PH:** --mostly.

**BG:** The teachers. OK.

**PH:** And the whole environment, and, Ed and Ann—

**BG:** The headmaster--



**PH:** The whole, the whole approach was, you know, each one teach one. Uh-. As Ed used to say, we're not about the ego. We're about the "we go." You know?

**BG:** I like that.

**PH:** Oh, he was, he was a piece of work.

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** He was a piece of work. I mean if you see some of the clips of him, it's like just that much. He was like, and he was a wild man, too.

**BG:** The headmaster.

**PH:** Yeah. But he was—

**BG:** During classes? During--

**PH:** No, he didn't teach. He was an administrator.

**BG:** --I mean during—

**PH:** He, he—

**BG:** --the Prep—

**PH:** --He um—actually helped money come in. Um-. He was a spokesman of the Prep. I don't know how much guidance he did in terms of the curriculum and the teachers. Um-. But he was a-, he, he was a force. He was, he was like really something else. But um-, the whole thing was just so different. You guys can't understand how--. I mean, going through the sixties was one thing. But then this was 1970. Um—

**BG:** Black Power going, all that—

**PH:** It was like—really uh--, phew-. More than you, you could expect. Uh-, because everything was open. Everything was very collaborative. Um-. Very, very supportive. I mean, all of the teachers, even Mrs. King—right? Who like was, like I say, one of the only teachers you called *Mrs.* King. Uh-. I told an experience not too long ago, I don't know if Sandy remembers it, is that uh-, I didn't like science too much. You know, I took her bio class and um-, she gave me like I think--. Cause I used to get like all A's. And that was another thing, too. I was like: Wow. Man. Look. I'm showing this to my peeps. Got all A's. You know, I got A+. One B. So she gave me like a B or a C or something once. And so, ended up I get, ending up getting an A from her. But um-. I-, you know, she instilled in me the--. Or she made me, you know, um-, compete with myself to make sure that I, you know, did well in her class.

Because, you know, I had to. And I remember--. She ended up like, when nobody else would answer the question, she would end up going to me. I remember having to--, or not having to, but making an oral description of the DNA double helix. You know. And before that, I wasn't really doing good in her class. And I'm saying whether it was intentional or not, you know, she-, like all the other teachers, they just um-, made you want to bring the best of yourself out. They, they, you know, they, they made you--. Not made you, but the environment was so um-, positive and uh-, supportive. You know, you just wanted to do-, you just wanted to do good. Even in the Prep, I have to say, I was not good at homework. But I, I, you know, I just loved it so much I used to participate and and it was just--. Uh--.

**BG:** You already spoke about—

**PH:** So I'm at a loss for words.

**BG:** No. I mean, you have at least—

**PH:** (laughs)

**BG:** This is fabulous—

**PH:** Hard to explain—

**BG:** --exactly—

**PH:** --though. It was just very dynamic. You had all different types of people there. All different types of opinions. And, you know, all the opinions and--. I don't know if I would say cultures, but um-, personalities. Just were, were free and interacted each class with each other and um--. It was just great. I mean, and I don't remember what my score was, but I actually like did amazingly well on the SAT and I never, ever tested well. I still don't test well. Um, I learnt through my exposure to Sandy and Ann Carpenter and Lena Pagliatta.

**BG:** Another teacher?

**PH:** Pa-, Paniagua. These are English and writing teachers that I had a little bit of a talent for writing. And I still kind of um-. Even though I ended up being an accountant, pride myself on the fact that I can express myself pretty good in writing. And, and, and I couldn't before that. Uh-. That's about it. Unless you—unless I missed something.

**MM:** Well, so it's like overall, the experience of Harlem Prep was good. Were there any like times where it was like going bad? And just like didn't like it or something?

**PH:** No, it wasn't-, you weren't there if you didn't like it. It, it, it was-. No. That, that, that--. You just weren't there. You know.

**BG:** And I guess you wouldn't be there.

**PH:** Yeah.

**BG:** Any, any specific stories you can think of, memories in those classrooms with that, that divergence of cultures and people and between your teachers and--. I'm trying to kind of figure out the structure of the day and how it all, you know, went down every day. You know, I mean—

**PH:** Hm—

**BG:** --uh--, any, any stories you can think of or um-. You know, interacting in the classroom. What, what that collaboration looked like. You know.

**PH:** Hm—

**BG:** Why that collaboration was so successful as opposed to, you know, other in traditional settings?

**PH:** Well, you know, somebody who was probably--, uh-, a teacher could probably--. Cause, you know, I'm a pretty good analytic person. I, I, I'm-, wasn't in the position then. I just knew that it was really something special. And you could sense that, too. It wasn't just that physically there were no walls and the fact that, you know, students could go and sit in any class whether or not they were in that class. And even offer their opinion um-, in the class. Um--. It, it, it was, it's just hard to describe how dynamic it was and, and how fresh it was, you know. This was 1970. You know. It was like-, just the sixties had just ended yesterday. And, you know, Dr. King had just been shot. And, you know, the whole deal.

**BG:** How did that, those kind of, all the current events affect—were those brought into, into classes, in-, into the school? When you think of like civil—

**PH:** It was part of everybody's psyche.

**BG:** Integration is kind of waning out. Black power. You know, you know.

**PH:** Oh, yeah—

**BG:** Young Lords—

**PH:** And but the thing was—

**BG:** --Yeah. —

**PH:** --that you had to understand that the palette was so diverse.

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** It, it was, it was wild. I mean, you know, you had the black power people. But you had the quiet poets. You know, you saw the film. Saw that young brother—

**BG:** We all did.

**PH:** --forgot his name, who read his poet to-

**BG:** Yeah. I could picture—

**PH:** --poem to—

**BG:** --cause we watched it together on the screen.

**PH:** Yeah. And um-, you know, phew. There were sisters who were um-, fine as wine, but you know, they were there participating. You know. They were getting down. And um-. It, it-. I can't-. I, I'm probably not the best person to describe an experience or a typical experience. But um-. One thing that also set me apart from mo-, all of the other students, was that I worked there, too. OK? I worked for the accountant. Um-, so I was there even when I wasn't in class. You know. But there were many students like myself who got there at whatever time. Nine, seven, whatever we started. And were there when Jerry Wooley closed the place down. Jerry Wooley was the drummer for the dance group that I Aissatou—I don't know if you met Aissatou yet.

**BG:** Not yet.

**PH:** That, they were a part of. And uh-, you know, um-. Many of the students would just be there because it was somewhere to be. And uh-. I can't say that I can recall the structure of, of, of a day. Um-. But I re-. As I recall, when you registered for the class, you kind of, you did it yourself. I don't remember what the process was. But you did have somebody that you could talk to, to help you piece together what you would what you needed to take. And which, how to set it up. Um—

**BG:** Did you have full control over classes you take? Was there any kind of—

**PH:** I don't recall.

**BG:** Yeah.

**SC:** It was pretty much full control.

**PH:** Yeah.

**SC:** There were people there to advise.

**PH:** Right. Right. Which is what I said. I think you did get some input. Just, you know, you need to have these things. Um-. And uh-. You know, you just came in and you went to your class and uh-, and down time you could do your own thing or you could go sit in another class. Or what, what likely. You know, they had little groups that were just socializing and whatever they were doing. It's hard to describe. But I have to say, if we have time, I need to make a little pit stop real quick.

**BG:** Sure. Go-. Def-. Absolutely.

**PH:** Pit stop.

**BG:** No. No apologies at all.

**SC:** You can go out that door there.

**BG:** Yeah. Absolutely.

[Mr. Hopson steps out; recording stopped, then resumed]

**PH:** OK. And--. It was just so unique and dynamic and I think unique and dynamic uh-, are the best, most descriptive terms that I could use. It's just um-. Very, very open. Very supportive.

**MM:** Were there, were there any like classes, like a specific class that fascinated you? That like opened your mind and made you—

**PH:** Oh, yeah, Ann Carpenter's creative writing class. As I said, I hadn't written before. And uh-, sh-. (slight pause) Formally, in terms of structure, I never really uh-, did learn all those little elements you're supposed to learn. But I learnt uh-, how to express myself in writing with Ann Carpenter's creative writing class. Sandy had a, I think, a—literal, uh-

**SC:** It was a literature class.

**PH:** There, wasn't there a history, lit-. Yeah.

**SC:** Yeah.

**PH:** Yes. And—

**SC:** Poetry. Some poetry.

**PH:** Right. Introduce me to Nietzsche. (heh, heh) But uh, and then there was—

**SC:** They don't know who—

**PH:** They don't know Nietzsche is?

**BG:** They don't. No.

**MM:** I don't, no.

**BG:** I read it in high school.

**PH:** Yeah. Uh-, and Barry. What was Barry's class?

**SC:** She taught writing, too.

**PH:** Writing. Yeah. Uh-. And I probably can't write that well. But much better than I thought I would have been able to do. Um-. So yes, I think the creative writing. I will say here that Erskine-, Erskine Keary, who's a real space cadet. And I think he still is. And I think he's published a book or two. Something about the divine being. He's like—

**BG:** (slight laugh)

**PH:** Yeah. Tangibly discovering. Yeah.

**SC:** Erksine?

**PH:** How many Erskine Keary's can there be? Because I remember he was trying to teach me algebra. I never got it. But I still graduated. And I remember he used to get in these discussions with me about right hand ascension of the planets and how it was just like somebody's uh-, concept because most of the world was right handed. Out there. And, but anyway, he was still very supportive. He would say, yeah, he's getting it a little bit. And I knew I wasn't getting it. But um-. (slight pause) He used to sit with me one on one. I mean, I had classes with him but basically, most of my time was, he would, he would, no Pete, you could do this. And for some reasons, the abstractness of math, I just don't get it. You know. And um-. I'm talking about real math, you know, just-, just—yeah. The weird stuff. The symbols and stuff, but he, he sat with me every day. You know, as much time pretty much as I needed or wanted. Don't know how I made it through algebra class. I still have my algebra book from that class. Um-. I spoke about Mrs. King's science class. Um-. Because that was like a personal triumph, you know, I, I didn't like it and she was like really hard. I mean I called her Mrs. King. She didn't play, man. And she was even planning to take us to a, to an autopsy. But it didn't pan out. Cause she worked-, she, she went to, she was a teacher at Flowers Fifth, Sandy?

**BG:** Was she older?

**PH:** She was older than most.

**BG:** Because most teachers are pretty young or—

**PH:** Most of them-. But we had some—

**SC:** She was the older, much older.

**PH:** Yeah. She was older. But George was older. You know, two or three that were older—but she, and she didn't take no smack, man. I mean, Mrs. *King*—

**BG:** (laugh)

**PH:** She was Trinidadian, I think. Short. Very strict. Very assertive. But she was about, you know, getting the job done. So as I say, that was one of the classes that sort of gave me a personal epiphany, you know. It was like, you know, yeah, you got it, you know, you got to do this. And you can do it. And like I said, I ended up already describing the double helix of DNA man, that's some pretty heavy stuff. (slight laugh) You know. And I ended up getting an A from her. You know. Uh-. You know, but this-, there wasn't just one uh-, one, one class. It was, it was the whole environment that was just um-, amazing. It was amazing, you know. Uh-. I will say, as I said before, that I per-, I personally didn't think that I was ready um-. But the administration and teachers uh-, knew better, I guess. Or they, they thought that I should move on. And part of that, I always say-

**BG:** Graduate.

**PH:** Yes. Might have been that they knew that the door was closing in terms of funding and what have you.

**BG:** Which I wanted to ask you, yeah.

**PH:** And so, I still wish I would have stayed another year because, funny enough, although I'd always been a good reader, and uh-, learnt how to write while I was there, I ended up going to City College right up the hill. Which also enabled me to keep my job there, which was key. You know? Cause I didn't have no money. Uh-, so and the placement tests, they had me do an essay and I bombed. So they ended up putting me in a remedial writing class, which was wild, cause I was writing poetry at the time. You know? But just because I still-, I couldn't test. I didn't test well. So uh-. Yeah. It was um-. I forgot what else I was going to say. But also, I think, what

happens is I learnt that your approach, for want of a better word, your personality can help you a lot. And that you have to have politic in how you carry yourself. And how you do your stuff. And it has to be real, you know. It-. And I hope I'm not getting too philosophical. But I mean, you know, that's a big thing that I learnt. You know. How to not let my personality fuck me, you know. Pardon me. But, you know, not how to screw yourself.

**BG:** Sure.

**PH:** You know? And, and I think, too, not to be unkind. But I think the teachers um-, were probably in some ways a little more support-, supportive than they needed to be. But maybe it was on a case by case basis. I don't know. But I really learnt that from the teacher body as a whole. You know. It's important, your approach is as important as what you produce. Because it was so interactive, it was, it was hard-, it's hard to describe. It happens that I ended up working at a place that I started in 1973. Um-. Called RTP, which was, used to be the Joint Apprenticeship Program, which you can look these things up. Which was founded by A. Philip Randolph and um-

**BG:** OK. Wow.

**PH:** --Bayard Rustin, to get minorities in the construction trades which as you know, any city you go to is closed. It's only Irish and/or Italian, and maybe some Germans if it was carpentry or whatever. Polish, if it was plumbing, whatever. So we, we uh-, were a national organization. I worked in the national office and uh-. It was like three years after I left the Prep, or two years. But it also had no-. Although they were stationary, they were like maybe four foot high partitions. There were no walls-, except for the executives, there were not walls. Everybody was on the first name basis. And even then, in '73, three years later, that was new and they were doing that in the Prep in '60-, '68 in the first class, you know. Everything was very first name basis. Sorry if I'm keeping you there, Michael.

**MM:** Oh, it's fine. Um-. I wanted to ask you uh-, wait, how, what years were you in Harlem Prep?

**PH:** I started in September of 1970 and graduated in June of 1971. So I was there for one year. One full year.



**BG:** How did they decide when you gra-, whether-, who graduated. Was it a teacher, administrative type of thing?

**PH:** I don't know what they did. I don't know what they did. But again, I was getting straight A's.

**BG:** Yeah. So they, they were just probably like: You're—

**PH:** (slight laugh)

**BG:** --good to go type of thing.

**PH:** And I was like: No, man, I'm not. I'm not ready.

**BG:** “I want to stay.”

**PH:** I'm not ready. And it wasn't so much that I wanted to stay, but I still had this confidence issue. And as I said, I went, I still didn't test well. And I still didn't have the, the mechanical, structural things. I, I was always a good reader, as I said. And I still say that I'm self-educated more than anything else. But don't forget, I went to this placement test and bombed. I couldn't even finish the stupid uh-, essay, you know? What, what was the last movie you saw? What was it about? You know? And then they, I ended up in a class and it was a gas because it was like uh-, two or three kids in there that really wrote, wrote very well. And actually at some campus thing, I was published, some piece that I wrote. But anyway, um-. I forgot where I was.

**BG:** Oh, about graduating and how you, how you—

**PH:** Oh. So—

**BG:** --ended up—

**PH:** --I think that the, the, the, the—

**BG:** How it worked out—

**PH:** --the administration, the teachers sat down and assessed individually whether or not a student was ready. Sandy could speak to that better than I. But that was my understanding. And I guess it was Mr. McFarlane that told you, and helped you uh-, apply for schools. And what happens is he had an in at City College and I didn't really apply anywhere early in the year because I didn't think I was ready.

**BG:** You just got there. Yeah.

**PH:** And so uh-, I went up and interviewed. Uh-. Some old bag up there at City College. Must have been the same person Utrice Leid was interviewed by. Do any of you know who Utrice Leid is?

**BG:** I don't.

**PH:** She is a Trinidadian American but she speaks, you know, must as uh-, standard pronunciation as I do right now. She was on WBAI. She hosted a show on WBAI and she told a story about she was up there interviewing--. This has nothing to do with the Prep, but--. This—

**BG:** No. This—

**PH:** Kind of funny.

**MM:** It's fine.

**PH:** She was interviewing with this person for placement at City College. And she said: I was interviewing with this person--. Of course she had a brogue then. Cause she was a teenager. Not that Trinidadians have the worst brogue in the world. You know. It's not like "Jammy's" or anything. And she said: Lady--. I think it—

**SC:** Excuse me?

**PH:** Not like Jamaicans or anything. The Trinidadians? Not as bad as Jamaicans.

**SC:** Move on (with smirk).

**PH:** But anyway.

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** So apparently she had a thick brogue. So she said after a 45 minute interview, the lady, lady asked her: Well, do you speak English? (laughs)

**BG:** Oh, wow.

**PH:** [laughing while talking: Can you imagine?]

**BG:** What you see like in a movie.

**PH:** [laughing while talking: I mean, what have we been doing for the last 45 minutes?]

**BG:** Oh, my god.

**PH:** Sorry. I didn't mean to break off.

**BG:** No, it's funny though.

**PH:** Uh, but yeah, I think that the um-, the teachers and the administration decided individually whether or not a student was ready.

**BG:** You mentioned funding. And I know, I know you were curious—

**PH:** About funding?

**BG:** About the funding and the-, you know, were students aware of like the funding issues? I mean, you—a

**PH:** I can't speak for anybody else.

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** But I was. Don't forget, I worked with, with—

**BG:** That's right. Cause you—

**PH:** --what was called the fiscal manager.

**BG:** That's right.

**PH:** Not that I was in on that. But I knew grants came in. And don't forget, my introduction was this Standard Oil of New Jersey full-page ad. And I didn't describe it. But it was a full-page ad—

**BG:** In *Ebony* magazine?

**PH:** In *Ebony* magazine. I think they were in *Jet*, also. But I remember in *Ebony*, the full size joint. And it was--, apparently, you know, cause--. What was-, what the park up the hill there? Edgecombe Park? There was this, there's a park, you know, you know cause after Eighth Avenue is Convent.

**SC:** St. Nicholas.

**PH:** St. Nicholas Park. Up the hill. And then there's a high school of music and art. And then City College's campus. So it was apparently on one of those huge boulders that there was these-, you know, group of students and the brothers had on their blazers with the Mojo logo. Uh-, uh-, patch. You know. We had a patch. We had an insignia which was a Two spears crossed over a shield and the words: moja logo, which were supposed to stand for um-, supposed-. Moja. What was it supposed to be? Moja—

**BG:** Brotherhood and unity was that?

**PH:** Yeah. But un-

**BG:** Was it brotherhood unity? Or-

**PH:** Yeah. Unity and—

**SC:** Something like that. Something—

**PH:** Whatever. Whatever.

**BG:** --brotherhood, yeah, yeah—

**PH:** So we had the school patch, man, you know, with the blue blazer. And um-. And, you know, we said Es-, I think it was Esso at the time or Standard Oil of New Jersey. So I knew that it was being sponsored through um-, I guess an extension of uh-, LBJ's what? What was his program called? The--. L-, you know. His version of the—

**SC:** I know what you're speaking of.

**PH:** --yeah, his version of uh-, The New Deal. What the hell was it called?

**BG:** Oh. Great Society?

**PH:** Yes. Yeah. So it was an extension of that. You know, Coca Cola um-, I think Chase, for—

**BG:** Definitely Ford. Carnegie. I think, or Carnegie Mellon, one of those two.

**PH:** Yeah. I wasn't, I wasn't aware of Carnegie at the time I was there. But Ford was probably the biggest one at the time. And of course, Standard O-, Standard Oil. Uh, uh, of New Jersey. Or Esso was what I was aware of. That's what made me—

**BG:** That's what I read about, too.

**PH:** That's how I found out about the Prep, through an ad in *Ebony* in the joint.

**BG:** Yeah. How long did you--. That's crazy. That I—. That's crazy. I'm going to have to find those ads.

**PH:** Yeah. I tried. And it was difficult. Uh-

**BG:** OK. I'm going to do some digging.

**PH:** Because I can send you a link if I get your email of some uh-, hm-, university's archives. Couldn't come up with it. I went through every page.

**BG:** Yeah. Did you?

**PH:** But I can send it to you. Again, they also--. I had some intercourse with somebody by email and um-, they actually did a search and couldn't find them. But I know they, they were there. Other people remember them as well.

**BG:** I, I'll try.

**PH:** Yeah. Other people remember them as well, but yeah-. Yeah, so I mean of course it was free to the students, so—

**BG:** It, how did—

**PH:** That was cool. (slight laugh)

**BG:** (slight laugh)

**PH:** (laughs)

**BG:** That's what matters, right? One of the things, cause how long did you—

**PH:** Which was also amazing that it was free. That was another thing. You didn't have to pay. And there was no creepy teachers.

**BG:** Private school education for pub-, but publicly—

**PH:** Exactly.

**BG:** Right?

**PH:** Yeah.

**BG:** Did-, how-? I mean, why did you--? I mean, we're always trying to, you know, theorize these things why, you know, how, why did these places stop funding eventually? You know? Uh-, cause in '75-

**PH:** I don't know.

**BG:** --the Board of Ed took it over because Ed, you know, Ed Carpenter used to say that we had no option but to accept [their] funding.

**PH:** That, that I don't know.

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** Even somebody like Sandy that was, you know, close to the administration, I mean, might know. But it have just been that the experiment or their, their commitment—um--, had panned out. I have no idea. Um-. No. I have no idea. But I, I don't know. Uh-. But--. And I'm speaking out of school here.

**BG:** Sure.

**PH:** But I do think--, have no basis in fact for saying it. But I kind of um-, the year I was there, the year before, the year after was like the prime time to be there in terms of what the experience was. I don't know though. Uh-. So I don't know if it--. I think what I'm saying is that I suspect that it was-, the dynamics of it might have kind of petering out. Has nothing to do with the funding, though. But I just sense that. I don't know why. Probably because I wa-, of course I was in the best year.

**BG:** Of course. Yeah. Of course—

**PH:** (laughs)

**BG:** Naturally, right?

**PH:** Of course.

**BG:** Of course.

**PH:** Yeah.

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** I mean I'll never forget the day we graduated. Um-

**BG:** It was outside, right?

**PH:** Yeah. It was in front of the Hotel Theresa. 125th and Lennox.

**BG:** Which we've been before [turning to other interviewers]

**PH:** But that's not even it. I guess Carp had the police block off 8th Avenue at 125th.

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** So-. And I was right up there in front with him. We marched as a body down 8th Avenue.

**BG:** That's cool.

**PH:** Right in the middle of the street. And I was up in the front with Carp. And Er-, and Bynoe too. Kassim, my best friend at the time. We were so proud. It was—

**BG:** --a community thing, was like—

**PH:** Yeah. And all the--. Yeah. The people on the street were like “yeah,” Yeah. You know. But uh- Yeah. It was uh-. It was, it was quite a thing. Yeah.

**MM:** I-, like to jump back into Harlem Prep. How, how was the communication between—

**PH:** I was talking about Harlem Prep all this time, yo!

**MM:** I, I—

**PH:** (laughs)

**MM:** I mean just like inside--. (heh, heh)

**PH:** Yes.

**MM:** How was the—

**PH:** The environment inside.

**MM:** How was the communication between students?

**PH:** Varied as the personalities that made up the place, you know. There were some dudes you didn't talk to. There were some cats you avoided. Uh-. There--. But mostly everybody uh-, had that recognition, uh-, that, you know, you are an island but we're part of this you know, whole globe. And um-. It was a lot of respect towards

everybody, even people that you differed with. You know, I had one little run in with Five Percenters, but uh-, it was no big deal. Uh-. You know. But if it had been in a regular public school, it probably would have been, you know, actually could have been semi-violent. Um-. But everybody uh-, had their own thing. You know, this was back in the 70's. In '70 actually, which you have no idea what I'm talking about but if I, if you could imagine, it was a, it was a, it was a time of um-. I don't think revolution is the right word. But that's what it was. You know, it was a time of--. Things just breaking out. You know. People expressing themselves, you know. Women's rights, you know, burning the bras. Burning the draft cards. People saying, you know, you know, we have, you know we have a voice. And so everybody kind of gave everybody their, you know their, their uh, breath so to speak.

**MM:** Was there like a particular group that you hung out with before like during or after school?

**PH:** Yeah. I hung out with Kassim. Uh-. Mickey Deans. And Ronnie Gilmore we used to smoke more reefer than you could even think about.

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** (heh, heh) But yeah--. I, I hung out with them loosely. But we were there--. I was there--. And everybody else was there mainly--. They had--. You know. One, one of the guys in my group actually had an affair with one of the teachers. But we were there for school. That's what we were there for. You know? That, that was the main thing. But yeah, I had a group that I loosely hung out with. But I actually uh-, was working when I wasn't in class, with the accountant. So my social thing wasn't that deep.

**BG:** Yeah. Just to clarify the dates. How long did you--how long did you work there? Did you continue working there?

**PH:** I think I probably worked there while I went to school at City College. Uh-. Until '73?

**BG:** OK.

**PH:** Not sure. I think--. No. Wait a minute. I think--. (slight pause) I'm not sure. I'm thinking seven-. No. It was-. I started working at RTP in '73. I think it was probably June or maybe even January of '73 cause I remember MacFarlane or Pruitt stepping

to me and letting me know that there, you know, they didn't have the money to pay for it anymore. And I had to move on cause I needed money. Had to pay rent, you know? Yeah. Um-.

**BG:** Did you have any contact after that with the school? Or did you stay in touch with teachers and folks or—

**PH:** Well, the school folded shortly after—

**BG:** Yeah. Shortly after.

**PH:** --and then you know, I had to live life, too, you know.

**BG:** Yeah. Of course.

**PH:** I uh-, had a common law marriage with somebody right at the time that I left school.

**BG:** Sure.

**PH:** Uh-, I was going to school. Was working. And uh-, what happens is in uh-, '87, which is 18 years, 17, 16 years later. I moved into Teaneck, New Jersey, which is where Ed and Ann lived. And I spoke to Ed a couple of times on the phone. That's a nice watch, by the way.

**BG:** Thank you.

**PH:** I'm a Swatch nut.

**BG:** Are you?

**PH:** Uh-. About eight or ten.

**BG:** Oh, wow. It's Skagen, it's really thin.

**PH:** Oh, that's a Skagen. Right. Right.

**BG:** Yeah. Yeah.

**PH:** I have a couple.

**BG:** They look nicer—

**PH:** I have a couple of those also.

**BG:** They, they look nicer than they cost. Don't worry. (laughs)

**PH:** Oh, I know. I have a couple.

**BG:** Yeah. Their not expensive.

**PH:** I have actually the first one they came out with.

**BG:** OK. I have a couple. Yeah.



**PH:** Anyway. Enough of that. I used to have a Patek, too, but I sold it because it was too much to maintain, you know? It was hand wound. Uh-. Anyway, where was I?

**BG:** Ed and Ann, '87.

**PH:** Ed and Ann and what happens is, OK. So it's funny. Ann is the one that made me understand I was able to express myself in the written word. And so Ann and Ed had already separated. But I got in touch with Ann through Ed and at first-. And she had changed careers and become a chiropractic doctor.

**BG:** Oh, wow.

**PH:** The first person that ever gave me an adjustment was Ann. Yeah.

**BG:** That's funny.

**PH:** Yeah. So other than that, I really didn't have any um-, contact with the school per se. Uh-, just one buddy in particular, I was uh-, in contact with. Um-. But other than that, no. But it was something that uh-, it was like a part of your personality at Harlem Prep, you know. It really always will be with you and I don't think I'll ever, ever forget it. You know.

**BG:** Yeah. Well, I don't--. It's already been--. I don't want to take up too much more of your time. Any—

**PH:** I'm good. If you guys got some more questions, I'm, I'm really--. I'm just sorry that I spoke longer than you expected.

**BG:** No. No. No. This is—

**MM:** No that was—

**BG:** --is like—

**PH:** But then again, you didn't know me. (laughs)

**BG:** No. No. This is like our--. We want to get these stories because this is like, this is--, this is-, this is incredible.

**PH:** Chris is taking a lot of notes. You ain't got no questions, huh? Nice neat handwriting, too. Very straight. Mine's all crooked.

**CHRISTOPHER BROOKS:** Yeah, I'm fine.

**PH:** Isaiah, you good?

**ISAIAH ARMSTRONG:** Yeah. I'm fine. Thank you.

**PH:** Yeah so pretty much that's it. I mean, uh-. If you got nothing else, I guess we're done.

**BG:** Any final thoughts or reflections or anything that you didn't say, but you said so much. Um.

**PH:** Mm--. No. I mean, uh--. I guess more than one student might feel it. But I feel very strongly that um-, the Prep sort of saved me, my life, really. Because, you know, the path I had been on—my unique experiences with the educational structure, environment, and um-. I think I'm blessed that I was able to actually go there and do so well. And uh-. (pause) Hm--. I probably wouldn't want you to use this, but uh, what happens is I didn't finish school. Cause I had a lot of things going on at the time. And--, they didn't actually turn, necessarily turn out too well. So I didn't finish school. And I went to a place called RTP, which I told you about. Which was started by Bayard Rustin and it also had a very open environment. And what happens is, it so happens that the guy who set up the finance department Dick Easton, who was a C.P.A., he was actually no longer there. He worked at the Dance Theatre of Harlem. But his um-, methods had stayed intact. And the, the finance director and the controller who hired me worked under him. They were certified and he was certified. So actually, it was sort of like working under them was working sort of like an apprenticeship as you would in a CPA firm. Not really, but sort of. But anyway, he had this system set up so I don't know if guys understand accounting. But there were four different—

**BG:** My uncle's a CPA.

**PH:** There was four different modules, you know, there was the accounts payable, there was the payroll. There was the administration and I forgot what the other one. Well, anyway each junior accountant rotated in all four areas. And it itself was an educational process. There's a reason why I'm telling you this. So what happens is I try to go back to school while I was working there. But I was going back up to CCNY-, still going uptown for classes. This place was on 23rd Street. I still lived in Brooklyn. So that was kind of rough. Didn't pan out too well. So what happens is-. Again, maybe you could take this off. And just think about it if you want. I--. You can leave it on there.

**BG:** Sure. No, no, no.

**PH:** But just think, just—

**BG:** No, what-

**PH:** --be discrete. OK. Cause it doesn't matter now. I'm retired. I've been retired for six years.

**BG:** No. Whatever uh-, I, I gotta' talk to you—

**PH:** I've been retired for six years.

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** But again, I, as I say, part of the thing that helped me most about the Prep was it instilled confidence in, in me. And so what happens is I worked at this place, and so I got a good grounding for—

[slight skip; edits in the transcript]

**PH:** And uh-, again it was about getting minorities into the uh-, into the trades.

**BG:** Sure.

**PH:** But the, the environment that I worked in was very educational itself in terms of accounting. So what happens is when I knew it was drying up, I uh-, I had my resume out there. And I rem-, and I got an uh-. I got a um-, call back from a head hunter for a job to work at the NYSE. And I was like: What's the N-, NYSE? And then I thought about it. Wait. The New York Stock Exchange?

**BG:** (slight laugh)

**PH:** And it was like uh-, it was a training program. You came in. It wasn't-. It was-, was-, to be an auditor, what they call an examiner. So again, I had no degree. But I had experience. I definitely knew accounting. And so I just-, I just “steved” it as we say

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** You know, Steve Brodie braved it. [Famous for supposedly jumping from the Brooklyn Bridge and surviving—to do a “Brodie” or “Steve” as was said in my neighborhood, was to take a chance.] And uh-, went for an interview. Aced it. Of course what happens they had, had a case with the EEOC just a couple of years prior. So there were no black people working there hardly.

**BG:** Sure, so they weren't—

**PH:** And especially not in the examiner staff because they went to the firms unannounced and did an audit. So I think there were three blacks there. In a staff of 60 or whatever it was. So anyway, what happens is--. Because I was in arrears on my student loan,

when they sent for the transcript, they didn't [laughing while talking: give it, they didn't give--] but I don't know if they found out. Anyway, cause they did a background check on you. Or whatever. But anyway—

**BG:** I feel like they'd have to, yeah.

**PH:** --my confidence was such that it made me able to actually take that job. Uh-. And even apply for it. And it was just luck and it was really providence, cause like I think I said, blessed in a lot of ways, lot of big fortunate ex-, mistakes or accidents happened in my life.

**BG:** Seemed to work out the way-

**PH:** Yeah. And uh, and, and the Prep en-, enabled me to capitalize on them by instilling me first and foremost um-, uh-, you know, confidence and the ability to realize that you are the captain of your own ship. And that um-, your intention has, has a lot to do with your product.

**BG:** Since we're—

**PH:** Not to wax too philosophically. But—

**BG:** No. That's powerful. You know, from what I'm reading and who I've talked to. I mean, do--. Obviously your story as unique. But do you feel like similar stories-, you alluded to that, similar stories kind of have the same kind of feeling that, you know, fell through the cracks, somehow it had—

**PH:** Of course—

**BG:** --the Prep, and like cause the way the documentary's former drop outs, all that kind of nature--. You know. Was, was that by and large was that the majority of the population?

**PH:** Uh-. I think—

**BG:** At, at the Prep.

**PH:** --that my story was unique uh-, but, you know, that was the whole thing about the Prep. As I said to you—

**BG:** Everyone had their own story.

**PH:** --the most defined--, the, the, the, the defining characteristic about this exchange is uniqueness and, and dynamism. And, and dyn-. And dynamic and it, it's um-, uh-,

uh-, pluralism, you know? It was wild, man. And, and, and, and uh-, uh-. Of course, everybody thinks they're the most unique.

**BG:** Sure.

**PH:** (laughs) Uh-. I, I think I'm unique in that uh-, I'm self-educated still today. But that place helped me, uh-, apply that. Sandy told a story, and I think I know who he's talking about, he would never say who it was. And I think it-, he's in that tape, step by-. He tells a story of a brother who was living in uh-, um- (snaps fingers)—

**SC:** In an abandoned.

**PH:** An abandoned building.

**SC:** I told him.

**BG:** Yeah. He did. Yes. That's—

**PH:** Yo. I mean, at least I-. You know, I had a place to sleep. You know, I mean, you know.

**BG:** That's crazy.

**PH:** My grandmother wasn't getting it, you know. Cause she was-, she-, she was kind of fed up with me, so at first she was like: Na--. You know. Uh-. But I had a place to stay. It was a place where I'd been all my life. I mean, can you imagine that? And a matter of fact, there was one girl there, you don't even know her [pointing to Sandy Campbell], but she was actually in your class, Spanish girl. I think she was in your class, too. Larry Burns said--. Remember, remember the guy who used to go on um-, uh-, Ed Sullivan and make-, had a hand puppet. [laughing while talking: he used to—

**SC:** Jose.

**PH:** --(laughs) Whatever. He had a hand puppet he used to make up his thumb and his finger and—whatever. He said that the girl looked like that. Anyway, so I had a little thing with girl. And she was like, you know, you'd see her in class. She was quiet and everything. And so there was this cat that I didn't know was related to her. I can't remember his name, Sandy. But he was real conservative. He was a little bit older.

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** You know, she was Hispanic and he was Hispanic. You know. Very kept to his self. Very conservative looking dude. Moustache. Very quiet. Ended up that she like lived

with him and she said the guy was like a monster. Like pretty much just about kept her locked up. You know. Some of those Hispanic cats are very possessive. But she was like this guy was like nutso buttso. Like what you see in the movies. And she was coming to class. You know. I mean, I don't think she was just saying it just to say it.

**BG:** Sure. Yeah. I mean. Yeah.

**PH:** You know. I mean, just to try to like ensnare me or anything.

**BG:** You don't make that kind of stuff up. Yeah.

**PH:** Yeah. That dude, yeah, yeah, and so I mean, you had all different--. You had, you know, people who didn't have to be there. Like Aissatou and, and, and uh-, um- (snaps fingers)

**SC:** Rosie Price. You remember Rosie?

**PH:** No. I remember the name.

**SC:** Unbelievable. Brilliant, brilliant, *brilliant*. She's the one that went on to the London School of Economics.

**BG:** You told me about that. Yeah.

**PH:** Yeah, we had, we had a couple of uh-, uh-, uh-, non minority students, you know? There was one guy that Sandy doesn't remember. He's in that tape, just a glimpse of him. I think his name was Armstrong. He was like almost white, but uh, I mean, lighter than me. But you know he could definitely pass. But this cat, wow, he definitely didn't have to be there. But he was there for the experience and for whatever, you know, problems he was having with the, with the regular education system. But he doesn't remember him. But this cat, and in all of his subjects, he was just like: Phew! Really, really bright. Uh-, but he was there for whatever reason he needed to be there, you know? And like I say, people like Aissatou and Sherry Kilgore, you know. They actually at the time they were in the Prep were still taking classes at Performing Arts, High School of Performing Arts.

**BG:** Really.

**PH:** Which is like you didn't get in that school. It was like getting into Stuyvesant or Bronx Science. You know. That's how talented they were. But they needed, I think, I

think she-, she's, she will say it to you, but I think she said before because she needed something more. And that's what the Prep had.

**BG:** That's what Cliff Jacobs kind of said, that he, he's not sure if what he needed-, what he--. He didn't know he needed, but he, he needed something different than what he was having.

**PH:** Mmm-hmm.

**BG:** Cause he was at Cardinal Hayes a private Catholic school—

**SC:** Mmm-hmm.

**PH:** (laughs)

**BG:** --he was like-, he's hanging up posters of like Eldridge Cleaver. He's like, and they're like, they're tearing it down. There yelling at him. Get that--. He's like I, I--. You know, he needed to express himself.

**PH:** Yeah.

**BG:** He was do-, but he was doing good there. It wasn't like he-

**PH:** Yes. I know. Exactly.

**BG:** You know, but he—

**PH:** He was, he was like a stellar student anyway.

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** Yeah.

**BG:** Were there-, I mean, there were lower achieving students in terms of like traditionally—

**PH:** Oh. Yes.

**BG:** --you know, in the school. So it-. That's what makes it so beautiful that there's such a-, the diversity of it in every way. You know. Um-

**PH:** Yeah. And, and, and—

**BG:** From all backgrounds.

**PH:** And of course I'm sure they had plenty a-, and but by the skin of my teeth, could have been one of their failures. But I don't think it was, you know, had anything to do with the Prep experience. You know. I remember one time I was on, um-, on a line for a bus in the Port Authority. And I turned around and this cat had on the, had on the blazer with the moja logo.

**BG:** Oh. Wow.

**PH:** I said: "Oh, man, I went to the Harlem Prep." And he was like: "Yeah. So what."  
You know.

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** He didn't even *say* anything to me. He was just like: Yeah. OK. I don't know if it was a borrowed jacket or whatever. Uh-. And that's off to the side. But I'm saying, um-. You had so many different people and stories. It was just amazing. You can't even uh-, you know, you can't even uh-, crystallize for me. You can't even crystallize uh-, describing the student body or your experience with individuals. It's just, it was just so varied. And maybe it was just because I was young and it was like such an explosion of um, different experiences. But uh-, it was just very, very plural. And um-. It's a beautiful thing. [laughing while talking: That's all I can say.] You know.

**BG:** What were, the reputation on the street? I mean, was it, I mean people you know, in the community. People know of—

**PH:** Well, I'm sure you've heard other—

**BG:** --Harlem Prep.

**PH:** --people say yeah, I mean, it—

**BG:** Because you [turning to Sandy Campbell] tell us a story about, you know, how you worked at Harlem Prep, we're going to-. You're, you're cool with—

**PH:** Yeah. Yeah. I heard that story.

**BG:** Yeah. Like—

**PH:** Yeah.

**BG:** --but I guess it, it wasn't--. Was the community--, was the community involved? I mean, you know, with Harlem Prep?

**PH:** I don't know if they were involved. But they, they were very--. Those who understood what we were doing, um-, were very supportive. Even if they-. And most people weren't able to do anything. Uh-. I was from Brooklyn. So, you know, it was over an hour ride for me and nobody in Brooklyn—

**BG:** Sure, oh wow.

**PH:** And nobody in Brooklyn, but nobody that I knew of knew what it was. Um-, but s-, you know, locally, for sure, the everyday person knew there was a different



experience going on there. And the, and the more enlightened or informed people in general knew. But every-. As far as I know, everybody that knew about the Prep was like: “Yeah. Y'all go get 'em.” You know? As far as I knew. But uh-. I, I didn't have much intercourse, uh--. You know, with, with people from the community cause I wasn't from Harlem. I was from Brooklyn.

**BG:** Sure. Sure.

**PH:** You know. But um-. When you told somebody and then you explained to them and, and it-, if it clicked either from the *Ebony* ad or whatever they were like: Yeah, man, that's great. You know? Except for that dufus guy that I was telling you about [laughing while talking: trying to get me a clerical job.] C'mon. Harlem Prep. You know. Yeah. It, it was-. Uh-, it was a very much loved and respected institution as far as I knew. Yeah. I remember actually one time, too, me and the accountant used to go out drinking. He was a bourbon man. So uh-. We were in a place [a bar] [laughing while talking: one day] and I saw coming out of the place as we were coming in, one of the hacks from Rikers Island. And he was in charge of what was called a honor quad where they didn't actually lock you up at night and everything. And that was the quad you were supposed to be in to go to school. I still didn't never get to go to school. I don't know. But I saw him one day and I said: “Yeah. Oh, Marshal Greene.” And he was like ehh....you know. And you didn't fuck with Marshal Greene. He was known to slap you. And actually I got in, in a thing one time, and I said: “Oh, man, he's getting ready to smack me.” He had these big like farmer's hands, you know?

**BG:** (laughs)

**PH:** But anyway, so I ran up on him and I said: “Yeah, Marshal Greene. You know, I was in eight lower quad”, which was his command for the day shift. I don't know if he was armed at the time, but you could see he was like: “Oh, shit. [laughing while talking: What's this kid getting ready to do?”] You know. So I said: “Yeah. I'm going to Harlem Prep, Mr. Greene. And I was like— And he said: “Oh. OK.” You know. Of course, you know, I think the thing of me coming and say I was an ex-convict of yours sounded like [makes sound of air blowing through lips]

**BG:** Like oh my god.

**PH:** Good thing he didn't go for his gat. But uh, you know, I told him I was going to Harlem Prep. He was like: "Oh. That's good. That's good. Good to see you young man." Or something like that, you know. But I still--. I guess I shouldn't have ran up on him like that. But uh-. Myself, I was just elated to let him know, you know, I came through that and I'm doing well. You know. I'm in Harlem Prep now, you know. He didn't shoot me, you know.

**BG:** Yeah. That's a good thing. (heh, heh)

**PH:** (laughs)

**MM:** (laughs)

**BG:** Wow.

**PH:** So yeah—

**BG:** Any final thoughts? Any-? I mean, it's a lot to--. It seems like amazing.

**PH:** Well, I think one of the things too, is that I'm a little bit uninhibited and, and not only do I talk a lot, like to hear myself talk and talk, especially about myself. Um--. But I think I'll say a little bit more than a lot of people will. Cause I've got a lot of that I don't give a fuck in me. You know.

**BG:** Yeah. (slight laugh) No, this is great.

**PH:** Say what? What'd you say? [to Sandy Campbell]

**SC:** Aissatou.

**PH:** Yeah. Aissatou is, she's really, she's really something. She's, she's really--. And she's so um-, uh-, eloquent. And she's so-. Oh, and she puts the things together—

**SC:** Sherry, too.

**PH:** So she's on the ball. Yeah. But Aissatou. She's got it. She's, she's very, very good talker. Her-, and, and her experiences like really very varied. I mean, she was da-, she was like the dance troupe. And they used to raise money for us, too. And I didn't even know she was going to Music and Art at the same time. Uh-. And, and she's uh-, she's, she's going to be a great interview. Cause she's, she's got it all together. She um-. You know, where I stutter and have to think about my words, she doesn't. She just like, she comes right out-. Cause actually, we had a, a session not too long ago with someone else who's doing a project.

**SC:** July.

**PH:** And uh-, I said to Sandy, we were off--, we, we'd finished the thing. And, and I said to Sandy, I said: "But Sandy do-, you know, it-, I always had a special, you know, were the teachers more lenient than they needed to be? Cause, you know, I got straight A's. I was no straight A student." You know. I asked: "wasn't a lot of it just your personality?" [that determined how you were graded] Sandy was like: "Huh?" So she came out and said: "But Pete--." Cause I, I was-. And I also said to in, in, in that context, I said, you know, I didn't think I was ready. And I really wasn't in terms of structural stuff, you know. Uh--. And, and I said I didn't think I was ready. I wondered if it was because of the fact that they knew they were running out of funds. And she said: "No, Peter, you know, because don't forget, a lot of it was that they knew that the whole system was all bullshit." And that, you know, yes, you were ready. And yeah, you know, they just understood that if you were going to go, you had to go. And, you know, you could do it.

**SC:** And as far as I know, everyone did.

**PH:** Yeah.

**BG:** They did it.

**PH:** Yeah.

**SC:** Yeah. I, I was just sitting here thinking to us that there are not many Harlem Prep that we still have contact with. And I'm just wondering if the ones that we do are all successful. I'm wondering if that has something to do with it. That they're the ones who have kept a close connection with us on Facebook or, or whatever. Just wondering.

**PH:** Well, I don't know. I, I, I think it just kind of um-, dissipated. I, I think the only thing that made me kind of get in contact with everybody was sort of--, not to be maudlin here, um-, but I retired very early, thank god, six years ago at 56. And um-, you know--.

**BG:** (slight laugh)

**PH:** Believe me, you know, it was time to go.

**BG:** Yeah. (heh, heh)

**PH:** Came out with a package.

**BG:** That was from—

**PH:** From-

**BG:** --Wall Street.

**PH:** --the New York Stock Exchange. I worked there for 30 years. Yeah.

**BG:** Wow.

**PH:** They came out with a package. That was the same job I told you I took—

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** The point was that uh-, I guess a sense of nostalgia--

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** --caused me to, you know, just like Google—

**BG:** Mmm-hmm.

**PH:** --Harlem Prep and then I found out that um-, we had that Facebook thing that Sherry started. And um-, you would have thought that we would have got a little more traction than we did. But I don't know what the reason is, Sandy. I think it's just that it's, it, it, it do-, it didn't exist for too long. There's, there's no presence now or the really Harl-, Harlem Prep. Certainly its legacy hasn't um-, been distributed as much as it should be. So I think that has a lot to do with it. You know, it's just like the physical presence and actually the legacy kind of discontinued. So you know. And what, we had at least 600 students, right? That actually went through the whole program. You would think, cause I think on our, our uh-, Facebook page, which we did a reunion for in '71 in 2011. I think we might have less than 100 "friends." And, and so I don't know what Sandy speaks to is because of the fact that there just isn't any physical presence. It can't be that people aren't interested, that they've been through—

**BG:** There were a lot of people. From what I've read through, there were hundreds and hundreds. I mean, more than, you know, more than a thousand ultimately who went, until '75, what I'm reading about some of the numbers.

**SC:** Well, it could be, too, that a lot of them are just not in the network to find out that there are many of us out there who are reaching out to each other. There are a significant number of teachers that have passed on.

**PH:** Yes.

**SC:** And there are a significant number of students that have passed on. And every once in a while, I'll bump into something, somebody and they'll tell me: "Oh, you know, so-and-so died."

**PH:** Mmm-hmm.

**BG:** And now there is only one administrator left and that's Hussein.

**PH:** Well, Pruitt. He still lives. He's in Teaneck, too.

**BG:** --Oh, Pruitt. That's right—

**PH:** He's in my town.

**SC:** Yeah. There's Tony Lewis I found out passed away in September.

**PH:** Yeah. He was be-, just before me though. Yeah.

**SC:** So-

**PH:** Yeah. And how about that other guy that taught math? Um-, Ro-, um—

**SC:** Bob Wilkins.

**PH:** No. They-. A small brother.

**SC:** Debra Michael.

**PH:** No--. Roy something. What was his name?

**SC:** Adiaye?

**PH:** No.

**SC:** That was Hussein's brother.

**PH:** No. This was a brother. Young brother.

**SC:** OK. I don't remember.

**PH:** Small, slight—

**SC:** I don't remember him.

**PH:** Cause both of the Gilmore brothers are dead, right?

**SC:** Mmm-hmm.

**PH:** That was my crowd, the kids I used to run with. This guy named Kassim and two brothers where one had, had graduated the year before us. Uh--. Both of the passed already.

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** And I mean we're getting to be that age, too, where it's not unusual.

**SC:** I went to Africa with Billy.

**PH:** Did you?

**SC:** Yeah.

**PH:** That was before he was married? Or—. Yeah. Cause he ended up having a—

**SC:** No wait a minute, not Billy. Um--.

**PH:** Ronnie.

**SC:** No, Ronnie was the taller one.

**PH:** Yeah.

**SC:** It was Billy.

**PH:** Yeah, Billy. Cause he ended up—

**SC:** I got malaria.

**PH:** Really.

**SC:** He went on to Nigeria. Yeah, but that's, that's—

**BG:** Yeah, no well, no we'll—

**SC:** Sorry.

**BG:** No, no, no, no, no. Well, just for the sake of—well, well, any final thoughts of all the—

**PH:** No. No final thoughts except for—

**BG:** Thank you so much.

**PH:** --I wish you were able to have um-, uh-, been there. You know, or, or we had more uh-, a larger body of recorded works whether it's just spoken or audio-

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** --and spoke because um-, you, you could see the diversity.

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** And uh-. I hate to be corny, but the, the concern, you know, if you want to say love, uh-, uh-, of everybody for what they was doing. I mean teachers could have been faking. I, I don't know. But I doubt it, I mean, because I mean—

**BG:** Doesn't sound like it.

**PH:** --all the students, you know, they, they--. Like you--. You asked one time, Michael, whether or not um-, there were any students who had a problem or, or, or whatever. You know, but they-, they-, you just weren't there unless you loved it. You know? I

mean, teachers were getting paid but they weren't getting paid that well. They loved it, you know? I mean, they were getting paid by what they were doing.

**BG:** Sure.

**PH:** You know, they were seeing, they were seeing their work. And that's pretty much it.

**BG:** Yeah.

**PH:** Thanks very much--

**BG:** Thank you so much.

**PH:** --for your time.

**MM:** Thank you.

**BG:** Thank you so much. We'll stop there.

*[end of recording]*