Sterling Nile Interviewed by Barry Goldenberg. Audio Conducted by Christopher Brooks. Observed by Isaiah Armstrong and Ibrahim Ali.
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BARRY GOLDENBERG: All right. So we're here--. Just to make this official, we're here at Teachers College Columbia University. I am Barry Goldenberg. I'm accompanied by Isaiah Armstrong, Chris Brooks, and Ibrahim Ali. And we're here interviewing Sterling Nile, a former student of Harlem Prep, and we're really excited hear your story. With that being said, you kind of told us briefly, where and when were you born? Where did you grow up?

STERLING NILE: I was born in Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, Sloan Hospital for Women. And that was on 168th Street and Broadway, August 31, 1948. I grew up in Central Harlem in a complex, a private complex called the Riverton, which was built by the Metropolitan Life Company, you know, an insurance company that had built a very large complex, Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village. And they also built another large complex called Parkchester in the Bronx. So that the Riverton was the Harlem equivalent of the downtown residence Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village. And the complement of the complex in the Bronx, Parkchester. I also lived for three years in New Rochelle from the first to the third grade. My father bought a house up there and I and my mother and my brother moved up there. And I loved it up there. But we had to move back to Harlem. You know?

BG: When-, and when was that? You moved back? Just roughly. (laughs)

SN: I was in the third grade. I can't even remember. Let me see. Let me-. I don't know. I was born in 1948, you went to the first grade five, five years nine months.

BG: OK. So you spent most of your time in Harlem though.

SN: Right. Yeah. I spent most of my time in Harlem. Yeah. And I went to all neighborhood schools. You know, walking distance until high school, I went to DeWitt Clinton. You know? I went to 133, that, that's kindergarten. Then I went to St. Mark's the Evangelist. Parochial schools, elementary school. Then when I moved to New Rochelle, I went to Henry Barnard School, that was elementary school in New Rochelle. And when I came back, I went to PS 100 for one year in the sixth grade. And then went to Frederick Douglas junior high school, uh-, which was also in Harlem. And uh-, that was significant because they headmaster of Harlem Prep at that time was a guidance counselor for the Board of Education at that school. So that was my initial meeting and—

BG: Oh. I haven't heard that before.

SN: --my contact and being aware of him.

BG: So you--

SN: Or him being aware of me.

BG: So Ed Carpenter? Is that?

SN: Yeah. Ed Carpenter—

BG: So he was—

SN: --was the guidance, guidance counselor and a teacher—

BG: Oh, I—

SN: --at Frederick Douglas junior high school.

BG: I didn't-, I haven't-, I have-, I didn't know that yet.

SN: And this was in the early sixties.

BG: OK.

SN: You know? Yeah. So you know. And so that's where I met him and he met me. Or he became aware of me and I became aware of him. And I didn't see him. I didn't need guidance counseling at that time. But, you know, we, we knew who he was. You know, all the students knew who he was.

SN: And that was a really good junior high school. A lot of black teachers and I participated--. I liked art. I, you know, excelled in art, fine art, drawing and painting and stuff. So to make a long story short, when I was in junior high school, I belonged to this extracurricular program, afterschool program called the Art Club. And that was simply twice a week you stay after school, you know, from 3:00 to maybe 5:00 or 6:00 and you paint and draw. They give you, you know, they give you assignments to do, to design and whatever. And then you also get to work on your own projects. And I, I received a very good foundation, you know, in art from that particular, that particular school and by the black teachers, the black art teachers. They were named-, Mr. Rogers was one. He ran the art club. And he was an art teacher. And the other one was Mr. Barnwell. He also taught. So those two were very instrumental in giving me a really good foundation in art. OK. So now, well, then I went to DeWitt Clinton and we'll fast-, we'll fast forward from there. (slight laugh) You know. And I also, you know, I did a lot of art in DeWitt Clinton also.

BG: This is great cause it gives us a sense of how your experiences—

SN: Yeah. This is—

BG: --before Harlem Prep and what they were like.

SN: So I went to DeWitt Clinton first. And I just could-, so the like art, I didn't really excel in the other subjects. And my art teacher, he saw that I liked art and—

BG: This was at, at-

SN: --he-, I used—

BG: --DeWitt Clinton.

SN: --to like--. We had like a double period in art. But I liked it so much that I would not go to other classes and just stay in the, in the art classroom and continue to work. I would be in the back of the class. And he saw, he saw that. And he would just like bow his head, act like he didn't see me. We, we knew that he saw me, you know? His name was Mr. Belizio. And-, but he loved me. And he also, he taught me how to make my own canvas for oil painting because—

BG: Oh. Wow.

SN: --when you're young, you're kind of like broke. You don't have a lot of money. So he told me get old burlap potato sack bag from the supermarket. And bring it in to school and he would teach me how, how to, you know, transform that into a canvas. So he taught me how to stretch canvas. He taught me how to prime it with gesso. And, you know, and I did my first oil paintings in, in his class. I went from tempera paint, which is water based that you use, you know, egg and water based in, in public school. And then I, you know, the next step up when you get more developed and you can, you want to use oil paints cause that's what the Masters in fine arts used, you know? Rembrandt and all them guys. You know, Van Gogh and all of, all of—you know. The Masters. So I did my first and second oil painting in his class. So I graduated from there. As a matter of fact, my grades were so kind of like borderline that I had to do six months extra at DeWitt Clinton. So I was supposed to get out in June of '67, and I graduated in January/February of '68. I did six months extra.

BG: This was high school, right?

SN: Yeah. I got a general diploma. And soon as I got out of there, that same month, in February, I went to the School of Visual Arts. Down on 23rd Street. And, cause that's what I wanted to do. I pursued a career, you know, in art. And I majored in fine art down there. And I went-, attended there for two years, right? And I think I stopped around 1969, right? You know. I went straight through, like when I got, went in in February of '68, I went straight through and even in summer school, we continued to have classes. You know. So I went full time all the way through the summer, all the way-, you know. So that gave me like two years within a year and a half or so. By '69, I had two years worth of credits. You know. And then while I was at the School of Visual Arts, I decided that I needed to study more than just art history

and art courses. Like I needed you know, I became interested in geometric forms. And the one of course that attracted me the most was the triangle. And the triangle is known as the perfect geometric form, you know. Not the circle. Not the square. But an equilateral triangle. You know. So I wanted to make--. I became interested in the triangle. And because of the pyramids, you know, African history, stuff like that. And the significance of the pyramids, you know. And I wanted--. So I started, I wanted to make my own stretchers. I wanted to make my own canvases and I wanted them to be triangular shaped. And so in order to do that, I had to learn the Pythagorean theorem. So I had to take math, you know what I mean? $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$. That kind of--. You know what I mean? So I, I said: Man. I got to, I got to-. They weren't teaching that kind of stuff at the School of Visual Arts. So anyway, so I—

BG: Interesting.

SN: --had, so--. I left there and, and then I did some Black Power work. I got involved in the community and stuff like that. And the Civil Rights Movement was going on. And the Black Power movement and stuff like that. And then I did, I went as far as I could go with that because it got, got to be risky. You know.

BG: Yeah. It was at that time period, right there. You know.

SN: Yeah. Like--

BG: --uprisings were happening—

SN: --the FBI, you know, had come to my parents' house where I was living and they also had stopped me in a car. I had taken it as far as I could go before, you know, getting arrested. That type of thing. You know what I mean? So really what slowed me down was I got sick and my mother went to Harlem Prep and spoke to Ed Carpenter and asked him, you know, could I attend. Could I enroll in that school. And he said: "Yes. I remember him. Sure I remember him." And he said: "Sure. When he gets--." She explained that I was sick, you know. And I probably wouldn't be better in time to start the school in September. But could I come as soon as I get-, recover, you know, in October. And he said: "Yeah. Sure." You know, and that's, that was how I got to come to Harlem Prep because my mother went over--. She was concerned about my Black Power activities. And stuff like that, you know. Cause we really pushed, you know. And so she wanted me to-. And she-. My, my parent's generation was about education. If you just get an education, everything will be all right. Of course, that didn't turn out to be. But you know, each generation wants the, their children, the next generation, the future generation to do better than them. So my parents were like-, they grew up in the Depression and stuff like that. You know what I mean? And World War II, so they wanted--. You know, they grew up under segregation and discrimination, stuff like that. So they-, you know, they--. Nobody in my family had ever gone to college. My father didn't even graduate from high school. My mother went to Pratt, she took all art courses part time at Pratt at night. And that's as far as they got. So for, you know, their children to go to college, that was like a breakthrough. You understand what I'm saying?

BG: Totally.

SN: That was like, you know, that was the first in their family line in the family tree and all of that to go to school, you know? That was like a new, new level of achievement. So anyway--. So that, that was their wish. That was their expectation. All right. So—

BG: How did you end up at Harlem Prep, cause you, you already graduated high school, right? So what was that—

SN: Right.

BG: --how, how did that work out?

SN: I had a general diploma from high school. So Harlem Prep gave you an academic diploma, which was much better. You know. I knew that in order to go to college, my average was very low. It was like 66 in DeWitt Clinton. Cause I just liked art. That was it. I didn't-, I didn't take science. I didn't take chemistry or anything. I just—

BG: Oh. Wow.

SN: --specialized in art. And I excelled at that. You know. I got "A's" in that. But that was so, cause I loved it. I was passionate about it. When I went to Harlem Prep, the whole point of going was to boost up my high school average. So that I could get, you know, get accepted into college. You know what I mean? You have to have a good average.

BG: Definitely.

SN: You know, and boost up your, your PSAT scores and all that kind of stuff. You know what I mean? So that, that was the purpose of going to, to Harlem Prep. I needed to boost up my average so that it could be recognized and respected, you know, for college acceptance, that type of thing, you know. So that's why I came there. You know? And it was just about doing the basics, you know. Math, English, history, science, you know, the four, you know. And then from there taking it there--. Now while I was there, when I got there--. I attended Harlem Prep from, you could say September/October 1969 through June of 1971. And I attended for two years, right? A lot of students (coughs) just attended for one year, you know. But I decided to--. I—what happened was when I, in my first year I loved the school so much and the courses and the instructors, that I decided: "Hey, man. I'm going to take my time."

BG: I'm not leaving. (slight laugh)

SN: And I'm going to, I'm going to get as much as I can out of this, you know, before I move on to the next level. It was a very--. It was the exact opposite of the public school system.

BG: How so?

SN: Well--. (pause) In my timea lot of blacks weren't accepted into like the specialized schools, the Music and Art, Art and Design, Stuyvesant. Bronx High School of Science. The other, the other part was it was a very high um-, high school drop out rate among Afro Americans, Hispanics, you know. They started using that term minorities. I don't think of myself as a minority. You know. But the high school drop out rate was in the 50s. Like, you know, 50 percent, maybe a little greater. So that meant, you know, one out of every two black kids you saw, teenagers, one of them was a high school drop out. That's a--. That's a devastating number. And the Board of Education had kind of said: "Well, you know, these individuals are not--, they don't have the capacity to be educated. They don't want to learn." They just blew us off. You know. And they, they said it's our fault. You know, that type of thing. So, I mean, it was some controversy. So Harlem Prep was created because out of a concern for the, for the number, the high number of drop outs, especially in the inner city. You know, in Harlem. That type of thing, you know. The black, in the black community. So it was a-. Originally it started I think in 1968. And the teachers were a combination of Marymount, Mount Saint-, Marymount-

BG: There were some nuns there, right?

SN: Nuns.

BG: Yeah.

SN: Right.

BG: From what I heard.

SN: And some, you know, black and white teachers. And they taught at the 369 Armory, you know where that's at? That's in Harlem.

BG: Did you attend, were you at—

SN: No.

BG: --you weren't--. That was—

SN: No.

BG: --the year before you, right?

SN: That was in 1968.

BG: Yeah. And you started—

SN: That was the year before.

BG: --in '69.

SN: And they taught in the hallway. They didn't even have a room. They, they taught classes in the hallway—

BG: At the Armory.

SN: --at the 369th Armory.

BG: Wow!

SN: And 369th is the Armory in Harlem. And they have a great reputation of the soldiers that were part of that armory during World War I were known as the Men of Bronze. And they had to fight under the French because at that time, there was so much segregation in the army, that [laughing while talking: they wouldn't even let a black soldier fight.] So they fought under the French and then the French, you know, awarded them really high medals and stuff because they, they recognized they were really gallant, you know, brave fighters, courageous fighters and what not. Soldiers. Of course they came back, you know, with, with a lot of, you know, pride and recognition. Anyway. So anyway that's, that's where Harlem Prep started. OK? And it was taught in the hallways of the 369th Armory. And then the following year--. So their-. So their first challenge was to get a space, you know, a good, nice physical space. And so there was a supermarket on Eighth Avenue between 135th and 136th Street. You know. And I guess it went out of business and they got that space. Right? And it was two floors, so now Harlem Prep. So when I came there, that's where it was at.

BG: It was the first year.

SN: Yeah. And it was a-, it was a nice space. There wasn't a lot of walls. They had what they called to concept of open classrooms, you know, which was a very new concept then. A lot of--. Now they're things that we take for granted now, that, that was--. Harlem Prep was highly innovative and they maximized the openness, the flexibility, the plastic--. You know, when I say plastic I don't mean something fake or phony, I mean the porous, you know, the breathe-ability. The breathe-ability not only of the physical design but the breathe-ability of the life of ideas. You understand, what I'm saying? You know. Giving ideas breath and life. You know.

BG: That's amazing. I mean it's--

SN: Nourishing them, you know. You know, like a mother's nurturing, you know, nurturing, cultivating ideas, you know. So a school is, is a beautiful idea and it was-, it's a beautiful experience because it's, it's the world of ideas. Like this here, this, you know, Columbia University, this is the world of ideas. When you're in a classroom setting or educational setting, you know, or some kind of training setting, on a high level, it's the world of ideas when it's a its best, you know. So and that's what Harlem Prep was. It was a lot of--. Lot of, lot of stuff going on all right? So that, it was an open classroom. That was different from the Board of Education. Um-. The students had input. We could, we could kind of uh-, request and suggest what cert-, what courses would be interesting for us, for the, for the teachers to teach in. You know, like if we had an interest in African history, or Afro American history, or creative writing. In the sixties, poetry was picking up prom-, you know, it was picking up importance. You know, you had—he was Leroy Jones then but he became Amiri Baraka. You know. You had Don L. Lee. You had a lot of black writers, you know? And one of the forms--. They wrote novels and they wrote social essays and things like that, but they also use the form of poetry. So, so wh-. In the school, uh-, that, that would take place in the creative writing class, you know.

BG: Yeah, that's—

SN: That, that type of thing. And it was-, that was, that was great. I took that, you know. So um-, uh-, let me see.

BG: Not to interrupt you. I—

SN: Yeah.

BG: Because, because of the time—
SN: Yeah. Go ahead.
BG: --I only have this room reserved I think till five or so, so I think folks—
SN: Oh.
BG: --might be coming in. So we'll move to a different room once they do.
SN: Oh.
BG: So don't feel bad about that.
SN: Yeah. Yeah.
BG: So but um--.
SN: Now our motto was mojo logo. It was an African, you know, term and it meant unity and brotherhood. That was—
BG: Yeah.
SN: --the school's, you know-. And we, at the time, they had blazers and they had a patch with mojo logo and because it was, the school was in Harlem, and, you know—we were Afro American, you know, we-, they put a shield. It was a black patch with a, you know, a, a--. Black and gold were the colors, so they had like a gold outline of an African shield with two spears crossing each other. And on the mojo and logo was on--. Mojo was on the top. Logo was on the bottom. You know.
BG: A circle. Do you still have your patch?
SN: No. I don't have that anymore.
BG: (slight laugh) Yeah. I know.
SN: Um-. But that was, you know, just to give an insignia, you know. You know. So um-. Uh-. Also, the--. Ed-, Ed Carpenter, he was a, a great uh-, headmaster. And uh-, he knew how to communicate on a lot of different levels. You know. He could talk on our level. He was a hip cat.
BG: (laughs)
SN: And, but he was serious about, you know, giving us an-. He was really interested in us, you know. And--. (clears throat) That was important because black people and black men in particular, were, you know, or-, every-. You know we're negated. You know we're neglected, denied. You know. We're not supposed to have an identity. We're not supposed to, you know, be, have abilities and intelligence and creativity. So he was different. He knew that we had a lot of potential in all those areas. You know. And—
[woman enters room: Hey, we have class now.]
BG: Yeah. No problem. Yeah. No problem.
SN: You know, he wasn't about negating us or anything. You know. OK.
BG: Yeah. We'll have to pause and head out. That's OK. We'll—
[end of recording]

SN: OK.
BG: Check. We good, Chris?
[Christopher Brooks, who was conducting the audio equipment: Yeah. Yeah.]
SN: We good?
BG: Excellent. Yeah.
SN: OK—
BG: So.
SN: --because I'm just going to be bouncing around.
BG: No. This is amazing. This is like the best. This is so great.
SN: Right. OK. Um-, which I was at DeWitt Clinton – I'm going to backtrack a minute.
BG: OK. OK.

SN: While I was at DeWitt Clinton High School, I always pursued participating in art, art workshops. So they had a-, they an afternoon art workshop. They had anti poverty programs in the sixties. And there was a HARYOU act. Had an afterschool workshop twice a week on 9 West 125th Street. And it was facilitated by an Afro American artist from the WPA period, that's oh- that's work-, that's under Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He did a lot of, you know, during the Depression, when he first became president, he had to put America back to work 'cause everybody was out of work. So he created a lot of federal programs. One of the programs--. Works Progress Administration. WPA. So the facilitator of my workshop was in-, as a-, was a Afro-, was--. Is it working? [referring to audio recording equipment]

BG: Yeah. We're good.

SN: Was an Afro American artist, one of them, from that period. And it's a, it's a well known period, you know. His name was Norman Lewis. You know, he kind of grew up in New York City. And he also was a Merchant Marine. But anyway, the work that he—I studied under him for two years in that workshop. So I had very-. Again, I had very good instruction. And while I was there, just briefly to mention, he, you know, he knew-, he had some really good artistic friends, as you would. And Romare Beardon came by. So I was introduced to Romare Beardon. And of course, I knew who he was, but when you're in high school, you know, I was kind of shy then and everything. So you just like, you know, you're like--. I knew who he was already because I had seen his work in major exhibitions in the sixties, you know what I mean? And we knew this guy was like: Man, he was advanced. You know? So you would-, you-, that, that's somebody that it's like admiring Michael Jordan, you know what I mean? You would like--. You know, you tried to-, you would try to be like him. You know what I mean? Or go beyond, you know, be like him and then go beyond him or something. So I met him and then another time, James Baldwin came by.

BG: Oh wow.

SN: You know, so I got introduced to James Baldwin, who, you know, is a writer. Afro American writer.

BG: That's a--. No way.

SN: And he was--. James Baldwin was—

BG: This is not. This is not. Before the Prep?

SN: This is before—

BG: --at DeWitt Clinton.

SN: --the Prep.

BG: DeWitt Clinton.

SN: Right. So that was my-. That was part of my foundation. It was always stuff going on.

BG: Yeah. Sure.

SN: You know, and I saw-. That kept me out of trouble going to art. I mean, I played ball. I met a lot of good ball players. That's another story. Cause I met Kareem when he was in the ninth grade.

BG: No way.

SN: When he was Lew Alcindor. That's, that's another story.

BG: I went to UCLA, so I'm a Kareem fan. (laughs)

SN: Yeah. (laughs) Yeah. Yeah.

BG: He's a legend.

SN: So--. That, that goes into another thing. You know. You just crossed paths with a lot of different people who were all doing something, you know. I mean, I saw Malcolm X when he was alive.

BG: Yeah. Wow.

SN: Yeah. I went to the viewing of his body, you know it was at Unity Funeral Home. My parents took me there. You know, so we, we had recognition and respect. You know, he was

significant to us and Martin Luther King came to Harlem. And so, you know, that kind of stuff. So there was-. Harlem was a, it was a very stimulating community you know. And, and it was a lot of innovative stuff going on. You know, people were trying to--. It was progressive. It was a very progressive community. It was a lot of ideas. Musically, you know, the first time I saw Miles Davis it was in the Club Baron on 132nd and Lenox Avenue in Harlem. You know, for free. I saw him no cover charge. Miles Davis. Boom. And then when he went off Cannonball Adderly's group came on. And it was so-. It was-. The most advanced stuff musically, the most advanced basketball players, advanced art, advanced everything was, it was happening in Harlem. You know. And, and you just couldn't help but be influenced or, you know, in some way touched by it. It, it was part of your timeline and part, part of your development. You know. You were-, we were there. You know. And even though there were pockets, there was poverty and stuff like that, we didn't-. We didn't really know we were poor. It was-, Harlem was-, I had a colorful childhood. A beautiful childhood. You know. That stuff about, you know, it being rough and all--. Phew! I don't know what you're talking about. Cause I mean, you know, it was, it was beautiful and it, the-, I went to the Apollo a lot and all--. Anyway, let me, let me--. I'm going off.

BG: No, this is wonderful. This is so interesting.

SN: I mean, I've seen James Brown so many times and, you know, all the Motown people. The Temptations and all. You know, it was, it was beautiful. It was a beautiful period, you know. Hendrix gave a free concert in August of 1969, right around my junior high school on 139th—

BG: Oh, wow.

SN: --and Lenox Avenue. August of '69. Jimi Hendrix. You know. And then you had Coltrane, John Coltrane, was a leading saxophone player. You know. Love Supreme. It's-, all the stuff is going on, it-, simultaneously at the same time, you know. Like people who were innovators, you know. They weren't just entertainers, they were innovators. You know. And oh-. One other thing. When I was a child somewhere between five and ten years old, my mother took me to see Billie Holiday sing at an outdoor evening concert in Central Park. So I-, you know, that was my foundation for music. For jazz. That was part of my foundation, you know. Very early she took me to see somebody who was like a highly original stylist singer. You know. OK. So now we're going to get back. All right. So—

BG: I'm curious to hear how all this affected like how-

SN: Yeah.

BG: --like what was going on in Harlem. Everything you're describing, how did it affect like Harlem Prep, like the school? Like was, did like affect—

SN: Well—

BG: Did like the ideologies of the time—

SN: --it's--. It, you know. It's on a simple level, all of this stuff is part of your experience. So, you know, I experienced all these things even before I got to Harlem Prep. You know. So, you bring that with you, you know. You bring it with you. And it's part of your make up. It's-, you see that other people that are like me are doing things. You know what I mean? They ain't just hanging on the corner. They're doing stuff. You know, and they're achieving. You know. And, so you--. You know, there's no reason-. You say well, you know, if he can do it, I could do it. You know. And they teach you that. You know what I mean? This guys-. Wow. You know. This guy's, you know, everybody was breaking through, you know. So you-, it gives you confidence and hope. You know what I mean? That you can, you can do something, you could rise to the occasion if you want. You know, that type of thing.

BG: Totally.

SN: So, so that's, that's-, you know, it's part of your experience. It's part of your experience, you know. And it-. The things that I saw, these-, these cats, they were beautiful. They were

beautiful people. And, you know, they did positive stuff, you know. And uh-, they, they blazed new trails. You know. They expanded the vocabulary of their particular fields. And they-, they were like, they gave you stuff to like: Whoa. What was that? What was that about, you know? You know sometimes you take a while to like digest it or process it. You know. Cause it was so new, you know. But it's great. New stuff is great, you know what I mean?

BG: Yeah.

SN: It's, it's stimulating. It's not the same old thing. So it's not repetition. It's: Whoa. Wait a minute. OK. So then it makes you rethink every-. You know, it's like: Hold up. Oh, I, I thought that that was painting, but wait a minute. Now, hold up. You know? Oh, I thought that music was supposed to sound like this. But he did this--. What the hell is that? You know what I mean? So you, you know. It--. You were constantly--. You had to rethink: wait, oh man, wait a minute. And, and it was like an expanding thing, you know. It was expanding. And it was more inclusive, too. More inclusive. More searching, more inclusive. It was--. Phew! It was a lot, a lot of stimulation going on back then. A lot of, a lot of stimulation, you know. For you, for your mind—

BG: --and Harlem Prep was part of that—

SN: You know.

BG: Yeah.

SN: For your mind and your soul and your heart. You know, for-, all of that. Intellectually and spiritually, there was a lot of stimulation going on. You know. So that, that's really important, you know. Let-. So, anyway. My mother, she--. Not right away, but after a while, she became the attendance coordinator at Harlem Prep. And she worked the front desk and worked the phones, the reception area, the phones and took the attendance and kept track of the attendance. Kept the records, the attendance records straight. So she became employed at Harlem Prep. So that was kind of-, that was cool.

BG: That's awesome.

SN: You know, that was interesting experience. While I was there, I kind of excelled in that environment because it was a very--. Well, it was a very positive environment. Ed Carpenter, the headmaster, he took a lot of pains to make sure that the school--. They didn't have much money, but he made sure that the school was a--. He wanted a warm setting. So he put wood paneling up on the walls. You know, to warm it up, to-. He made it so that even physically, the physical you know, design you would want to come in there. You would want—

BG: It was welcoming.

SN: --It was some place that you would want to come and hang out. You know what I mean? You know, some places you go, you want to get out of there as fast as you can. You know what I mean?

BG: Not Harlem Prep.

SN: No. And you want-, you go there and: Oh, man. You know? And so it was that, it was that kind of, it was that kind of setting. I became, while I was there, I, I, you know, I became, the student representative to the faculty.

BG: Like student government or--?

SN: Yeah. Student representative to the faculty. But you, you have to have a representative—

BG: Sure.

SN: --to voice, you know, the students' concerns and their ideas and stuff like that. And I also became the student representative to the Board of Trustees.

BG: At Harlem Prep?

SN: Yeah.

BG: So you sat on the Board of Trustees?

SN: Right. And I had a vote.

BG: Wow. Wow!

SN: Mmm-hmm. They let me—
BG: That was pretty cool.
SN: Yeah. They let me vote. So that was-
BG: I bet you-. I bet most schools weren't like that, right? (laughs)
SN: No. No. So that was, that was an interesting experience for me. You know. And it's saying again that OK, you might be a teenager or a young adult but we're interested in, you know, you have a voice. You have ideas. You're-, you have a voice. Your voice is to be heard. You know what I mean? Your ideas are to be, you know, express them. You know, that type of thing. It wasn't-, they weren't trying to slap it down or silence you. They weren't trying to muzzle you. They wanted, they encouraged you to come forth with stuff. So that was—that was innovative at that time. Harlem Prep was an independent school. They had their fundraise-, their fin-, they were backed by basically, as I know, there were—
BG: You probably knew a lot of information--
SN: There were a lot of little funders. But the, the two, the two to three big ones, I would say the two big ones were Standard Oil of New Jersey, right? Which is like, you know, that's Rockefeller's—
BG: Exxon, now, right?
SN: Right. Exxon. Mobil.
BG: Esso.
SN: All that. Right. Esso. Right. Standard Oil of New Jersey. And Mosler Safes at that time. John Mosler. Yeah. John Mosler, he, he has a safe company. They make safes for banks and stuff like--. You know, these big, gigantic vaults and stuff like that.
BG: Wow.
SN: So one of the people on the Board of Trustees was Sheila Mosler, his then wife. John Mosler's wife. And she love-, she loved-, they lived in like Gramercy Park. You know, they had like one of them town houses down there.
BG: They had it going on.
SN: [laughing while talking: Around, right off Gramercy Park. That kind of thing.] You know. And she came up to Harlem Prep a lot. She was, she liked Ed. They were friends. They were friends. She used to sit in his office and talk. You know. It was just—it was more than fundraising, you know what I mean? She stayed in touch, wanted to see what was--. And she liked what was going on at the school. It was something new and innovative, you know what I mean? You know.
BG: That's awesome.
SN: It's, it's something that's different. Right. You knew something was-, important was going on. You know, it wasn't fully formed. It's like America, you know. It's an ongoing experiment.
BG: Totally.
SN: And a democracy, you know what I mean?
BG: Yeah. Yeah.
SN: You know. It's ongoing experiment they say. I also was one of the people that gave--. I was like valedictorian and I gave--. Well, there were two people, I think two of us that gave the graduation speech. They had one male student and one female. So I-. You know, I was the male person.
BG: This is what, '70, '71, right?
SN: Right. And Harlem Prep used to always have their graduation outdoors on 125th Street and Seventh Avenue. And that was because the head-, Ed felt that we should, you know, make the community aware. You know what I mean? Like we don't have anything to hide or cover up. So he wanted to sort of like show the community that you know, we're educating people and they're graduating and they're going on to a, you know a higher learning center. You know what I mean?

BG: Mmm-hmm.
SN: A higher learning institution.
BG: Sure.
SN: So--. And, you know, in a way that was like a positive example, you know? You know, we're showing the rest of the community that: Whoa. There are some kids that are complete. They're getting—you know, they're not high school dropouts. They're graduating from high school.
BG: These are the kids who were before, right?
SN: Right. And they're taking their ambitions a little further with the, you know, with college and whatnot. So he, he wanted that, wanted the community to see that because of course, if I can do it, you could do it. You know what I mean? Lead by example. That's all. And it wasn't an ego trip, it was just, you know, if I can do it, if we can do it you can do it, you know? That type of thing, wishing the best for everybody, you know. There were--. The teachers there were great. I don't remember everybody, every teacher there, but of course it was Sandy Campbell. He was a English teacher and he also taught creative writing. Um-. You had Dr. Ben Jochananon he taught African history and macroeconomics. I took both of those courses with him. The quart and the egg, and all that kind of stuff. I still remember that stuff, you know.
BG: That's funny.
SN: And he had an assistant who also taught African history, Paul Simmons, Mr. Simmons. He was good, too. And then you had Mike, this guy named Mike. He was a chemistry teacher. And, oh, boy. Ed's wife Ann Carpenter. She was the assistant principal and she was, she was responsible for the curriculum. Ed was kind of like, he went back to school and got his PhD in education. Right? But, you know, he was kind of--. He was good. He could talk to you. He could talk. And he could teach. But his role primarily was to be the fundraiser also, you know, which is--. That was, you know—
BG: That's how they survived.
SN: --without--. Right. You know, without any money, the whole thing was money. So he had an important role. So while he was out go-, meeting with different people, his wife, she was responsible for the day-to-day operations and the curriculum at the school. You know what I mean? Keeping the courses on a certain level. You know. Keeping the high quality education. You know, that type of thing. And what not. And making sure our reading levels came up. Now the other innovative thing that -- at least I had never heard of this before in my time, it's pro-, it's taken for granted again -- but the idea of 100 percent graduation. They didn't-, they wouldn't graduate any student there until they felt you were ready to, you know, you're on the college level, till you, you could-, you're ready to handle college level work. That's all that was, simply they wouldn't graduate you un-, until they felt you were ready. So by doing that, they created, you know, a 100 percent--. For some people it took one year. Some people they needed to attend there two years before they could bring, raise their reading level up and their math scores and stuff like that. You know? Until they got enough skill ability to go to college. And that was great. That was great. You know. So they had no-. There wasn't no [coughing while talking: dropout rate you know what I mean?] So like, you know, so—
BG: Did you know people who dropped out of Harlem Prep? Or--
SN: So--. It was like they took the Board of Education's-, you know, they made it stand on its head. You know, they--. And it was, it was kind of embarrassing the Board of Education at that time. They were really, you know—
BG: So you think the Board of Ed had something—
SN: It was kind of embarrassing because here you taking all these people, all the dropouts, once the word got out, people started coming to Harlem Prep. You know what I mean? You know, and all these people that were like the Board of Education--, all you--, we can't--, you can't--,

they can't be educated. They, they--. You know. They got learning disabilities and all that kind of stuff. They--. You know. And they--.

Harlem Prep proved that the Board of Education was wrong. They were wrong about the way they felt about the students and whatnot.. So uh-, so that, that was-, that was innovative and that was different. It, it's sort of like-, it, it made-. You know, the Board of Education wanted to put Harlem Prep out of business cause they were showing them up. They were showing them-. They were showing them that there's a better way to do this, you know? There's a better way, you know. And you're not, you know, you're too bureaucratic, too bureaucratic to change. You're too slow. You got to be more progressive. You know. And that's what it-. You've got to be more advanced, more progressive, more open. You know. Get some more new ideas in there. You know what I mean? So that's what-, that's what that was about.

BG: Do you feel like they--. It--. Do you think--. I mean, we're always curious—
SN: Mmm-hmm.
BG: --you know, there's so many questions—
SN: Mmm-hmm.
BG: Since you were on the, you know, the Board of Trustees, you're talking about the Board of Ed.
SN: Mm-
BG: I mean how do you think--, you know, why ultimately did Harlem Prep not continue? I mean, I know cause money ran out. But do you, I know—
SN: Right.
BG: Were you—
SN: Well—
BG: I mean the Board of Ed, you think they had a—
SN: Yeah.
BG: --role in that or--?
SN: No. I think, you know—
BG: Just your opinion.
SN: Harlem Prep was-, there was a climate uh-, for change because of the—
BG: Early seventies, that kind of stuff. Right?
SN: (slight pause) Because of the Civil Rights movement. In the fifties, the Civil Rights movement was called the Protest movement. Then by the early sixties, it became the Civil Rights movement. Then by maybe the mid to late [coughing while talking: sixties. They started--] terming it the Black Power movement. And Malcolm X, before he was assassinated, he termed it [coughing while talking: the Human Rights movement.] Excuse me.
BG: No problem.
SN: (coughs) I'm sorry.
BG: Take your time.
SN: So--. (coughs) I'm sorry.
BG: [laughing while talking: No, take your time.] You're doing a lot of talking.
SN: So-. Because there was a lot of protest and demonstrating and a need for change there was a need--, a great need for change, it created a climate of funding. Some-, a source of funding. Some companies, they needed to do certain things to show that they cared about the community.
BG: Definitely.
SN: Whatever. You know. They were being confronted and they were being, you know, their--. They were being questioned. Like: Yo, what are you about? Just about making dough or do you care the people in the community and all of that? You know what I mean?
BG: Totally.

SN: So, there was a favorable climate to getting some money, you know? I think in the sixties, there was a big push. There weren't a lot of--. There were some blacks in college, but basically on the whole, in the country, that there was--, the Afro American population didn't have a lot of blacks going to college. So then it-, there was like a big push because, you know, again, like education was important and they felt that that would help the standard of living. And it would help Afro Americans to make more progress if their education level was higher. You know. As far as Civil Rights legislation and lo-. You know, like—today we have like black senators and black congressmen, you know, representatives and stuff like that. Back then, we didn't have that. So that's, that's one of the--. You know, you need people. You know. And they have to be educated to you know, take those positions. You know. More doctors, more lawyers, stuff like that. You know, more scientists. So it was a big push in the sixties. So-. And then part of that was uh-, you needed money to do that. You know. So anyway, it-. There, there was money for the, for-, at that time, in the black community. There was sympathy and there was money. So, by the--, the--, I would say not quite the early-, the-, by '73, '74, '75 the funding started drying up. You know? People got tired of it. You know, they wanted to move on to another cause. You know? So as a result, it got harder to fund raise and to keep a-, you know, it cost like, oh boy, I guess anywhere from half a million to a million dollars a year to run that school.

BG: Wow.

SN: I saw the budget. You know.

BG: Oh, from the Board of Trustees.

SN: When I went to the Board of Trustees. Right. So anyway, the, the two-. I told you the two big funders were Standard Oil and Sheila Mosler. Now while I was there, Ed told me, he said to me--. You know, I used to stop and say: “Hey. How you doing? How you doing?” You know. He had an open door plan, you know, he was the principal but you could just come, come in and talk to him so-. He said, he said: “Listen. We-. I got to go down, Chase-, Chase Manhattan Bank is going to give us a check.” You know. But they want-, they wanted- they requested to speak to one of the students. He said: “Can you come down and, and, and talk to them? You know. So we can get the check?”

I said: “Yeah. Sure.” He said: “All right.”

So we got in the car, we went down to One Chase Plaza—

BG: OK.

SN: That's down in Wall Street.

BG: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SN: It's the main building for Chase Manhattan Bank. At that time, you know. And we go up--, we go up there and, you know, anyway, we go to the floor, the reception area, and then we, you know, we go in this room. It's this big long conference table. I mean, really long conference table. And there's a guy sitting at the end of the conference table. And you know who it was? David Rockefeller.

BG: No way.

SN: Who was the head of Chase Bank, at the--. Well, Chase is the Rockefellers. That's their bank. You know. They made money in oil, you see what I’m saying? You know. And then they said: “Well, why should I take my money that I made in oil and put it in somebody else's bank? I'm going to make my own. I’m going to create my own bank and put my money in my bank.” So that's what they did, you know what I mean? That's, that's--. You know. On a simple level, that's what it's about. But anyway, so I met David Rockefeller and we talked for about 45 minutes. You know, he wanted to talk to a student. You know, he asked me how do you like the school? How do you like your experience there? Tell me about it. Do you feel it's helping you? Is it positive? And all that kind of stuff. And then he gave us a check. It wasn't even a lot of money. It was like $50,000. You know? That was like, Standard Oil had given

us like 300 thousand, five hundred--. You know, that kind of stuff. You know. Sheila Mosler, they had given us, you know, hundreds of thousands of dollars. So-, but you take what you can get.

BG: Absolutely. Yeah.

SN: You know what I mean? Cause—

BG: Exactly.

SN: --it all helps. It all helps. But that was kind of a-. That was a unique experience cause I got to meet uh-

BG: That's amazing.

SN: --you know, David Rockefeller. And he was OK. You know. I mean, he was a--. That, that--. He was OK. You know. And um-, and if it wasn't for that school, I wouldn't have been a-. You know, you wouldn't have crossed paths with people like that.

BG: That's pretty amazing.

SN: You know? Yeah. If you have some questions, you can ask me. There also was another teacher there, Barri Hankerson. She was a-. She taught--. Well, I took a course with her, Eastern literature. So I learned about um-, Hinduism, the Buddhists. I was interested in Buddhism. So I learned about that. And Taoism. She taught Taoism. Confucianism. But I remember Taoism and Buddhis-, Budd-. Hindu and Buddhists. You know? And that, that was, you know, she-, she was an English teacher, too. You know what I mean? But she, she taught those subjects. I remember the-, in the Ramayana, that's like a, a Hindu book. You know. The collection of short stories about Rama. He's, in Buddhism, a man can become god. He-. Buddhism and Hinduism, god is interchangeable. You know? Like in Christianity, god doesn't really become man except for, you know, Christ. But in Buddhism, god and man are interchangeable. So whe-, when he wants to take on one of the human forms, becomes Rama who-, the heavenly prince in endowed with divine powers. You know, and Rama's born in the solar dynasty. That kind of thing. And he carries a silver sword. And the silver is representative of justice. And he flies across the universe, kind of defending and keeping, you know, he gets rid of like evil or negative spirits, forces, in the universe. So the universe could keep—that's his, that's his function. So, I mean I-, so I got an introduction to that book in Harlem Prep. And it was, it was beautiful, you know. It was beautiful. And so-.

BG: That-, I mean that sounds—

SN: Yeah.

BG: It's just so-. This is so enlightening.

SN: Yeah. Yeah. Harlem Prep was, it was--. Phew. I, I think in a way, you know, I-. You know, Ed was, he was really concerned about the Afro American community. I think he was concerned about everybody cause we had Caucasian and white students there. We had Hispanics. We had-. His, his faculty-. You know, he believed in, in multiculturalism way before people even used that term.

BG: Yeah.

SN: You know. I mean, we had-. There's a teacher, math teacher there named Hussein. He's from-, I think he's Lebanese. He's from the Middle East. And so he had, he used to say-. Ed used to say: “the earth is but one country and all men are its citizens.” He used to say that all the time. Like you call a general meeting and all the students stop and they have to listen, he's going to announce something important. And he used to say like the earth is but one country. And all men are its citizens. You know, that was like kind of heavy back then. You know, it was like, that was heavy, stimulating.

BG: Yeah. And for high school, you know.

SN: And it was like: Wow. What is-. That's a big thought. So he was-, he was-, he was for being inclusive, including everybody. And all ethnic-. He realized all ethnic groups, you know--. He was sort of like John Coltrane. And I think the significance of Coltrane is that he realized

that there's something important in everybody's culture. Meaning, and the highest form of that is there's something highly spiritual and positive in everybody's culture. So that's why he began to study, you know, like East Indian music. And Far Eastern music. And Middle--. You know, African, all that, because everybody has something to contribute. Everybody's culture has something positive to contribute. You know, to the world. So and I think-, and Harlem Prep was like that, too. They realized that, you know, everybody has something to contribute. And that's, that's, that's real significant. Because then you don't get into, you know, denying people and neglecting and stuff. And that, that was, you know, that was, that was--. Harlem Prep was the most positive educational experience I had, you know. And it, and it, and it gave me a really good, solid, sturdy foundation. You know--. I went from--, I had a 66 average in the public high school system. I went from that to having an A, A+ average to being, you know, the valedictorian of my class, giving the graduation speech, being the, a student representative to the faculty. You know, really being involved at the school. Being on the student Board of Trustees. People respecting you and trusting you and, and—

BG: Yeah. That's amazing.

SN: Giving you responsibilities beyond just being a student, you know what I mean? So that was-. We also, we helped fund raise for the school, you know?

BG: Students did?

SN: Yeah. So, one of the things I did was--. Not me by myself. Me and another guy named Ady Emi. He was from Brooklyn. One time we, you know, of course we're young, we liked music. So we felt like well let's have a concert and raise money that way. So we approached a couple of jazz musicians, you know, cause we, we liked that kind of music. And we, we felt that jazz was, it has the history, you know, it has, it tells the Afro American experience in addition to other stuff. So we asked Yusef Lateef who was a saxophone and a reed player. And he was a teacher at Music and Art. And Music and Art was on top of St. Nicholas Park. On 135th. You know, what-, the school was there. So it was an easy walk, from Harlem Prep at that time. Harlem Prep was kind of like in the valley. And they were up on the hill, you know. So you just walked through the park. So we asked him and he said yeah-. And he was a well known jazz artist, Yusef Lateef. And then we asked another guy, another musician who was a vocalist named Leon Thomas. And he said yes, and it was to do a benefit concert. And we also had an organ player. I think her-, singer and vocal-, either Hazel Scott or Shirley, I think. It was one of them. I can't remember which one. It was Hazel--. And they often, that person did several concerts for Harlem Prep. The Scott—you know, whoever it was. It was either Hazel or Shirley. I, I can't remember which one. But I know they played the piano and the organ and stuff like that. And they sang. So the students were involved with fund raising. You know, that type of thing.

BG: Totally.

SN: We did what we could. We couldn’t—

BG: Yeah. Yeah.

SN: You know, we couldn’t raise hundreds of thousands and that, but we did, we did what we could, you know. And it-. You know, it's like taking ownership.

BG: Totally.

SN: You know, you're part of the ownership of the school. You guys have questions or anything?

BG: You know, I mean, have you--. We have to go eventually. There's this—

SN: OK.

BG: --this is amazing. This—

SN: I could stay.

BG: --is amazing.

SN: Yeah. There's a-, there's a lot of-. There's, there's a—

BG: I, I'd love to speak with you again if possible.

SN: Yeah.
BG: Like and I, I don't know where you're located but I'm happy to come to you as well and--.
SN: Yeah.
BG: I'd--. There's so much. This is, this is incredible.
SN: Yeah. Well, you know, I, I want to-. I want to mention some other stuff. You know, when I, when I, when I was there, I did this painting and I said, you know, the Board of Education invited Harlem Prep to participate in a citywide art show, right? And it was a big question mark. They thought that: Oh, it's just this little independent, homemade school. They don't know what the hell they're doing. And Harlem Prep, let me say this. Harlem Prep was the big--. It was also part of a whole network of schools called the Street Academies. Street Academies were like storefronts. And students from the neighborhood, you know, they would come to these storefronts. And they would teach courses there and stuff like that. And then, you know, if they really wanted to go to like something a little more well-rounded and fully you could come to Harlem Prep, too. Harlem Prep was like the, I guess the shining example of the Street Academies. You know what I mean? But there was a whole network of smaller schools, education centers, called Street Academies. And they were storefronts in Harlem and then East Harlem, Spanish Harlem, that took the kids. They were trying to-. They had to go to the communities where the dropouts were. So it was like outreach. You know what I mean? They reached out. They didn't wait for them to come to them. They went into those, you know, hard core communities and got the kid. You know: "Hey. What you doing out in the street?" Get off the drugs. Get off-. You know, stop drinking the wine, the pluck. You know. C'mon, c'mon back into school. Harlem Prep was significant, too, because some-, like if you were a female and you had a child, you know, you couldn't come to a public school. But Harlem Prep, you could, you could bring your kid. Or, if you couldn't come to school because let's say you needed to get a babysitter or go to daycare, so maybe you couldn't get there by 8:00. Maybe you couldn't get there till 9:00 or 10:00. Or 11:00. Harlem Prep had a flexible course schedule. You know what I mean? And it was built around--, they tried to--, you know, there was some flexibility so that it could work around your other needs. You know what I mean? That type of thing. That was innovative at that time. That was important because, you know, some, some, some people have, had children. And they-, you got to take care of your kids. So it was-, they were all-, Harlem Prep was open to that. You know, that was, that was part of it and whatnot. The-, back to the art, the art thing--. So we, we entered that contest and we became first place winners on the student level and in the faculty level. So that was, that was very good. And we—we won Whitney Museum scholarships and we were-. When I won a Whitney Museum scholarship, the Whitney Museum had a workshop, a warehouse that was like a workshop down in Cherry Street. That's down in Chinatown. You know, it's right south of the Manhattan Bridge. If I wanted to do something, I could come-, go down to the Cherry Street Workshop and they gave me access to that for six months and free art supplies. And it was run by another Afro American artist named Vincent Smith. You know what I mean? He was-. Yeah. Vincent Smith. He was another Afro American artist and painter and whatnot. So-, and I knew about his work. I had seen him in different exhibits and whatnot. So that was, that was-. It's just an interesting period, you know. Very stimulating. You know, you, you crossed-, you could actually cross paths with people who had already, they were either doing things or they had-, they were-, they had-, were already accomplished. You know what I mean? They had already achieved and were accomplished, and, and were still, still active and doing things. So it was a very, very-, a very special time. It's a very, very unique experience. It was the best and most positive and productive educational experience I had.

When I went to college, it wasn't-, it wasn't [laughing while talking: it wasn't the same at all.] You know, it was sluggish and whatnot. I just want to say. As a result clears of what

happened with the art. When I graduated, the day that I graduated, a woman approached me and she said, you know: "I'm from the Rockefeller Foundation. And we'd like to buy your artwork." And she wanted to buy the painting that I did for like $500. And I said no. (slight laugh) At that time. Cause I felt it wasn't a lot, enough money. But at that time—

BG: Use the restroom real quick. I'll be right back.

SN: Yeah. In the era of the Black Power movement and the Civil Ri-, you know, the Black Power movement. Once you become aware of who you are in a positive way and your heritage, and, and once you know the history of what happened to us, I felt that that white people, you know, or those in power, the status quo shouldn't be able to own Afro American art. That like, they had enough. Like a lot of the European countries had, you know, under colonialism had, you know, you go into their museums in their country, they got like a lot of African art.

You go to Britain, they have massive, huge collections of African art, Egyptian. You know, you go to Germany, you go to France. At that time, that was where my head was at. You know, and I-, that's one-, that's the main reason why I said no because I just felt that white people should not own black art. It should--. (slight laugh) That type of thing.

It's sort of like if you make music or a movie, you want to retain the rights in the creative, the artistic control of it, you know. You know want like some white company telling you, you know. It's not really about race. I mean, at a certain point now, I mean, I, I could transcend all of that. But at that time, that's where I was at. You have to be able to put things in a certain perspective. And so I said no. You know, which was--. To me, that was positive. That was like-. It wasn't being aggressive, but it was standing up for yourself. It was like, no, this belongs to my people. You know what I mean? And--. You know, that type of thing. So it should be for them. Them first. And then, then you could-, everybody else can check it out.

So that was, so that-, I said no. And I kind of lacked an older person giving me advice. So I made some really, really poor decisions. I was approached by a black woman who was a recruiter for the Rhode Island School of Design, and she offered me a full scholarship there. And I turned it down. I should have taken it. I turned it down cause I wanted to go to school with my best friend in Harlem Prep, which-. And I wound up doing to Springfield College, which I got a scholarship for the art, but it was really the wrong decision. You know?

So I should have, I should have just pursued the Rhode Island School of Design. You know. So it's like a learning experience, you understand? If I could talk to young people today, I mean, I don't even have any contact with that person who I felt was my best friend, you know, at that time. And, and when you-, with life, when you move on in life, a lot of-, you're going to meet a lot of people along the way, but you're not going to stay in touch with them. You think you will, but you won't. You know, it do-. They-. People just, they just fade away. They go their own way. It's most important for you to know what you want to do and stay focused on that and pay attention to that.

The other opportunity that I kind of, I had it but then I let it slip through my hands. While I was there at Harlem Prep, right? Because the, because we were getting funding from the Standard Oil of New Jersey, the headmaster talked to the contact, which was Ed Gant. He was a black guy that worked for Standard Oil of New Jersey. And he helped us-, he helped negotiate that company giving us money for our education. So Ed asked him could he help me get a part time job in the art department down there. And they gave me a part time job in the art department, working on their--. They worked on a magazine. I worked on a magazine called *The Lamp* which comes out once a month and it's for the stockholders. You know, the people that have shares, you know. People who invest in the, in the company and whatnot.

So, that was a good job. I had a, I was like an assistant art director. I had a drafting table, big table with all the stuff. The T-square and it taught me paste-ups and mechanicals. It taught me how to make a magazine from scratch. You know, use dummy, dummy print and they'd cut for columns and use, it taught me color photo separation and a lot of other stuff. I

went there after school. From 3:00 to about 6:00. And that was my little part time job. And it was at 30 Rockefeller Center. You know where Rockefeller Center is, right? It-. You know the building that's right behind where the Christmas-, where they set up the Christmas tree and the ice skating rink? That's 30 Rockefeller Center.

So they had, you know, it's Rockefeller Center. You know. So Standard Oil, that's Rockefeller's company. And they, they developed Rockefeller Center. You understand what I'm saying? That and Lincoln Center. That's their project, you know. So they had their-. You know, they had their offices in that building at that time. So that was a-. It was like a great experience. You're in high school and you're going to work in there. You kind of get exposed to like what it would be like to work in advertising or in the corporate world doing art in the corporate-. You know what I mean? In the corporate setting. And so that was, that was a beautiful, that was a beautiful experience and Harlem Prep got me that experience. The headmaster and the teachers at Harlem Prep, they tried-, they really tried to help and tried to-. They gave us a lot of support, encouragement and support and whatnot.

And what I didn't do, they asked me: "Would you like to continue this job in the summer time?" And I said: "No." Cause I wanted to have my summers free. I wanted to be off. I didn't want to work. That was--. That was wrong. I shouldn't have--, I shouldn't have made that kind of, you know. If I had an older person, like a mentor that would have—"Listen, this is a great opportunity here, man, you know?" And realize this. And if I would have stayed and worked in the summer time, and then when I would have graduated from Harlem Prep, I probably could have come back there and worked there every summer while I was, you know, when I was off from college. And then maybe when I would have graduated from college, I might have been able to get a job as an art director there. You understand what I'm saying?

But I didn't--. I didn't have the foresight. That was a blind side. That was my blind side. But--. People--. And I think others can learn from my, my blind side. That's why I'm mentioning it. There were tremendous opportunities that I, phew--. It kind of went over my head a little bit. So it was, it was, but it was a really interesting--, <u>really</u> interesting experience.

There hasn't been-, I haven't had an experience like that since. I haven't seen anything like that since. The classroom without walls. That was innovative. You know. And-, it-, several courses were being taught simultaneously. You could still hear. You know? You could still, since it was set up in a way where you could still hear. And sometimes there'd be a little overlap, but you could, you could hear. And it was great because you're in one section, and you're listening to something, and then you know-, you could see this-, another group on another subject, and they're--. So you see another group of people learning. Hanging on the edge of their seat listening and learning, going through their educational process. And it was like: Wow. All this is going on at the same time. So it was, so it was just great.

BG: Sounds like an amazing place.

SN: Yeah. Yeah. I think, you know, Ed-, I think Ed, to maintain the status quo was unethical. You know. To just accept what the Board of Education says that, you know, there's just a 50 percent plus dropout rate among Afro Americans and Hispanics and so called, in the inner city and the-. You know, just to accept that was, it was just really unethical. And it was really-, and it becomes immoral. So they-, they were-, they were really highly-, you know it's, it's a-, it, it becomes like a moral question, too. An ethical, moral question. And it even gets into being illegal, too, you know what I mean? (slight laugh)

BG: Yeah. That's a whole other--

SN: [laughing while talking: You don't educate people unless--]

BG: It's not right.

SN: Yeah. You know, there--. You know what I mean? Like separate, separate and unequal or separate and e-. You know, that the Brown vs. the Board of Education. It gets into legality. So, it was, it was quite an innovative experience. Very progressive. Very advanced. You know. And, I'll never forget that experience. I, I wish that we had that kind of experience today.
BG: I do too.
SN: Mmm-hmm.
BG: Unfortunately, I have to go, unfortunately—
SN: OK.
BG: --at 6:15.
SN: Yeah.
BG: Um-, cause of the time frame.
SN: Yeah.
BG: But I'd love to like—
SN: Well, we could do—
BG: We're going to—
SN: We could do it again.
BG: --do this--. Yeah.
SN: If you—
BG: Yeah. I'd love to like speak with you again and—
SN: Sure.
BG: After listening to this, then we can ask some more questions and if this—
SN: Sure.
BG: --like--. This is so-, so helpful.
SN: Yeah. If you have—
BG: Yeah.
SN: --some questions, I can—
BG: Yeah.
SN: --I can field some questions for you, you know.
BG: Yeah. We'll, we'll, we'll have to make a, a follow up.
SN: I just put down some general—
BG: No. This is like-, it gives us a frame. So we're going to go back as a group to look—
SN: Mm—
BG: --and think about everything. And hopefully, we can follow up soon. So—
SN: Yeah. Yeah.
BG: Thank you so much.
SN: Yeah. No problem.
BG: Like this is, this is going to be a huge like--. Thank you so much.
SN: You know, I became really--. Ed was like, he was, he was an educator, but he—
[end of recording]