

9-13-2007

Wilkes, Quinton

Wilkes, Quinton. Interview: Bronx African American History Project
Fordham University

Follow this and additional works at: https://fordham.bepress.com/baahp_oralhist

Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wilkes, Quinton. 13 September 2007. Interview with the Bronx African American History Project. BAAHP Digital Archive at Fordham.

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the Bronx African American History Project at DigitalResearch@Fordham. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of DigitalResearch@Fordham. For more information, please contact considine@fordham.edu.

Interviewee: Dr. Quinton Wilkes
Interviewer: Dr. Mark Naison and Dr.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

Mark Naison (MN): This is, September 14 – 13th, 2007, we're at Fordham University, this is the Bronx African American History Project, and we're interviewing Dr. Quinton Wilkes, who was one of the founders of the Institute of Afro-American Studies at Fordham, and also of the department of Afro-American Studies at Fordham. One of the first black studies programs and black studies departments at any Jesuit University in the United States, and also the first black studies department formed at any private university in the New York Metropolitan area. So, Dr. Wilkes is truly a pioneer. Joining us – I am Dr. Mark Naison, and with us are Dr. Claude Mangum, who was an early member of the institute of Afro-American studies and has helped steer our institute and department into its current very dynamic state of growth. With us also is Dr. Oneika LaBennett, the newest member of our faculty and also an administrator with the Bronx Afro American History Project, and we have Gina Virgil from inside Fordham University of Public Affairs.

Gina Virgil (GV): It's news and media relations [laughter]

MN: News and media relations! And our photographer is Chris Taggert, and ok, to start with Dr. Wilkes, tell us a little bit about how you ended up coming to the Bronx, and how the Bronx became part of your life.

Quinton Wilkes (QW): Thank you, first of all, let me just say what a real pleasure and privilege it is to be here with you today, and this is a real homecoming for me; at Fordham I spent, lets see, 11 very good years, they were excellent. I came to Fordham in 1967, as a graduate student in the program of Psychology right here in Dealy Hall. So you ask how I came to the Bronx, and that's to Fordham. Well, actually, my experience

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

entirely in the Bronx far predated my time at Fordham. I have long had family in the Bronx and as a child growing up in High Point, North Carolina, which is my hometown, I used to come to the Bronx every summer from early childhood. My mother and two aunts lived in the Bronx. Having moved here from Washington D.C. in the mid 40's after World War II, I was born in 1941, right before the war, and my mother and father, who were both moved to Washington from High Point. I was born in Washington. My mother was both working, she worked at the Pentagon at that time, 1941, and was also studying to be a beautician. She had, as a young, she was a young mother, 17 years old, my father is the same age. They figured with, their both going to school and working that probably I would be better off with my grandparents in High Point, so therefore I was taken to High Point with my grandparents where I grew up. But as I said, as was pertaining with my family, as was very typical with Southern Black families at that time, usually part of the family, most often the younger members of the family would migrate north for better opportunities and for education, as my family did, but the older generations most often remained in the south and there was in many families a very close connection and constant travel back and forth between the northern cities and the southern cities or towns or rural areas that were the points of origins for these families. So it was in my family, and so I traveled up and down the road, most often in the summer when school was out.

MN: Did you go by train most of the time?

QW: By train mostly, especially during those early years.

MN: Now where would you pick up the train?

QW: In High Point. High Point was a major stop on the Southern Railroad.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

MN: Oh, ok.

QW: It ran between Washington and New Orleans as a matter of fact. It was the main line of the Southern Railroad. I can name stops here [laughter] – but I won't go there.

Claude Magnum (CM): I don't want to bring it up, I just want to ask you was there anything that you observed in the difference regarding racial etiquette in the South and racial etiquette when it came to the North?

QW: Well, the entire South, including the border states, Maryland, and Washington D.C., were all rigidly segregated at that time, by law.

MN: So you – with segregated cars, and waiting rooms and restrooms?

QW: Yes. Segregated when we traveled by train. The station at High Point had two waiting rooms, the white waiting rooms and the colored waiting rooms, so marked by signs. So all the facilities were separate. On the trains, were segregated South of Washington, and that's a peculiar phenomenon that we'll talk about a little later. So when we traveled we'd catch the train in High Point, it was about a, let me see, 9 hour ride from High Point to Washington, in a segregated car, we used to call them Jim Crowe cars. They would be in the front of the train.

CM: Why would the black cars be at the front of the train?

QW: In case there was a wreck, you would be the one to be hurt, and also in the day, when I came along, well there was still a few steam engines on some railroad, most steam engines were diesel but I remember the steam engines quite well, and before the days of air conditioning the colored cars, the Jim Crowe coaches, were up front nearest the engine so for, so that the smoke and the soot and the cinders and all that stuff would

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

come back and hit those cars first. The white cars which were in the rear would probably have very little smoke.

MN: Were there different like seating quality in the Jim Crowe cars?

QW: Yup, absolutely. The quality of the Jim Crowe cars was usually inferior, this was in the –

[INTERVIEW CUTS OFF, BEGINS AGAIN]

MN: Joining us for this interview now is another Fordham pioneer, James Pruitt, who for many years was the director of the Upward Bound Program at Fordham, right across the hall from the Department of Afro – for the Institute of Afro-American Studies and also Mr. Pruitt is one of the major community researchers of the Bronx African American History Project. So going back –

QW: Great to see you Jim!

James Pruitt (JP): Great to see you.

QW: I spent many great years working with you at Upward Bound and we'll get into that a little later on, a fine program. I always, when people talk about, particularly when Republicans and other people who want to knock, excuse me [laughter] the Landon Johnson's great society and all the anti-poverty efforts of the 1960's and talk about those programs as abject failures, I always remind people of Upward Bound, which is as I think is still going strong probably not as strong as it was, but was a singularly successful program at taking black high school, black, latino, and white students, low income, but with promise and potential, and giving them academic and cultural enrichment and exposure to the college environment, great program.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

MN: When you take pictures, make sure you take a picture of Mr. Pruitt, the four of us, this is, its amazing we're still alive [laughter] the things that we saw. So you were talking about the difference in like the type of seats in the Jim Crowe cars, was the food service different or did people bring their own food?

QW: The food service was a shoebox lunch with a chicken sandwich [laughter] and in fact, we used to refer to some of the trains as the "chicken bone specials." [laughter] Box lunches of grill fried chicken, cake, cookies, they had you know somebody's momma, my grandmother, used to fix those lunches because there was no dining car service. That did come along in the 50's, in the late 50's with the supreme court decision that outlawed segregation in inter-state travel. That was about 1958, I think, and black folks could go into the dining cars, maybe even a little before that, but customarily, that didn't happen, and they were old coaches. They were, especially in the 40's and early 50's they were old coaches that were vintage, really coaches were back in the 1920's with stiff seats not reclined. There was no air conditioning; you had to open the windows.

MN: Were there fans in the ceiling?

QW: Big fans in the ceiling, and the white coaches at that time, stainless steel equipment was required in the seats; the modern cars that you see now. Typically the white coaches would have that equipment.

MN: So this was not separate but equal?

QW: It was not. It was highly unequal, it began to equalize somewhat in the mid to late 1950's. After the pressure of the Civil Rights Movement and the Zeitgeist, the spirit of the time, which I consider myself very much a product of.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

MN: Right, now what about the waiting rooms at High Point, were those also differently structured or those were more perfect?

QW: They were pretty good colored waiting rooms at High Point, they were almost equal. The white waiting room was a little larger, and a little better appointed, but ours wasn't bad as colored waiting rooms go [laughter]

CM: Did your family give you instructions on how to conduct yourself, how to negotiate these two systems of greater segregation in the South from their experience?

QW: No, not really. You know, along with the segregation, I think everyone in this room would know, there were really great nations of segregation and oppression in the South. North Carolina was certainly not Mississippi or Alabama or Georgia or even South Carolina. North Carolina has, although it was segregated, and there certainly was hatred and racism there, and the Southern etiquette, it was not nearly as pronounced as the other Southern states that I mentioned. I think North Carolina and Texas and sometimes Florida, South Florida, North Florida was just an extension of Georgia, they had the reputation of being much more oppressive and racist. I remember accounts of people being lynched even during my time. One of the formative experiences in my own involvement of consciousness was the mention of Emmett Till in 1955. I was the exact same age as Emmett Till; I was born in '41, about 14 years old, so that had a profound impact I think especially on black American but also I think on anybody decent because Emmett Till's mother, God bless her, she had the courage and I guess everyone knows the story, we don't need to recount it. A 14 year old boy from Chicago who was very violently lynched in a horrible way in Money, Mississippi for allegedly having whistled

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

at a white woman who was a store keeper there. They abducted this boy from his uncle's house late one night, took him out and just literally tore him apart and then dumped his very mutilated body into the Tallahatchie River. The body was found I guess a couple of weeks later in the distorted shape, and when they took the body back to Chicago the undertaker did not want Mrs. – anyway Emmett's mother, to even view the body it was in such horrible condition, but she insisted and when she saw what they had done to her son she fainted, but then she recovered and said, "I want an open casket." The undertaker said, "But no you can't do that!" Well, she insisted, casket was open, you may have seen the, I'm sure you've seen those famous pictures in Jet Magazine.

MN: The cover went around the world.

QW: Yeah [Crosstalk] I think it was too horrible for the cover, and it went around the world and it is without a doubt that that was an important impetus for the Civil Rights Movement because it was shortly after that time that the Montgomery Bus Boycott got started. But as I said, it had a profound personal impact on me as a – being the same age as Emmett Till, that could have been me. Fortunately, in North Carolina we didn't have lynching's, I don't remember any lynching's by that time or they had some lynching's in North Carolina probably during Reconstruction. Actually I think there was one as late as, probably in the 20's some time, and my mother and my aunts used to tell me that when they were growing up, when they were kids in the 30's there were once or twice when the Ku Klux Klan in full regalia would drive through the black community in their cars, but by the time I came along all that stuff was gone. In fact, I think I've been called a "nigger" more times in New York than I was [Laughter] [Crosstalk] – at Fordham, not

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

directly, but there was the graffiti at Fordham [laughter] in fact, Phil Penel wrote an article in The Ram on Fordham's racist graffiti.

MN: Was the spelling correct?

QW: N-E-G-A-R? [Laughter] Right, yeah, sometimes and sometimes not. But you were asking me about the—

MN: About the etiquette –

QW: Right, about the etiquette, no my family didn't make a big deal of that. I think in my family, you know we were taught basic respect, basic manners, conduct yourself, and carry yourself in a respectful way. there was no, nothing in particular in High Point although it was segregated. Black folks didn't have to get off the sidewalk or laugh into a laughing barrel. Do you all know what a laughing barrel is? There were some places in deep South it's reputed that they were so mean and hateful that black folks were not allowed to laugh out loud in public, and that they actually had barrels on the street that black folks that if they wanted to laugh they had to go and stick their head in the barrel to laugh, a laughing barrel. That's funny, wrote a book way back in the 60's, *From the Laughing Barrel* it was on black humor. I don't know whether that's true or not, it must be based on something, but anyway, the racial etiquette didn't exist.

MN: Now the neighborhood that your mother and aunt lived in in the Bronx, were the neighborhood or neighborhoods multiracial?

QW: Yes, very much so. When they moved from D.C. to the Bronx we had, my great uncle, their uncle, my grandmother's brother, my grandmother was – she had 7 older brothers, she was the baby, had 7 older brothers and that figure is important to my own

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

family history development, but the 2nd brother above her, L.R. Hope, Lawrence Reynolds Hope, was a Pullman Porter on the New York Central Railroad, and I used to love to listen to him regale me with stories about him, you know his time on the railroad. He worked on the 20th century up until, he worked on the Commodore Vanderbilt. He fought in World War I, he was a member of the 369th Division. He left High Point as a young man and I guess he volunteered or he drafted, but he was in World War I in the 369th because he was living in New York at that time and after the war he stayed in Paris for about 6 months, and I just recently found out one of the reasons he stayed there, as many black World War I G.I.'s did, was he felt a much greater sense of freedom in France that they had ever felt in the United States, South and North. He was interested in Opera, so he actually studied Opera for about the 6 or 9 months that he stayed in Paris. So he came back to New York, and I guess that's when he got a job with New York Central, he became a Pullman Porter. A very dignified man, I never saw him without a tie and a suit, shoes always shined, and so he had raised his family on 138th Street, just near Abyssinia Baptist Church, that's where the family lived when we, lets see, his three children were born, they're roughly the same age as my mother and aunts. So they were born in the late teens or early 20's, or 20's and the youngest was roughly born in the late 20's. In any case, they at some point moved from 138th Street to 166th Street, between –
MN: Really?

QW: Yeah. [Laughter] 166th Street, did you live on 166th Street? You lived in Morris!

JP: I was born on 166th Street.

QW: Is that right?

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

JP: Yeah.

QW: He lived right across from the armory, the block between what is that, Franklin and Boston Road.

MN: Ok, so he was down the hill?

JP: Yeah [Crosstalk]

MN: Oh no – [Crosstalk]

JP: No that's a hill too

MN: Ok, but he was on 166th right across from the armory?

QW: Right across from the armory because I used to love when I visited him to look through the window, yes National Guard used to be there, I used to love to look at the soldiers drilling.

MN: And now was this a big apartment building they lived in or in a house?

QW: It was a walk up, and he lived – Uncle Reynold lived on the 4th floor.

MN: Now, is it still there? [Crosstalk]

JP: Is it 590?

QW: It was 590, I think it was 590, is that where you lived?

JP: No, that was kind of like a garden apartment, it had a big courtyard. You walked in under an underpass, it had a courtyard, and then there were like 4 buildings, 4 separate entrances to buildings that looked –

QW: No, that was – [Crosstalk]

JP: That's on the corner. [Crosstalk]

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: No, he lives down at the end of the block. Cause you entered right off of, 530? 538?
560?

MN: Did you enter from Franklin or you entered off of 166th Street?

QW: We would come, my folks lived on Bouvenire Place, yeah, at Bouvenire Place. First they lived with Uncle Reynold on 166th Street and then they got their own apartment probably you know around 46 or 47, at 12 Bouvenire Place, and Bouvenire is a one block street runs between 166 and 167, between Washington and Park.

MN: Ok, so that's down, that's down the hill?

QW: That's down the hill between Washington and Park

MN: Ok, now when you know, was that a multiracial block?

QW: Yes it was, very much so, and for my you know as I started going there as I said as you know in early elementary school and I had buddies that you know when I'd come up in the summer, made good friends with Raymond Gardner. He was the biggest kid on the block and the toughest kid on the block, and that was my man [Laughter] Well his family and my family were very close. His mother, she was a funny, funny lady from Meakin, Georgia, and his older brother Charles. So both, well he befriended me and took me under his wing.

MN: Now did you play New York City street games in the summer?

QW: I tried a little stick ball, my sport was football I wasn't much of a – all stereotypes about us is not true [Laughter] [Crosstalk] I couldn't dance very well, you know since I was clumsy I could knock people down [Laughter] so my sport was football. There wasn't too much football going on in the city at that time, they started, the guys started

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

playing football right before school would start in the street. By that time I was almost out of here.

MN: Now loties?

QW: Yeah, a little bit of loties.

MN: Did you play ring olivio?

QW: Not too much.

MN: Red light green light?

QW: Red light green light and May I? You take 3 giant steps – [Laughter] yeah, may I, I played that.

JP: Johnny and the Pony?

QW: Is that with the bouncing the ball off the stoop?

MN: No, that's stoopball.

QW: Yeah, stoopball, played that.

MN: Johnny and the Pony is when you line up about 20 people against the wall, bent over, and then another group of 20 jump on their backs and try to knock them down.

QW: Oh ok.

MN: That was a game we used to play in Junior High School. It was very much done in schools because you needed a large number, you needed about 50 people to play. They banned it now, you know, because you know people used to jump on you and punch your sides, kick you, and you know, pinch you.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: Which is the one where the penalty is you had to bend over and you get hit in the butt with the small green ball, it was the penalty for losing the game? [Laughter] Maybe its stick ball or something like that.

MN: Now did you play slap hands where you put your hand in front like this and the other person had their hand behind you and they slap your hand and if you flinched you got slapped? [Crosstalk] Now did they do that in North Carolina as well or a lot of these were very New York –

QW: Those were very New York Century games. I don't remember, we played softball more than baseball; football was very big. In elementary school we played dodgeball, what else?

CM: What about playing the dozens, is that -- ?

QW: Oh yeah.

MN: Is that North Carolina too?

QW: Yeah [Laughter] [Crosstalk] You want to talk about that – with ladies present.

Yeah, yeah we played the dozens. And we would do it, you would do the rhyme thing, but we would also just we all knew each others mother's names and fathers names.

MN: Can you give us an example of something you would –

QW: We would call our buddy by his momma's name you know. Patsy! Patsy, what's up? How you doing Patsy? I saw your momma last night. [Laughter] [Crosstalk]

MN: Now when were you first exposed to this remarkable church that your mother and aunt were involved in?

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: Reverend Thompson's Church, the Community Church in Morrisania, on Taylor Avenue, 1325 Taylor Avenue, which I just found out, Mark of course, Mark did an interview with Reverend Thompson and I sat in, that was a great pleasure. My family have always been Methodist; my grandmother actually was originally A.M.E. when she came, this was back in, that's Episcopal.

MN: Oh yeah.

QW: How much time do we have?

MN: Well, since we're going to end up doing 6 interviews with you – [Laughter] you know, as much time as you want.

QW: Ok, maybe this, well actually in leading up to Community Church of Morrisania, and how Reverend Thompson gets into my family's church history, my grandmother as I said was the youngest of 8 children. She was the only girl, she had 7 older brothers. She was born September 23, 1894, in a community called Woods Chapel, it's an Alamance County in North Carolina. I used to think it was cool when I used to go with momma, when I used to just take me down home as she called it. I thought they called it Woods Chapel because it was in the country, and that's when the country was the country. You didn't have running water, outdoor toilets, you know you wash up on the back porch [Laughter] Food was great, and I used well water, I mean that well, they had wells and you looked down in the wells, got that nice cool water out of there, it was clear. I thought it was called Woods Chapel because it was in the woods, it was in the country. But Woods was a Bishop Woods was an important founding person I think in the African American Episcopal Church, so it was named after him. That church had been there since

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

I guess, since emancipation or maybe even before. That whole community was a part of where my ancestors and other people had been enslaved and I guess the property was given to them after emancipation. We have uncommonly good records in my family which maybe I'll bring those next time. Written records going all the way back. When we started having our family reunions, the family name is Holt, in 1982, there was an elder cousin, cousin Marvin, somehow he had gotten hold of the original ledger of Michael Holt. Michael Holt was one of the wealthiest men in North Carolina, that had been a governor of North Carolina, and Michael Holt it was this incredible ledger, I don't know how cousin Marvin got a hold of that, I would love to know that story, but this was the original ledger, all written in this elegant old fashioned hand writing. I have you know copies of some of these pages, and where Holt kept record of all of his properties; all of his land holdings, all of his cattle, as well as the people that he had enslaved you know which included my ancestors, and he very well, I'll have to give him his props because he kept excellent records and above all apparently he allowed a fairly stable existence for the people that he had enslaved. He allowed marriages, and he carefully recorded the births of his, you know of the slaves, and the furthest back of my fore bearers that I know about were Old Charles, that was his name, Old Charles and Patti, his wife, P-A-T-T-I. So those are my great-great-great-grandparents. So Old Charles had been born in 1770, so he was here before the United States was the United States, and Patti was 20 years younger, so she had been born in 1790, and they were recording the birth of Stephen, S-T-E-P-H-E-N, who was my great grandfather. He's the father of Charles Holt who was my grandmother's father. So there are all these recorded births, one page has a summary of

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

all of the slaves listed and their relative value. I was surprised that really moved me most because you could see how the value varied according to gender. Men were valued more than women, and from age. The slaves that had the highest value would be in their mid-20's, males, and as they got older their worth declined, and if they were younger, like a baby, they were worth you know zero value. A child might be worth 5 or 6 dollars, and it was just awful just to see that. Just to see a value put on human life. Anyway, getting back to the – so, the center of this community was the Woods Chapel A.M.E Church, which my family were members, and so when my grandmother's parents, I believe that they decided to move to High Point from Alamance County, it was just a distance of about 40 miles because of the existence of the school there, which was the High Point Normal and Industrial Institute, which has a very interesting history. It was a school, a normal school which is including grades I think all the way from primary grades all the way up to probably 2 years of college because a normal school teacher training institution and they also had the industrial part. They also had the industrial education all on Booker T. Washington where boys learned trades of you know carpentry, brick masonry, which were two skilled trades that made black men engaged in the South. In fact, that used to be considered black man's work, to be a brick mason or to be a carpenter.

MN: You know what's fascinating is that those skills ended up you know being nullified in the North because these were Unionized occupations that blacks were kept out of. You had black men who were skilled carpenters and brick masons but who couldn't get into the construction jobs in New York City.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: Exactly. Even now, plumbers, I have a cousin who is a plumber, lives in Staten Island. He's the only black plumber in New York that I – [Laughter] that I've ever known. Anyway, the High Point Normal and Industrial Institute was one of I guess a whole array of schools that were set up after the Civil War for the education of the freedmen. This particular school had been established by the Quakers. That part of North Carolina, right around Piedmont, what's now called Piedmont-Triad, with the cities of Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and High Point, apparently in colonial times, in the early 1700's or the mid-1700's, there was a pretty substantial migration of Quakers from Pennsylvania to that area of North Carolina. I'm not exactly sure what attracted them. what I understand was that a part of it was the quality of the forest because furniture making became, my city of High Point is known as the furniture capital of the world, you know it's a home furnishing's capital.

MN: And they still have companies that are –

QW: Oh yeah, not that much furniture is manufactured in High Point anymore, it's more of a marketing of furniture. It used to be the manufacture, there are still some furniture factories that you know, Thomasville and Baxter's in High Point, but so the hardwood was one attraction. Incidentally, our three most well known products in High Point, from High Point, are John Coltrane, Fantasia Marino, and Furniture. Yeah Fantasia's from High Point. So they came to High Point, I think for the education. My great grandparents wanted their children to be educated. Now the older boys I don't think had a chance to attend the High Point Normal, but the younger boys and my grandmother did. So that's how we got to High Point, and at some point I think the A.M.E Church at High Point had

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

a fire and my grandmother changed from the A.M.E Church to what at that time was called the M.E. Church, Methodist Episcopal; now it's called the United Methodist Church, and so when my mother and aunts came to New York, you know they affiliated with the nearest Methodist Church to whom their place which was the Trinity Church on Washington Avenue and 166th Street.

JP: It's still there.

QW: Yeah, it's still there. I passed by there I think a couple of months ago.

JP: Substantial Church.

QW: Yeah, beautiful church. [Crosstalk]

JP: You know, we didn't go past Third Avenue. [Laughter] I lived on the other side, we didn't cross Third Avenue. Washington was rather treacherous. We didn't go that way, but its been there a long, long time.

QW: A very active church too I'd say. When I come up in the summers, when I was in high school they used to have some nice dances there.

MN: So even when you were involved in Community Church you'd go back to some activities at the Methodist Church?

QW: Oh, oh no, well what happened was Reverend William E. Thompson was the pastor of Trinity Methodist Church had some how come into conflict with the Methodist hierarchy. Methodist I guess next to Catholics I think Methodist have the most serious hierarchy in the churches. You're Methodist aren't you?

JP: No, Congregation Church.

QW: Congregation –

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

JP: Yeah, I'm a Baptist. [Laughter]

QW: Congregational Church, yeah, how about that. So, and he also was a very independent minded man. So some how, and I don't know the complete sort of – Take care of yourself.

JP: Alright.

QW: He separated himself from the Methodist Church, and along with 9 members, 9 founding members of which my aunts and my mother were a part of, see there was an immediate group of 9 signatories that founded the Community Church in Morrisania, and a larger group of 20 some who were supporting members of the 9 founders. So they founded the Community Church in Morrisania, and they moved to Taylor Avenue, 1325 Taylor Avenue, between 169th and 170th street, a long walk, and I recently found out that that was the first Protestant Congregation west of Webster Avenue in the Bronx, and because that area west of Webster, north of the Grand Concourse of course was overwhelmingly Jewish at that time, and I guess there may have been a Catholic Church over there here and there, but I'm not sure. I guess probably.

MN: There were some up the hill. It was Christ the King on 170th Street and Grand Concourse, which is still there.

QW: Oh right, yeah.

MN: And another Catholic Church at about 164th Street, down a little further. Yeah, so there were a couple of Catholic Churches.

QW: Most of the population, or most of the religious institutions were Jewish, and the Community Church in Morrisania which moved there in 1956, was the first Protestant.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

MN: And it was on a predominately Jewish block at the time?

QW: Yes, Taylor Avenue was predominately Jewish at that time. Wonderful block, private houses, still very well maintained block, tree lines, the model in the Bronx.

MN: So your family was still living on Gougenier Place?

QW: Yes.

MN: And then going to church on Taylor Avenue?

QW: On Taylor Avenue, and they lived on Gougenier as I said which was in the late 40's early 50's a quite racially and ethnically heterogeneous block. In fact, very funny, one of the guys that I knew you know from time in elementary school lived right across the street, Jimmy Deleskie, who was white, I guess, Deleskie –

MN: Probably Irish.

QW: Irish, yeah, Deleskie, yeah. Anyway, it turns out that 20 some years after that, when I was a young 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army in Germany, I was in a the Military Police Corp, and I was platoon leader, and it turns out that in my platoon was Jimmy Deleskie [Laughter] it was one of those many ironies. The block became increasingly African American with some Puerto Rican primarily, as the 50's progressed, and my family moved from Gougenier Place to Grand Avenue, 1271 Grand Avenue, between – you know something about that neighborhood, we talked about that – almost near 169th Street, between 167th and 169th.

MN: Right, that's fairly close to the Grand Concourse.

QW: Yes, close to the Concourse. We moved there, I was at Morgan State where I went to Graduate School when they moved which was about 19—well I started Morgan in '59,

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

they lived on Gougenier Place. By the time I graduated from Morgan in '63 they were on Grant. I think they moved in about '61 or, yeah '61 I think.

MN: Now one of the things is, you know we had talked about this in the Reverend Thompson interview, is when did you develop an interest in African American history and who helped nurture that in you?

QW: Ok, well as I said, I guess I'm a product of the times. I was fortunate to have been born at a time when the –

[END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

QW: Black folks, African Americans, it was a very exciting time starting, oh well I mean, there has always been a movement ever since the first of us, one year, that was 19—one year and 1619 in Jamestown, Virginia, somehow the movement really got ignited especially with the effects of, going all the way back to the founding of the NAACP, was that 1909? World War I was an important milestone, but especially World War II was very important in history for the movement of black people towards equality. The forerunners of the Civil Rights Movement were probably the soldiers who served, especially those who served overseas, and fought for their country. Many of them had died, and were just subjected to incredible injustices. There are stories of black soldiers being lynched in uniform in places in the South during World War II. My father in law, I had always heard and read that there were instances where there were black soldiers who were guards for German prisoners of war because they got to the United States. They would be guarding these prisoners, and they would be on the road traveling in the trucks or buses or whatever they traveled in and there were places in the South where German

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

prisoners could go in restaurants and eat and black soldiers who were guarding them had to go around to the back to the carry out window and get the hand outs. Now my father-in-law was one of those G.I.'s. He had been in, that had been one of his assignments as a guard for German POW's, and he actually experienced that. So that, the impetus for some of the movement came from World War II. Medgar Evers had been in the Air Force, ok, well there was no Air Force, it was the Army Air Corp, and went back home to Mississippi and became very active in the NAACP. The Tuskegee Airmen of course, now that was a special project, I think kind of an experiment to see whether or not blacks could fly airplanes, and they of course distinguished themselves as one of the most honored and distinguished units of all Army Air Corp units during the war.

JP: Roscoe Brown was from Mississippi, and the actual experiment was at more than one college, I think it was 9 historically black colleges today, but the programs were you know, these, they weren't funded well, and they didn't have a good organization between them, and so a lot of them died, and then Tuskegee was the surviving program. So Roscoe Brown ended up going to Tuskegee to be, I think he was in the first class, I have a buddy who was in the second class.

QW: How about that. I didn't know that. I knew that he was in the I think it was the 99th Pursuit Squadron, or one of the Tuskegee Air – there were several units that were part of the Tuskegee Airmen, and Roscoe Brown was, had the distinction of being the first American pilot of any race to shoot down a German jet plane with a propeller driven P51 Mustang, and I saw them on TV once describing how he shot the German down. So this is a propeller driven plane that, well, it was a pretty fast, the Mustang was a fast plane. It

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

could go 40 some miles an hour, with propellers, yeah, one propeller actually it was a single propeller plane, but the German was a jet, and he described how he shot this. So he got out, came up behind [Laughter] [Crosstalk]

MN: Now one of the questions I have, did you go to High Point Normal, or did you –

QW: Oh that's very interesting, yes, I'm glad you asked – what did you ask me?

MN: About whether there was African American history in that school?

QW: I'm glad you asked me that. We're talking about the formative influences that influenced me as well as the Civil Rights Movement. High Point Normal and Industrial Institute, as I said had been founded by the Quakers immediately after the war and it operated as a private school until, in the early 1920's, yeah, the early 1920's negotiations between the city of High Point and the American Friends Society, which was the name of the Quaker organization/structure which was actually the South Eastern Society of Friends was headquartered in High Point for a long time. I think it's in Atlanta now, but so there was a negotiation and the Quakers turned the school over to the city of High Point to become the black public high school. One of the early black public high schools in North Carolina, with the proviso that the high school be named William Penn. So I went to an all black, segregated William Penn High School in High Point, North Carolina and people say well how did you – most of the black high schools, Booker T.

Washington, Paul Lars Dunbar, Carver, George Washington Carver [Laughter]

[Crosstalk] All of them were named for some local black educator like JC Price, let me see, JC Price, anyways, those were the typical names. William Penn, well that was the provision that the Quakers wanted their founding father honored so it was William Penn

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

from that time in the 20's until it closed in 1968 with the pressures of integration. It's now reopened; it is the Guilford County, which includes Greensboro and High Point, they have a unified school system. So what was William Penn is now the School of the Arts. They have a John Coltrane wing with dance and so forth. So it's the Guilford County School of the Arts.

MN: Now did they teach African American history in the William Penn School?

QW: There was no, I don't remember a single formal course in African American history. What they did do through elementary school and high school was that they took Negro history week, it was only a week then, Negro history week was taken very seriously and we'd have to do projects, and write papers, and put together scrapbooks and that kind of thing for Negro history week. I used to love to do that because my great uncle, my grandfather's brother sold the *Chicago Defender*, and the *Chicago Defender* was one of the, along with the *Pittsburg Courier*, the *New York-Amsterdam News*, the *Baltimore Afro American*, and the *Norford Virginia German Guide*, which was a lot more popular in the South than it was in the North, I guess you'd get the German Guide here in New York. So the *Chicago Defender* was probably the most nationally circulated black newspaper. So I used to love to read it, and read about black folks and learned a lot because there was a lot that was not taught to us. I did not know, as shameful as it is, I did not know that John Coltrane was from High Point until I got in college, I never heard that growing up, and that's where he, he wasn't born in High Point, he was born in Hamlet, North Carolina, another little town in eastern North Carolina. When he came to High Point at age 5, he grew up there, learned to play his clarinet there, he didn't play

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

saxophone he played clarinet in the band. He was taught his first teacher was one of my very best friends mother, Mrs. Grace Yokely, whose mother of my good buddy Ronald Yokely, and she's mentioned in fact in his biographies as the person who he learned how to play his clarinet.

MN: Now, what about Morgan State? Was there formal courses in African American history at Morgan State?

QW: Yes, yes. One of the, we had at Morgan, which I went to in 1959, we had one of the fore most historians, Benjamin Quarles, was professor of history at Morgan during that time and we had, history was actually one of our very best departments. We had a distinguished history department. August Mire was there. August Mire was a white professor of history, he's very popular. In 1962, my senior year, there was a debate that was staged between Malcolm X and August Mire [Laughter] in the Mercury Auditorium and its very interesting, Dr. Mire was quite popular. I would say most of the students were rooting for August Mire because Malcolm was talking some stuff, although with the emergence, the emerging civil rights movement, you know we had to listen to and think about, and he really that was a very consciousness raising experience.

CM: If we might just I guess sort of back up to High Point here, you had mentioned that William Penn was an all black school, maybe if you could tell us a little bit about the dynamics in terms of the faculty and staff and the student body and what that relationship was like?

QW: Oh ok, good, that's good, I just came from my high school class, we've been class of 1959, we had our 48th reunion two weeks ago in D.C. We had a lot of class members

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

in D.C. class is quite unusual; we've been getting for the last, since about 1989, we've been having reunions every other year, every two years, and so two years from now, in '99, what am I— 2009 is our big one, that's the 50th. You can tell because – it's the 50th. So, the dynamic, we had, William Penn was a very good school academically, and the teachers were quite serious, what you always hear about black teachers, and those segregated systems. They were quite dedicated, they were quite interested in the students, they were quite earnest and they pushed us. So I would say that the quality of education was excellent because when I got to Morgan I had friends right here from New York City who had gone to pretty good high schools here who had never written a research paper. Never written, one of my good buddies who went to John Adams, one of the best high schools in Queens, yeah, had never written a research paper at that time.

CM: So that was ten pages?

QW: Huh?

CM: Ten page?

QW: No, a little bit, it was [unknown name] had gone to Adams, and that wasn't I don't want to just pick on New York City schools, it was you know, it was good. Now let us not romanticize segregation. It did create the necessity of having a pretty cohesive black community. Pretty self contained, especially if you were in a city of any size you had black businesses, black professionals, doctors, dentists, lawyers, preachers, teachers and in fact, one of the noticeable effects of integration has been the decline of black business districts well, right here in the Bronx. I mean, but in any city particular Southern cities of any size, there was always a street that was the main block, a business street, and those

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

streets have declined. So, and not to say that there were class conflicts, and color conflicts, and conflicts of all kinds, but an overall sense of community which I grew up with and which was a part of my experience growing up. There were a lot of good organizational influences in the black communities.

MN: What I'm really interested in is how this cultural capital then influences how when you're at Fordham you create a black institution at Fordham. A place with no tradition of a significant African American student population, but you're coming with all these experiences, this knowledge, and you know not only book knowledge, but institutional experience that you know then comes to bear in what happens here.

QW: Well, you know, again, the zeitgeist, I think it was the spirit of the times where black folks, particularly black students at that time who were very active all over the country, and I think, coming to a place like Fordham, which, I don't know, I guess there were probably one or two black students at Fordham going all the way. I don't know how far back.

CM: 1948, the beginning of black students at Fordham.

MN: '48? So basically no black students at Fordham before 1948.

CM: At Fordham College, on this campus. Fordham Law School had been a conduit for a number of black lawyers, particularly who went to school part time and there's the School of Social Service in Manhattan. The School of Education –

[Crosstalk]

MN: But the first black student on the Rosehill Undergraduate College was in 1948?

CM: Yes.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

MN: And what year did you arrive?

QW: 1967.

MN: Now how did you end up choosing Fordham for graduate school?

QW: That's an interesting story. When I was at Morgan, I'm so old that when I was there ROTC was required of all able bodied males for the first two years, freshman and sophomores, we all had to take ROTC unless you had some serious physical ailment that prevented you, and Vietnam had not gotten started at that time, but it was an advisory, there were advisors, but there was a draft, and so every able bodies male was going to be drafted. And so I figured that since I was going to be drafted anyway I might as well go on into the advanced ROTC which you got selected for that, and get a condition as a 2nd Lieutenant, which is what I did. And I was in Germany for two years. Its very interesting, when I was on the ship on my way to Germany that's when I heard that they had found the bodies of Goodman Chaney and Schwerner in Mississippi. I had heard, of course it was big news, that they were missing, that they had been abducted. They didn't know what had happened, and I was on my way to Germany and I heard that those boys had been found and so that was kind of a – then I started you know thinking about the inherent conflicts in what I was doing as a Lieutenant in the Military Police Corp in the U.S. Army. I was glad I didn't have to go to Nam, that had really started heating up by that time, but I was thinking, should I be somewhere in Mississippi working on voter registration, here I am in uniform, but you know it was fleeting. I had actually had a good experience in the army, I learned a lot, but I knew I didn't want to make that a career. I knew going into Morgan that I wanted to major in Psychology.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

MN: Really?

QW: Yeah, the way that I got interested in that was that I think it was in my junior year at William Penn I had to write a term paper on some career field that we wanted to go into. So, I didn't know what the heck I wanted to do and to write about; I wanted to be a doctor, lawyer, fireman, whatever. And one of my good best friends that I just saw at the reunion, Claude Matthews, he went on to Howard and graduated from Howard at one of the early black TV shows in D.C. on CBS called "Barambe." He, Claude said, "Why don't you write about psychology?" I had vaguely heard the word before and I've always been interested in people and so when I started doing research and I found out what was involved in psychology I said, "Ooh, this looks pretty interesting." And there were a lot of things that psychologists do, so that's when I said, "I think I'm gon' be me one of these!" [Laughter] So, that's why I said, when I go to college I want to major in psychology. I knew that I was going to college just to digress a little bit and talk about family influences, my older aunt, Norma, had gone to Wilberforce, well she had first gone to, you've never heard of Palmer Memorial Institute; she went to Palmer, which was one of those networks of private black schools throughout the South. I think they only had one or two –

CM: Sedalia.

QW: Yes, yes! She was my old, Sedalia, North Carolina. It was a private, black school; I like to brag about the fact that one of her classmates was Maria Cole, who is now, Maria Brown, Maria who was, Maria Cole, Nat King Cole's wife, Natalie's momma, so I like to say that [Laughter] [Crosstalk] They were classmates at Palmer. I think Maria was

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

Charlotte Hawkins Brown who was the founder and person, the moving spirit of Palmer Memorial. I think Maria was her niece. Anyway, and she moved from there to Wilberforce, and at that time W.E.B. Dubois was a faculty member of Wilberforce in the late 30's, I think she graduated from Wilberforce in 1939. So I always, you know, loved to hear her talk about college and you know education was an important value in my family. My grandfather, Norman Saunders, taught me how to read, I could read I think I guess by the time I was 4 or 5 years old, certainly before I went to school. He taught me how to read, and he said, he used to say that, what buster I taught you how to read. He used to read the funny papers to me; I used to sit on his lap and he'd read the funny papers and he said, "I taught you how to read so you could read those funny papers yourself." [Laughter] So, education was I guess something I haven't heard before.

CM: That's something I haven't heard before.

QW: What's that?

CM: Buster.

QW: Buster, yeah, only my granddaddy called me that, buster. I had very southern names but my grandmother and my mother and my aunts, but he called me buster, he was the only one. So education was important and I grew up you know my aunt taught me you know, you gotta go to college. She even said at that time, for your undergraduate work you should go to, was it a black college or a Negro, probably a Negro college, and then for your graduate school go to the best white university that you can.

MN: Wow, and this is in like the 50's?

QW: Oh yeah, in the mid-50's, yeah.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

MN: Fascinating.

JP: You know, because of segregation many of the professional schools were not open to black students with bachelors, so states like Georgia paid for their law students to go to places like the University of Chicago. Leave the state and become a lawyer and come back home to serve your community.

QW: They sure did. One of the blessings with segregation, if you want to call it that, you asked about the dynamics, one of the dynamics was in the 50's, with the Civil Rights Movement heating up, the teachers and adults in the community were willing to motivate us for the coming integration. There used to be a sort of a catch-word, "Are you ready?"

[Laughter] Even back in the 40's, I think there's an old jazz tune, "Are you ready."

[Singing] But there used to be kind of a war after the Supreme Court decision. I remember our two, we didn't have anything like little league football or anything, we used to have informal football. I had a field beside my house which was kind of the neighborhood gathering place where we played football and softball and so forth. But two older guys who had been football players at William Penn volunteered to teach a group of us how to play football and we formed a little team, and we played there were about 3 or 4 other teams in various parts of town that we would play, and I remember Randolph Reed saying, "You boys better get ready for this integration, cause it's coming. You better get ready." So that was the message, get ready. And I remember, my principal, Samuel Burfery, who had gone to Virginia Union and had gone to, whose graduate work at the University of Michigan, I think it was Mr. Burfery, which saying that the cause of segregation in the assembly, he said, "Yes, white teachers going to school at a mediocre

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

university in North Carolina,” it’s not mediocre anymore, but it was mediocre, “mediocre some Southern college while our teachers went to University of Michigan, NYU, Columbia.” Because that’s where all, virtually all of my teachers that had, most of them had masters degrees. Had done their graduate work at, Columbia was the favorite place. My aunt got her masters from Columbia after she graduated from Wilberforce. She came here and she worked for the – well, her first job, actually when she had gotten her masters from Columbia in English because she was an English teacher; but the first job that she could get coming to New York was she worked in Brooks Brothers. So I got some benefit in that. [Laughter] [Crosstalk] And then she became an attendance teacher with the board of ed, where she did her career, and she worked for the board of ed in that capacity for until –

MN: Now, were you a psychology major at Morgan?

QW: At Morgan, yeah.

MN: And they had a department of psychology.

QW: An excellent department of psychology.

MN: Now did they have a graduate program, or it was only an undergraduate program?

QW: No, there were – Morgan didn’t have any. Morgan was Morgan State College at the time. They were just beginning, there may have been a graduate program, I think education may have been the first one. Now it’s a full university, they have doctorates in so many different fields; engineering, education, business, but no there was no graduate program in psych.

MN: So how did you become aware of Fordham’s department of psychology?

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: You know the first time I heard of Fordham was at Morgan, the chairman of our department, Dr. Roger Williams, who was, he had gotten his doctorate from Penn State, and he's one of the people, there's a book that I used to use here at the institute called *Even the Rat was White* [Laughter] it's still in print, I was looking it up online! *Even the Rat was White* by Guthrie, I think it's Robert Guthrie, it's a history of blacks in psychology. They give profiles of the first, I think the first 20 or 25 black students to earn PhD's in psychology. The first one was Siesel Sumner, who was in 1920, and his was, Sumner or it was – oh gosh, was it Harvard? Maybe, I think he was from Harvard. Anyway, Kenneth Clark, little Kenneth and Melanie Clark, who both got their doctorates from – wait a minute, this is awful, I should know this.

MN: No, we can get the book.

CM: If you could just expand upon one thing, I think you just said that the first you heard of Fordham was when you were a student at Morgan.

QW: At Morgan, Roger Williams.

CM: You were spending your summers in the Bronx, you would come up to Fordham Road or visit the university.

QW: I knew about Fordham, we used to come shopping on Fordham Road, and I would see this nice campus there. So I knew, I had a consciousness of Fordham from my days of shopping at Fordham Road.

MN: Did you know anybody who went to Fordham? When you were in – so in your community in Morrisania there was nobody with a Fordham connection?

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: No, nobody with Fordham. No. Most of the, I would say, of the people that I knew like when I was in high school first of all, most of the people on Gougenier Place and around that way that I knew, I don't remember anybody else that went to college. I don't remember a single one of those guys –

MN: Of the people that you –

QW: That I was friends with because I came to New York in the summers that went to college. Not a single one.

JP: Where did you go to high school?

QW: In High Point.

JP: Oh I see, so you didn't know. Where did they go to high school, the kids staying here?

QW: I know several of them, Bunk, my man Bunk went to Haron. Some went to Commerce; I think a couple went to Clinton. I'm not sure I remember, I'm sure somebody must have gone to – oh Taft was a big one, that's right near Grand [Crosstalk] yeah, that was the new school, that's right. That was a privilege to go to Taft.

MN: Morris, did anybody go to Morris?

QW: I'm trying to think, someone must have been – my cousin graduated from Morris. Uncle Reynolds daughter graduated from Morris, and my – when they were living on 138th Street as a matter of fact, back in the, both my aunt's husband who grew up on 138th Street and my uncle, one of my uncle's sons went to DeWitt Clinton back in the, must have been the 30's.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

JP: That was the feeder pattern. Frederick Douglas Jr. and I, which is 139 on 109th Street, the boys went to Clinton and the girls went downtown to I want to say Washington Irving.

QW: Washington Irving.

MN: Now, one of the things that you know, Fordham, there wasn't much of a Fordham consciousness in the community so they talked about it at Morgan as a place for psychology or just as you know, how did they talk about Fordham?

QW: The first, there was no talk about Fordham at all at Morgan. The chairman of the department once wrote Dr. Williams wrote a review in the *New York Times* Book Review on Audrey B. Shewey, who was a psychologist at Randolph-Macon college in Virginia who was one of those whole core of racist psychologists who used psychology to prove the intellectual inferiority of blacks, and Shewey wrote a book, I think it was *The Testing of Negro Intelligence*, and Dr. Williams wrote a review of that book in the *New York Times* and this was probably about 1961 or '62 while I was an undergraduate at Morgan. And Dr. Williams mentioned that there was a professor at Fordham named Anne Anastasi, and that she was one of the few psychologists who would refute this whole position that, almost mainstream psychology was fixated on proving the intellectual inferiority of blacks, and that was the first, I spoke at Dr. Anastasi was as you may know was chairman of the department here at Fordham from 19—let me see I got here in '67, she became chairman I think in '69, yeah, '69.

MN: So she was a pioneer in challenging the racial theories of white supremacy and black inferiority in psychology.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: She was right here at Fordham.

MN: And that made an impression on you in terms of Fordham consciousness?

QW: Yes, it made, it was probably an unconscious impression, I distinctly remember that conversation with Dr. Williams telling me about Dr. Anastasi. And something said, oh that's pretty good. I didn't even have that much of a consciousness at that time that psychology was being used in that way. You didn't, you know we had a good psych department at Fordham, but we learned mainstream, experimentally oriented psychology.

MN: So, but how did you end up applying to Fordham.

QW: Ok, well I got out of the army and I came back home in 1966. I came here to the Bronx and I lived with my mother on 1271 Grant, and so I was saying I want to go to grad school. I knew I had to go to grad school in psychology and so I said, where do I want to apply, and so I wrote to a number of places. I wrote to Iowa, University of Pennsylvania, Temple, Howard, Fordham, and where else? A few other places. I actually applied, and The New School. I applied to Fordham, Howard, the New School; I don't think I completed the application to Iowa, I think maybe Temple. I was accepted first to Howard and then I think I got accepted to Temple, then I got accepted to Fordham, and I said, well where do I want to go to school? I think I got accepted to Iowa, I think I got accepted to pretty much every place I applied, yeah. I said, go away all the way to Iowa? Iowa, I don't think so. Then I said, Temple, Philly, oh that sounds like you know [Laughter] [Crosstalk] I think I want to stay right here in New York City. I think I want to go to Fordham. Cause I had always, I said when we used to come shopping on Fordham Road I used to say this is a nice campus, and you know Fordham probably has

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

about the most attractive campus of the New York City Universities, absolutely. I said, I think I'm going to go to Fordham. Actually, I had gone to St. Johns. I know, this was another influence. When I first came home from Germany in 196—no, no, no, before I went to Germany, I had a year, I graduated from Morgan in June of 1963, and I knew that I wasn't going to go on active duty until spring of 1964. so I took that fall, I took two graduate courses in psychology at St. Johns.

MN: In Queens?

QW: In Queens, yeah. The way that I got to St. Johns was that my aunt Norma who worked for the board of ed had a good friend, Hilton, who had, I think he had gotten his masters in psych at St. John. So he said, I recommend that you go to St. John. So I went and took those two courses at St. Johns and the people at St. Johns were talking to Fordham and how good the psych department at Fordham was, and they really, really had Fordham on a pedestal. So I said, maybe I better – so those were all factors in my decision. I decided to not leave the city, to go to school in the city and I remembered Dr. Williams talking about Dr. Anastasi, and I very much remembered the people at St. Johns talking about what a quality place particularly the psych department at Fordham was.

CM: I just want to just ask if you could sort of digress just for a second, you had mentioned the attractiveness of the trees when you were standing on Fordham Road at Fordham's campus, and you came across another finding in your own visitation as to one of the things that attracted student, black African American, Latino students to Fordham. Do you remember what it was?

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: Oh yeah, I think the campus. Yeah, I forgot about that, thank you very much. You remember my visitation better than that. [Laughter] [Crosstalk] yeah, that's right. My dissertation research had to do with, I was comparing the, well there's a personality theory in psychology by Henry A. Murray, who was one of the sort of the founding bedrock members of American psychology who was at Harvard for many years. Murray had a theory called, "His need-press theory of personality." He said, we all have various personality needs, like the need for achievement and the need for dominance and the need for nurturance, and that those needs and how we express them are an important component of our personality. He also said that environments have these corresponding characteristics that he called, "press." That word is both singular and plural, so they're, just like there's a need for achievement, there could be a press for achievement in an environment. There was a Henry A. Stern, who was a psychologist at Syracuse, that constructed two inventories, a personality inventory that measured personality needs and a college characteristics index. It was the PPI, the personal personality index, and the college characteristic index, that measured the environments, the first characteristics of college campuses. And so I, you know, again, always interested in the experience of black people, you know as a psychologist that was my focus in psychology, how can we apply psychology to our experience? And so, the experience of black college students, and so the dissertation that Claude remembers better than I do, I compared three groups of black college students on their personality need patterns, their perceptions of the college environment, how those two variables influences or correlated with their academic achievement and with their other experiences of college. And so I compared

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

samples of black students here at Fordham, at my alma mater of Morgan State, and at Talladega College, which is a small liberal arts historically black college in Alabama. At that time, Fordham had a very exciting relationship with, was that Title 9 – something like –

JP: Women's?

[Crosstalk]

QW: Some title, Title 9 is athletics. Where a, what they call a more developed institution like Fordham would have a partnership with a historically black college and they would exchange faculty, and they would exchange students, and just have a very productive relationship. So that relationship between Fordham and Talladega, I guess it was probably started in '67.

MN: So it was here when you came?

QW: When I came, [Crosstalk] No it wasn't already here, I think it came in '67 the same year that I started.

MN: So tell us a little bit about what Fordham was like when you arrived here, in terms of the atmosphere.

CM: If we could just get to the [unknown word] because I think it's important that we realize the impact that certain kinds of observations have on our current students or perspective students, so if you could just finish that point first, in terms of what you discovered in terms of what caused many students to come to Fordham in respect toward, in terms of the campus.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: I think, well number one, Fordham had a rather, I think a rather aggressive improvement effort for black students. Another factor that influenced me to Fordham, there was an article in, was it *Atlantic Monthly*, it was a magazine something like that, in 1966 when I first came home from Germany and was just thinking about grad school, they had a fine article on Fordham as a very progressive place that was really changing at that time. And I remember they had a picture of Fordham's campus that was taken from the platform of the Third Avenue L, remember the Third Avenue L? [Laughter]

[Crosstalk] The Third Avenue L. [Crosstalk]

MN: It was Fordham Road and Webster.

QW: Yeah, Fordham and Webster.

JP: It was Fordham

[Crosstalk]

QW: Yeah, and they had this picture of Fordham's campus and the trees and they were talking about all of these innovative programs that Fordham was really sort of a model of educational progressiveness and reform at that time, 19—that was '66 or, probably '66 yeah, late '66, so I said, oh that sounds interesting because there were a number of very innovative things going on. Anybody remember [unknown name] college, the experimental college? One of the, I don't know, and I don't know if it was absolutely unique in American higher education but it was certainly close. I'll be there were you probably don't need one hand to count the number of colleges of that type.

MN: Now did you feel welcome when you came to the campus? I mean given all the—

QW: By the black students.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

MN: Ok, but so, in general I mean, because so you're reading all these positive, you're hearing all these positive things, you see the trees, you read the article in *Atlantic Monthly*, and you come here, so what was the differential realities of that experience?

QW: Pretty indifferent. I wouldn't say I was, it was highly individualized. I made some friends among my fellow graduate students in psychology, who all of them were white, I was the only black student in the –

MN: In the whole class or in the whole doctoral program?

QW: In the whole doctoral program.

CM: Had you heard reference to anyone who had preceded you?

QW: Yes, I understand that I was the first black male student to earn a PhD in psych from Fordham. I believe there had been a black woman before me, some time I believe in the 50's, either very early 60's or the 50's, who was a nun. I do not know her name, but I understand that she was a nun, and she had done the first –

[END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO; BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE]

MN: But there is a black student community that you end up connecting with?

QW: Yes.

MN: Where did you meet other black students?

QW: It's a good question. You know I have a distinct memory of the first person I met at Morgan, who was, sweet thing [Crosstalk] but I don't remember the first person I met at Fordham. It may, it probably was Bob Bennett.

MN: Right, and what department was – was he an undergraduate at that time?

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: Bob Bennett was from Jersey City; he had come to Fordham on a track scholarship, he was a hurdler from Snider High in Jersey, and Bob Bennett and Fred Douglas. Fred was from Queens I believe, no, no Fred was from Manhattan, he was from Manhattan. They were really the two outstanding student leaders here. When I got to Fordham I think there were 9 undergraduate black students. The number 9 sticks in my head, in 1967. Fred and Bob were probably juniors in '67, and they were, as I said, I think they were, I probably could name them if –

MN: Did you meet them, was there a black table in the cafeteria, were there rallies, was there a table?

MN: All of that came much later. I sought out the black students because I was seeking, I wanted to make connections, I had had a wonderful experience at Morgan and of course growing up in an all black community, connections and social relationships and a sense of community and really, I don't think its exaggerating to say a sense of kinship that black folks have in the time of segregation, and I wanted to have some of that.

MN: Now was there a formal black student organization when you came here?

QW: Yes, I understand that – Bob told me that the first black student's organization here at Fordham was called Gamma Beta Nu. That stood for God's Blessed Niggers

[Laughter] That was the first, that was the fore runner of SAAL and SAAS, Society of Afro American Students at Fordham and Society of Afro American Liberation, so you can see the evolving consciousness from Gamma Beta Nu [Laughing] to Society of Afro – Let's see, it was SAAF at first, Society of Afro Americans at Fordham, and then it became SAAL, Society of Afro American Liberation. So you can see the evolving

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

consciousness from the name changing in the black student's organization. So I immediately became active with the black student's organization.

MN: Were you the only graduate student?

QW: The other graduate student—there were 3 other graduate students. There was John Cole, who became, who was a history major pursuing his doctorate in history, he had graduated from Talladega, and in fact, two of the, there were 4 black graduate students here at Rosehill. John Cole, in the history department from Talladega, there was this brother, I don't remember what his name was, he was also from Talladega, I can't remember what – he only lasted, I think he stayed maybe one year and then he dropped out. There was Charlie James, I don't know if any of you remember; Charlie James was a fast talked brother, he had gone to a small liberal arts college in Minnesota, something like Carlton College [Crosstalk] One of those colleges in Minnesota. He was from, was he from Phoenix City? He was from Alabama, I'm trying to remember, I think it was Phoenix City, yeah, he was a coal boy from Alabama. He was, Charlie was a history major also, and I think he got his doctorate, I believe he did. And then John and I became good friends and as I said, I became active with SAAL, used to you know attend meetings, and with the spirit of the times, with the increasing movement of black students particularly on white campuses and increasing militancy because the Cornell episode, that famous picture of black students emerging from a classroom building with rifles at Cornell. That had happened in '67, that was the protest where they were agitating for a black studies program there, and so we started meeting and talking about the need for a black studies program here at Fordham.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

MN: Now this was in '68, or –

QW: This was starting in '67, and in '68 as a matter of fact the fore runner of what was to become the institute was actually from the first courses in Afro American studies here at Fordham were a, it was a student taught course, teen taught by Bob Bennett and Fred Douglas, I forgot the name of the course, and that was actually offered in '68.

CM: So was that before an incident that I know we want to get into took place. Was that prior to the sit in?

QW: That was prior to the sit in.

MN: And was this course a credit course?

QW: Yes, it was.

MN: So it was taught in the undergraduate college?

QW: It was in the undergraduate college. There was no department. [Crosstalk] It was the institute.

MN: But was it for credit?

QW: This is a student taught course that Bob and Fred I think had probably gone to, was it Dean or Father –

CM: Father McMann?

QW: Father McMann, I guess it must have been probably was Father McMann.

MN: Ok, George McMann because he is a key figure in everything we're going to be talking about. A Jesuit who is the dean of Fordham College who is an incredibly supportive of students of color and of African American studies. He is a true hero of this community, and I want to make sure it's on record here.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: And just a genuine, good, good, kind hearted nice, nice man. Personable and just down to earth and just a good guy.

MN: Right, so this would be like the equivalent of Michael Partis, one of our best seniors, teaching a course and having it given credit. This is you know, the times. That kind of thing could happen at a university. Two seniors could teach a course and have it given credit with the Dean's approval.

QW: Yes, that's right.

MN: And that was the –

QW: That was the fore runner, that was the first black studies course at Fordham.

MN: Student taught but given full credit.

QW: I wish I could remember the name. Those are the documents that I said I needed to find and have to locate them in my archives. And then, well lets see, we want to talk about what came next or –

MN: Let me see if the –

[INTERVIEW CUTS OFF, BEGINS AGAIN]

MN: So when we left off we were talking about the course, and that's 1968. Now you had a vision of a black studies program, of an array of courses in those years?

QW: Well let me say, it was certainly not only my vision. It was a collective vision, and I would say if you know we can't underestimate the contributions of Bob Bennett and Fred Douglas. Particularly Bob who I think was really a visionary and quite an activist and he was really an important moving spirit behind the formation of the institute. And John Cole, and I could not think of her name for the life of me, it finally occurred to me,

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

Constance Smith. You had mentioned her in your book. She was a graduate student at Columbia in Anthropology, yes, and she was really the first director of the institute. And I hadn't remembered clearly what had happened, I think she lasted one year. And I am reading your book. She was fired for I guess being, you probably know more about it than –

CM: Yeah, I forget she was up for –

MN: It was an extensive correspondence that I have, that I'll leave it for you to read.

[INTERVIEW CUTS OFF, BEGINS AGAIN]

MN: Yeah, no I want to sort of build up from, not now, one question I have is were you and Cole and Bennett in touch with people at other schools in New York City? Was there any cross campus discussion among African American students about how you go about forming you know black studies?

QW: We certainly were keeping up with events that were occurring nation wide. I'm almost certain that John Cole, I'm trying to remember, real contact with other campuses, I'm not clear on that.

MN: I mean the reason I ask this is—

QW: Direct contact?

MN: Yeah, yeah, is here you have a group of undergraduate and graduate students essentially creating an academic department.

QW: That's what we were doing, yeah.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

MN: I mean, I don't know if there's any precedent for this in American the history of American universities. You know, so where's your blue print? Or were you inventing it as you went along?

QW: We were inventing it as we went along. It was again, the spirit of the times. The general feeling that first of all, the movement was at its height at that time in the late 60's, and it was really the Civil Rights Movement had, was also morphing into the black liberation movement which was more militant, more Northern based, more ideological movement than the more Southern based, more church rooted, and community organizationally rooted civil rights movement, beginning of course with the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955, running on up through especially the sit in movement of 1960. The 4 students from North Carolina A & T at Greensboro who sat in at the Wool Worth Department Store. One of whom was an old buddy of mine, Eisel Blair. Eisel was from Greensboro, and he is now, he has a Muslim name. He was converted to Islam many, many years ago and lives in Massachusetts. Anyway, all of that, combined, there were literally protests and demonstrations on nearly every black campus. When I first got to Baltimore in 1959, Baltimore was still, the public accommodations were still very rigidly segregated. You could not go in to places; you could not eat, a black person couldn't eat at the lunch counter of the 3 major department stores downtown; The Hat Company, Hershell Comb, and Hustler. So, Morgan students participated in sit in demonstrations in Baltimore, a northern city, to break down segregation in 1959, and along Route 40, the public accommodations, particularly for those, there were a lot of students at Morgan from New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania who would come to campus on Route 40

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

and could not stop and have a hamburger or cup of coffee at the restaurants in Maryland and Delaware. So there were a lot of demonstrations there. So there was a whole spirit of protests and filling on campuses of making the academic studies relevant to the struggles of black people to represent with more accuracy and integrity and with a facilitating effort the experiences of the African American community. And so the impetus on campus for black studies to have an academic discipline was part and parcel of the movement and it was a natural progression.

MN: Now what were the events leading up to the sit in that ended up leading to the creation of the institute?

QW: Right. It was the sit in – well, as I said, I was meeting with the black student's organization SAAF; we met regularly. And we, I'm not sure how it first came up, but anyway, again, kind of the spirit of the times, that we knew that we wanted to have a black studies entity here at Fordham, and as I said Bob and Fred had gotten that course, but we knew we wanted a department. As we said, a degree granting department that was our catch word. We said that this is only going to come about with some substantial pressure on the administration. We had, and now it can be told, in our meetings we were talking about all kinds of things to bring this pressure to bear. At one point they were talking about taking over the computer center, which was in the basement of Dealy Hall. This was at a time when they had the old main frame computer, which was an IBM 1401, much bigger than this room, it was a huge thing down there. So they were talking about taking over the community, I mean the computer center, and if our demands weren't met, burning down and hacking [Laughter] taking an axe to the computer, burning, destroying,

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

they were actually talking about that. And I said, I said, now wait a minute, I said we better think about this. I said do you realize what will happen to us if we destroy that computer that they have down there? I said no, that doesn't make sense. So, there was – but there was a militant wing of the student organization that were really talking seriously about doing that. So we finally came up with a plan that we would take captive one of the senior administrators here at Fordham. That we would somehow, do that to make an appointment – the plan was to make an appointment with the dean of students, Dr. Martin Mead, and that we would hold him captive in his office, a group of students from the black student's organization, until he ceded to our demands. That they were for increased enrollment of black students, increased black faculty, a black studies program, and increased scholarship aid, those were the demands, and they were not unique to Fordham. Those were pretty standard demands in just about all, particularly white campuses, not all of them, but certainly in – but in those places where there were active student movements. So that was the plan and as it got closer and closer, I was in my second year of grad work, and the night before I literally was up all night, I could not sleep, and I said, what am I going to do? I wanted to be down with the movement, I helped plan this thing, but if I am caught, if Dr. Anastasi and the other people [Laughter] in the psychology department get wind of me participating in locking a dean in his office, I said I will be out of here so fast. [Laughter] So I thought, and when it finally, I said no, no I can't do it. I have to go to Bob Bennett in the morning and tell him that I can't do it. And then I could, I finally fell asleep about 5 o'clock in the morning. Later that morning I went to Bob, I said, Bob, I've been thinking about this thing all night, he said, man, I

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

can't go in there in that room with the dean. I said, I'll do anything I can to support you guys but I just can't with my position. And you know as a graduate student, because I was really the only graduate student, the rest were undergraduate.

MN: Oh, so John Cole wasn't in the—

QW: He wasn't part of the demonstration, no he was not, and he, John was not really active with the black student's organization. He was married and had two children at that time. We were the same age, but he was married, and you know – so anyway, Bob said, I understand, I understand that man, you're you know, as a graduate student you can't afford to get kicked out of here. I tell you what, what we need is somebody to be a liaison between, I think there were 12 or 13 of the students that were actually going in to the office, to the dean's office, to lock him in there and hold him captive, and we need somebody to help us communicate with the outside world. I said, solid, I can do that!
[Laughter] Man, it turns out, so I was supposed to when they went in they had an appointment with Dr. Mead, and they went in, the whole gang, man they came armed they had on combat boots, army fatigues, [Laughing] and everything in there was this brother, Pat, Patrick, what was his name? And he was, I think he, well he represented himself as being an actual Black Panther or a certain Panther, and he had all the rhetoric and everything. And so Bob said, yeah so if you can maybe be in front of the door and you know get messages back and forth and so forth. Man, I was the most visible one
[Laughing] I was out here in the outer office, and by the time the newspapers got wind of it and all the press was here, TV was here, and me in Mead's outer office. I made the *New York Times* and *Newsweek*. That's two of the things I was looking for too. They said,

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

about the students, because that was really one of the most militant, next to the Cornell and Columbia—

MN: At Columbia they seized the dean.

QW: Yes, and I think that's that gave us our idea [Crosstalk]

MN: Henry Palmett was the dean we seized, not we, the black students seized him.

QW: So, the Columbia action must have been in the Spring of '68, and ours was just a few weeks later.

MN: Oh ok, it was '68 this took place?

QW: No, no it was the spring of '69.

MN: Right so it was a year later.

QW: The spring of '69 because that was the immediate pressure that brought the department. So, and then when the press came over, the students from SDS, they, the outer office was filled with SDS students and they were sitting on the floor and chanting and carrying on and somebody told me they said, "You have to tell those kids to put those cigarettes out, they can't be smoking in here" [Laughing] It was all over the garden. So they said about the students at Fordham that held the dean captive and they said that standing in front of the door was a huskily built black kid [Laughing] who at one point announced, those of you who are smoking please use the ash trays [Laughing] don't ash on the carpet. So it turned out that I was the most visible one. Fortunately, the word, Dr. Mead's office was across in Keating Hall, the word didn't get to this side of Dealy to the Psych department otherwise we wouldn't be having this conversation. [Laughing] So, but

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

that was really the impetus. They, he, Mead ceded to the demands. He signed it, they had a paper for him to sign and everything.

CM: How did they write it up? Or was there something else that happened with Dean Mead, wasn't he, didn't he have a -- ?

QW: He had a heart attack, that's right, I completely forgot.

MN: Did he have it during it or after?

QW: No, no, it was afterwards. Literally a few days afterwards.

MN: Was, he had a heart attack.

QW: He had a heart attack, I don't think he died. He didn't die, he lived, but –

MN: Now, when you're then saying ok we can have this institute, did you then, how did you sit down and create it?

QW: We had the involvement, there were more black students from that time from the original 9 that I think were here in '67. In '68, a good size, and I mean compare a class with some very active people like Betty Noel and Sheila Steinback and –

MN: So the first really big class came in the fall of '68?

QW: I would say, I believe it was. Significantly larger, and the HEOP program also got started, and Upward Bound came to campus in—

JP: '65?

CM: No, 60—

JP: '64?

CM: Maybe '66, I think.

MN: When did you come to the Upward Bound Program Jim?

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

JP: I came in 1969, to replace Fred Douglas.

MN: Oh so, Fred Douglas [Crosstalk]

JP: He was graduating, he was assistant director and he was going to go to law school and the first thing Claude said, well for me to learn from Fred Douglas so I followed him around all day, and we went to Carlos Alomar's house in Brooklyn to fill out the financial aid form, which I had never seen, and to help his parents fill it out. And Carlos Alomar is responsible for Luther Vandross.

QW: I was telling somebody the other day that Luther Vandross, I had just missed him in the Upward Bound Program,

JP: He was supposed to graduate from high school at about '60—.

MN: He was from Taft High School, and Carlos Alomar is mentioned in the book about Luther Vandross.

JP: Yeah, that was his best friend.

MN: Yeah, and he went with him, they went together to Sesame Street and also on tour with David Bowie.

JP: Carlos Alomar played for David Bowie, and he introduced Luther to David Bowie.

MN: Is he still around by the way?

JP: He's got a band.

MN: Can we bring him in?

JP: I don't know, we have to look him up somehow.

MN: Carlos Alomar, that would be—

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

CM: I was going to ask, you mentioned that there were women who came in in '68, were there any women involved in the earlier sit in?

QW: Yes there were several women students in the group of 12 or 13 that went into Marty Mead's office. I can't remember exactly who. It was mostly guys, but there were a couple; wait a minute [unknown name]

Gina Virgil (GV): How long did the sit in last?

QW: They had a meeting in there for at least, probably, at least two or three hours. We must have gone in for the appointment at about probably at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon and I don't think they came out of there until, maybe it was 3, until about 6 o'clock. That's when he gave in and signed the paper. He probably had to go to the bathroom. [Laughing] What if he had had his heart attack? [Crosstalk] That would have changed the course of history.

MN: He was very good to have it later.

QW: As far as I know, I didn't really know him, but I don't remember any recriminations or attempts at revenge or anything on the part of Mead. He seemed to be a pretty decent man.

MN: Now, did, when the structure was set up, and we want to close this out pretty soon, so you know cause people, and then we'll have a second interview. Were you one of the people appointed to teach courses in the first year of—

QW: Yeah, in the very first year, John Cole did the negotiation with the administration.

MN: Ok, so now that's interesting, he wasn't involved in the sit in, but they picked him to be the negotiator?

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: To be, he was our point man with the administration because he came back to tell us, we had a governing board, or an informal body that was composed of both the I guess the 3 graduate students, Constance, John, myself I think that was it. And then Sheila and Betty –

MN: Now, how did Constance get involved, she was at Columbia?

QW: She was at Columbia.

MN: But how did she get involved at Fordham?

QW: I don't know. I didn't really know her that well. I don't know. She may have heard about the department being formed, but I don't really know.

MN: So, but she then became the first director?

QW: She was the first director, but John was, I guess it was John and Constance that were negotiating because he told me, he said "Quinton I went over there and we were talking about money. How much do they want to pay the faculty members?" And he said, I guess it was Comerzado –

MN: Comerzado was the [Crosstalk]

QW: He looked at me and he said, "John, I'm going to offer your faculty members \$8,000.00 and that's my final offer." And John said that number rang in his brain. He said, "\$8,000.00?!" [Laughing] He thought he was very cool, John was very cool. He said, "Alright Dr. Comerzado, ok we'll take it." He said \$8,000.00?!

MN: That was a lot of money!

[Crosstalk and Laughter]

QW: \$8,000.00!

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

MN: I would have done \$10,000.

QW: Yeah, that was big money at that time. That was the salaries of the three full time faculty members.

MN: So the three, full time—you were, you came on as a full time faculty member?

QW: In '69, three courses per semester in 1969.

MN: And you were still in the doctoral program?

QW: I had, yes, I had started, I was a full time graduate student in '67, '68, and '69. '69 was my last year at full time study in the psych department, but I was always carrying a full time teaching load.

MN: Ok, but still, that's pretty unusual. I mean again, to put in perspective, you have John Cole who is history who is also teaching 3 courses per semester.

QW: Yeah, that's right. John I think may have taught 2 because he –

MN: He got at director, and then who else was teaching on an adjunct basis?

QW: I know Father Abrams hadn't come.

MN: Was Bob Bennett teaching?

QW: Bob I think Bob may have continued a course in his senior year, Bob and Fred. They may have continued, and we had a governing board that was, it was a faculty-student governing board. They set policy for the institute. And I remember Sheila staying back, and Betty Noel and I guess Bob Bennett and Fred Douglas and maybe one –

MN: Did Will Ride get involved because he later came on.

QW: I think Will came in about '70.

MN: '70, yeah that would make sense.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: Yeah, and he was very active with the institute.

MN: Now, in looking back at all of this, you know, what do you make of this – I mean, in retrospect its really an incredible moment in the history of American universities that a group of people create something totally new and get the administration to invest in this.

QW: Well, you know we certainly didn't have a sense of how important it was at that time. You know you can only see some certain things in retrospect.

MN: But also I mean from the point of view of Fordham, you know, it sounds like you have some support and empathy from key people in the administration.

QW: Not a whole lot, but some [Laughing]

MN: No, who, if you were looking at you know, George McMann, was there any—who were people who you saw as actively opposed?

QW: You know, I didn't get involved that much in dealing with the administration. There was one, a huge event was in the April 4, 1968, of course when Dr. King was assassinated. And I remember I was right here on campus, I was leaving campus at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon when I heard about that. And of course you know the whole country was upset. And as the black students here at Fordham, we said, we have to meet with the administration. I remember probably the next day we met with Dr. Comerzado, and that was another important impetus because I think some scholarship, increased the amount of financial aid for black students.

MN: So that meeting ended up producing the significantly larger enrollment the next year?

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

QW: It probably did because that was the trend on American campuses when Dr. King was assassinated, that that was a contribution that many colleges and universities made. They offered—they were a whole genre of Martin Luther King Scholarships, just remembering him.

MN: Now, just to sort of wind up this phase because you know we have a lot more to cover, connecting your experience growing up, you know going to William Penn School, having a family with a sense of history, how do you connect the two? If you think about it, you know from this point of view, what you've built, you helped build at Fordham and all the things that you would experienced in your life before.

QW: Well I guess that there's a continuum there, you know we're all a product of our family contribution, our environments, and our own produces our own personal needs and characteristics. I can see that all of my experiences were pushing me and shaping me toward doing something. I wanted to make some contribution. I had the idea as a psychology major, I knew that psychology was used to help people; psychotherapy. I wanted to be of help to my people. I had no idea of black studies then, I don't think it existed, but I can see how all of these experiences of kind of the collective influence of all those experiences result in what I've experienced here and my experience here at Fordham will certainly—

MN: Now, let me throw one more thing, which I just thought of from the interview, you know, this Fordham institution you've created has been unusually successful. It was built on a very secure foundation. Do you think there's any connection between the fact that you and John Cole both came out of age, seeping news, came out of Southern, black

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

communities where there were strong institutions which gave you the ability to give a court of common sense, stability to this that might have been different from people who grew up in the North where there was a movement sensibility but not real experience with black institutions.

QW: Yeah, I think that's an important part. First of all, let me again emphasize this was a very collective effort. You know I played, whatever role I played was you know contributing, it was a collective effort, and I think that's where the strength came from, the collective action and thinking of a lot of people, and again the zeitgeist, the spirit of the time. But I do, know that my specific experience growing up in High Point I had a lot of organizational experience from the church, from the Methodist Youth Fellowship, to the Boy Scouts, to the Boy's Club, to the High Y Club in high school, to I was president of the high school chapter of the NAACP, and Morgan organizational experience. Most important of which was the fraternity that Claude and I are brothers in, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. And that organizational experience is very important because one of the things I found when I came here with working at the students at Fordham, almost nobody knew how to really run a meeting. Knew parliamentary procedure, knew how to you know just how to run an orderly meeting. Of course, you know with my, especially with my fraternity experience, and other organizational experience I had a long history of doing that. So I think there is something to be said about the grounding of—you know, you can, the black experience is rooted in the south but northern black communities were extensions of that southern black culture and the Caribbean culture also, so it all fits together. The church I think is a very important influence there. Again, organizationally

Interviewee: Dr. Quinton Wilkes
Interviewer: Dr. Mark Naison and Dr.

Claude Magnum

Date: September 13, 2007

with the idea of working toward some common good with a sense of faith and belief, not necessarily religious of course for many people it was specifically religious, but for others just the influence of the church resonates in the civil rights movement.

MN: Ok, well everybody, thank you so much for this unbelievably inspiring experience which will bring you back into the Fordham family.

QW: Oh I'm so glad, it's such a privilege for me to do this. It's a lot of fun, I have really enjoyed it and I look forward to coming back.

MN: Ok, thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]