1-29-2008

# Cedeno, Luis

Bronx African American History Project
*Fordham University*

Interviewee: Anthony "Doc" Carter
Interviewers: Mark Naison, Oneka Labennett and Claude Mangum

March 5, 2008

Transcriber: Ariana Allensworth

Mark Naison (MN): Hello. Today is March 5th 2008, we are at Fordham University this is the Bronx African American History Project. We are interviewing Anthony "Doc" Carter, who was born and grew up in the Bronx, attended Fordham University, was a student leader there and is now a Vice President of Johnson and Johnson. Conducting this interview are Dr. Claude Mangum, Dr. Oneka Labennett and Dr. Mark Naison. Could you start off by spelling your name, and giving your date of birth?

AC: Anthony, A-N-T-H-O-N-Y. Carter, C-A-R-T-E-R. I was born November 3, 1954 in Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx.

MN: So tell us a little bit about your family and how they ended up coming to the Bronx.

AC: I will tell you perhaps what I know Dr. Naison, I unfortunately don't have too much family history because my parents died when we were very very young, and left ten of us in the Bronx. So what I do know is what we've been able to gather over the years. But I was born in Bronx, Lincoln Hospital as I said, 1954 and I was the 8th child, I was the 5th boy.

MN: What were your parents' names?

AC: Virginia Johnson, was her maiden name, Virginia Carter, and Robert Carter were my parents. And my father was a construction worker; actually he worked on Co-Op City which was once the freedom land ground, yes freedom land grounds. And he actually died in service, actually the crane operator came disoriented and drunk to work one day, and wiped out the whole site and my father was a construction foreman, and he was one of the –

MN: Now was he a member of the union?

AC: He was a member of the union, my father also a mason in the Bronx, as well.

MN: Now in those years it was very difficult for an African-American to get into the union and have those kinds of responsibilities. How did he manage to do that?

AC: Well he was very light skinned. [Laughter] No. He did that because I think, from what I know of my father, he had a tremendous work ethic, which he instilled in all of us. He was just really focused on construction from a long time.

MN: Now we've interviewed several people who moved in and out of different—did your father pass a white to do this?

AC: No not at all.

MN: No because when we interviewed Dr. Cunningham, his father, who worked at the customs service, you know.

AC: My father was about my complexion; he would never pass for that. Although we didn't talk a lot about black history in our household, so you know.

Claude Mangum (CM): I was just going to ask that, we realize that you were born in the Bronx, do you know if your parents came from the South, from another part of New York City, form the Caribbean?

AC: Yes, I do. My mother was born in Virginia and my father was born in Ohio. So my father's father's father, my great grandfather I guess, was a white Haitian. And my mother is of the Blackfoot Indian tribe, we can trace her ancestry.

MN: Now did they meet in the Bronx?

AC: I don't have history on that, I don't. But I do have a photo at home of them dancing at the Savoy. So they stomped at the Harlem nightclubs. [Laughter]

Oneka Labennett (OL): How — so your father died in that accident?

AC: Yes.

OL: And then your mother?

AC: My mother died first, actually. The year before my father died, I want to say '62 and then my father died at '63, so we were very very young, I must have been less than ten at the time. My mother died, we say, from having too many babies because our ages are just a year apart, most of us. But she died from kidney failure.

MN: Now where were you living when you were born in the Bronx?

AC: 1347 Prospect Avenue Apartment 21. [Laughs]

MN: And that was between where and where? The streets?

AC: It was between Freeman Street and 169th street, two bedrooms and ten children. [Laughter] That's a fact.

MN: What was your memory of the rooms that you slept in?

AC: I didn't have a room. [Laughter] I slept with my parents in a crib in the corner of the room, in their bedroom. Our living room became the bedroom at night, which was a Castro convertible pullout sofa, which slept about four of us. And then in the back room, the other bedroom, we had two bunk beds, which the rest of the kids slept in.

MN: What elementary school did you go to?

AC: Saint Anthony of Padua, 166th Street and Prospect Avenue.

MN: Did you siblings also go there?

AC: All of us went to that school, we started out, until our parents died. Then we separated.

MN: Were your parents Catholics?

AC: My mother was a Catholic, but not as practicing as the kids, she made us go to church. My father, he was probably was Agnostic, I don't know what he was. [Laughs]

CM: Now you said that once your parents passed the children were separated. How did that happen?

AC: Aunts and uncles took us, and some friends of the family. My Godmother, who lived on the 4th floor, apartment 42, adopted me. It was either that, or we would've ended up in a home, and we kind of rebelled against that, so family took us. Which, I will tell you, at some point was probably the worst thing that could happen because we all separated and we never came together until our adult lives. So by being with family members, we didn't intersect at all.

MN: So not all family members were in the Bronx?

AC: A couple were in Brooklyn, one was in Harlem, and the rest were probably in the Bronx. And then you had four adult children who pretty much were on their own, some stayed in apartment 21, two brothers and two sisters.

MN: So apartment 21 was maintained as a Carter residence even after?

AC: Carter place. [Laughter]

MN: Carter place. Now how did the – how many extended family members were actually living in the Bronx?

AC: During which time Dr. Naison? When my parents died?

MN: Yes.

AC: I would say two probably went to Brooklyn. I would say one was in Harlem, one was in Philadelphia. So do the math, that's about four. So I would say about six of us.

OL: Can you just talk briefly talk about your early childhood memories of having all those siblings in that apartment before your parents passed away?

AC: Sure. A lot of whippings. [Laughter] My father was pretty strict. But a lot of fun. I remember he had this black – and I should know the name of this car, but this black car, he used to throw ten of us in there and we used to go up to Brooklyn and Manhattan to family to visit. Actually we visited Aunt Catherine, who was probably the matriarch of our family, even with my mother, because she adopted about four of us siblings. And I remember always getting an allowance, I remember always eating dinner as a family, not until after my father took his shot of Old Grandad. I remember that vividly, I have a bottle of Old Grandad at home as a relic, that I won't drink. I remember my mother being the matriarch on Prospect Avenue, being well received by the neighborhood. I remember playing up and down the street in the alleyway, going to Crotona Park, to the pool, on Saturdays and Sundays. It was a happy family, you know, a very very happy family, until our parents died.

MN: Oh boy. Now what sort of food did your family used to serve?

AC: Oh my mother used throw down. It was Southern cuisine, you know –

MN: Give me some – mention some foods!

AC: You know, collard greens, fried chicken, sweet potatoes, macaroni and cheese. Fish on Fridays, because that was rule, we're Catholic, you know I had to have fish on Friday. But she would fry up some nice fish for us, some sea bass, some catfish, I remember all that stuff.

MN: Okay.

AC: I used to go with her to shop. I was a baby but I remember. [Laughter]

MN: Now where did she go to shop?

AC: We went to the fish market. There was one right down 169th Street, we walked right down the hill, close to 3rd Avenue. Everything seemed like it was on 169th Street, the barber –

MN: So you were pretty close to McKinley Square? Do you remember that was where Boston Road intersected –

AC: Right, we didn't call it that then.

MN: What did you call it?

AC: We went to Boston Road. Went to the record shop to get hamburgers, two for a quarter, at the record store.

MN: At the *record shop*, sold *hamburgers*?

AC: Well they weren't 100% beef [Laughter] Hamburgers and french-fries at the record shop, yes.

MN: Now what sort of music was being played in your household? Was there much music in the house?

AC: I don't remember a lot of music being played in the house. I remember my father used to have a lot of poker games. I remember –

MN: Who were his friends? Were they –

AC: Neighborhood folks. We used to get the loot under the table the next morning, and I remember watching a lot of TV. [Someone walks into the room] Hello, how are you? Anthony Carter.

Dawn Russell (DR): Hi, Dawn Russell.

AC: Nice to meet you. You said Joan?

DR: Dawn.

MN: Keep going.

AC: So I remember a lot television. We used to watch a lot of different shows. I don't know if I remember the shows but I remember a spoon and the knob, because we couldn't get, you know– we couldn't get static free, so my oldest brother used to jam a spoon in the knob, to hold the channel in place, so we could – how do I remember this stuff? [Laughs]

CM: As you recall it was the community primarily African-American, African-American and Latino, did people come from the South?

AC: We didn't know a lot of Latinos. A lot of the Hispanic families were not in our neighborhood at the time, a lot of white families, matter of fact. The younger Carter kids, me included in that, we used to knock on the doors and, you know, 'hello. Can we take out your garbage? Can we take any of your bottles to the store? Can we walk you pets?' And the majority of the tenants were white.

MN: So in your building, it was a majority white building?

AC: In all of the buildings. 1332, 47.

MN: This was in the '50s?

AC: [Laughter] Actually, yes. I was born in '54, so it had to be.

MN: Did you have awareness of the ethnicity of the whites? Were there Jewish, Italian?

AC: I don't, but I do have awareness of their nurturing of all the families. You know, you could not do anything without the families reporting back to your parents.

MN: So you were being watched?

AC: Oh, yes. [Laughter] Mrs. Macy lived on the front — on the first floor, had a window in the front, and would look at the whole block. And before my father got home, there was a report on what we did that day.

OL: Wow, that's amazing.

MN: What were some of the – did you play street games?

AC: Yes, we played ring-o-livio. Do you know what that is?

MN: Explain what ring-o-livio is?

AC: [Laughs] Ring-o-livio is what I guess the modern day kids play as, they call it, I forget, my son plays it now.

MN: Like capture the flag?

AC: No, let me explain the game and then I'll remember what he plays now. It was a catching kind of game, about 10 or 12 of us, you would count to about 20 or 30 and then you would disappear. Right? And one guy has to stay because he was he was the person who, whatever, was last to get the number right. So if that was me and I saw you coming, I'd go –I would catch you and say ring-o-ivio 1, 2, 3, 1, 2 ,3. Then you had to stay on this base. But I couldn't catch you and you snuck around and you stepped on the base and you freed him. My goal was to catch everybody there, once I got everybody then I was free to go. And then we played – the time I grew up, we didn't have schoolyards, so we actually played, you're not going to believe this, stickball, baseball, and football on our block, on our block.

MN: So this on 169th street?

AC: On Prospect Avenue. It was the other side, and here's our side and up and down our block, which is about five tenements, we had bases on the block.

MN: Not on the street but on the sidewalk?

AC: Yes. Because many of us couldn't cross the street.

MN: Now did you have stoops?

AC: No, we didn't have – we had a vestibule sort of area where this one point into the building, at about three or four flights, that you'd go into and that's where we did our doo-wop singing.

MN: So you got into some doo-wop stuff?

AC: Yea we did some doo-wop, that's where the numbers guys came in with their numbers.

MN: Tell us a little bit about the numbers person, and what that was like in your community.

AC: I remember one, I don't think I'll put him in a bad position, I don't even know if he's alive. But there was this one guy who we thought was the coolest, and his name was Bobby. And Bobby wrote his numbers on the Reynolds or a portion of bubble stick gum, he would open that up, write your numbers, and I used to play the numbers for my Godmother at the time. He would write the numbers, fold it back, roll it up and put it in his mouth, so he wouldn't get caught. Isn't that cool?

MN: Now did he dress particularly well?

AC: Clean. Never drove.

MN: He never drove?

AC: Well that was the giveaway, so he used to walk around, but he was always clean. Hat, you know, nice shoes.

MN: Was he respectful to people in the community?

AC: People respected him because he used to play with the money, but he wasn't one of these arrogant kind of wealthy – you know he was a service, and he provided a service.

MN: Now did you ever – was this a neighborhood you felt safe in growing up?

AC: I did. Yes, I did.

MN: Did you feel safe going everywhere, or where there certain blocks which you were wary of?

AC: I grew up during the gang era, so I only felt safe when I was with my brothers. I had some older brothers who were pretty tough, actually I have four older brothers.

MN: What were some of the names of the gangs you remember from that era?

AC: We had the Savage Skulls. I 'd see citizens on the back of someone's jacket.

MN: Do the Crowns? The Seven Crowns or is that an earlier –

AC: I'd heard of them, but they weren't in our area.

MN: They weren't in your area? What about the Slicksters? Does that –

AC: No. I remember the back of the jackets, the colors. Those were frightening days, frightening days.

MN: So were the gangs most frightening when you were in your adolescent years, or?

AC: No well my adolescent years I had more protection. I wasn't out as much, my godmother just put a moratorium on going outside.

MN: So this is when you were in elementary and middle school?

AC: Elementary, yes.

MN: There was a sense these gangs were formidable?

AC: Yes. And we feared them. I mean, we didn't go too far.

CM: What was your –

AC: My radius? My safe space? The block, the block that was it, you know. You didn't want to go past the block [Sneeze] God bless you. Times I went passed the block, I got mugged once.

MN: Really?

AC: Yes. Biggest knife I had ever seen in my whole life. But it was probably only like this. [Laughter] [Measures length of the knife with fingers]

MN: Now what about walking to Saint Anthony of Padua?

AC: Five blocks. We walked as a family, and came home as a family.

MN: So somebody picked you up at school?

AC: No we walked.

MN: All of you together?

AC: Yes. Brown pants, green sweater, white shirt, and brown tie. [Laughs] I remember this stuff.

MN: What was Saint Anthony of Padua like as a place to go to school?

AC: Very nurturing environment, run by the nuns. It was probably the best fun I ever had, because it was an escape from my block. I met a lot of kids, a lot of white students, some Hispanic, some Latinos. I was very involved, very active, I was a very good student, don't know what happened. [Laughs]

MN: Were academics emphasized in your household?

AC: When my godmother raised me, *oh yes*, I mean nothing but A's. That's what you had to do.

OL: What was that household like? Did she have children of her own?

AC: She had two daughters. Two much older than I was, and they kind of hung out with my older brothers and sisters. It was a very strict, *very strict*, household.

MN: Now which side of the family, was she from your mother's or your father's side?

AC: She was a friend.

MN: A *friend*? So —

AC: She was friend of the family. She raised me. She was my godmother.

MN: And how old were you when you –

AC: I'm still trying to figure that out. I understand my – I'm not sure, but I believe I was with her in the early '60s. Yes because my parents died, not too very long –

MN: What was the distance between when your mother died and your father died?

AC: One year.

MN: Jesus.

AC: Summer. Two experiences, we went to the pool, Crotona pool, came back there were a lot of people in front of my doorway, and my older brother said to me, 'somebody died.' We walked upstairs, and they were all in our apartment, it was our mom. *Next summer*. The *next* summer, true story, coming back from the pool, there were people in front of our door, my brother said, 'somebody died.' Came to our apartment it was my father.

MN: Jesus.

CM: Touching story.

AC: [Starts crying] I need a moment. [Pause] Alright, I'm good.

MN: So was there a family meeting, did people come to the house, and figure out what was going to be done?

AC: No, it was done absent our involvement, because we were young. The four older siblings made a decision, after being taken out of the discussion, that they were not going to allow us to be in a home. Because they thought that we would never really amount to much. So we thought – I remember my sister sending me up to the fourth floor to knock on my Godmother's door, and saying would you adopt me. But I still submit today, that I don't know if that was the right move. We should have gone into a home.

MN: Wow.

CM: Knowing you over the years I've admire the way of your writing and speaking, is this something that evolved in your early years, was it conscious on your part thinking about sports, and other activities at an early age?

AC: Well it became – well *Dr. Mangum* you helped me with that when I came here. Because you helped me move into communications, I don't know if you remember that. But I have a friend, who is a priest, Father John Mien, out of Our Lady of Lords in Harlem. And he began a leadership project –

CM: The Archbishop leadership project.

AC: That's right, A.L.P. And he brought in kids from the Bronx, from Manhattan, and he focuses on, you'll appreciate this, black history.

MN: And this was when you were in high school?

AC: This was – yes, high school.

MN: And where did you go to high school?

AC: Saint Raymond's High School in Parkchester. So it was a high school for boys, but the academy was for girls. [Laughs]

MN: And you were living in Prospect Avenue at this time?

AC: I was.

MN: And how many African-American students were there at Saint Raymond's?

AC: Not a lot, the year that I went in 19 – whatever that was, I guess '72? That was the first time the bussed, well because they wanted to build a basketball team [Laughs] it was very clear, and they brought us in from the Bronx, and maybe some places in Manhattan. I say literally bussed, I wasn't on a bus, I took city transportation but you can see that they were trying to increase the population – and out homeroom was in , that year was the first time, we ran out of space, and our homeroom was in the cafeteria.

MN: I want to go back to Prospect Avenue. You mentioned the doo-wop, when did you first become aware of the doo-wop singing as a sort of, not only as a recorded phenomenon, but as a neighborhood phenomenon?

AC: When we would he our older – well *my* older bothers and some of the older kids, I guess we would call them at the time, on the block, in the hallway. Because the sound, was *unbelievable*, in the hallway.

MN: Did you sing?

AC: Yes, I did a little singing.

MN: What was your – were you a?

AC: I was a Little Anthony and the Imperials kind of guy.

MN: Can you give us a sample?

AC: No. [Laughter]

MN: I can do the base. [Hums a tune in doo-wop base voice]

AC: We used to sing their songs, and then we used to make up our own stuff.

MN: Did you ever have a group that you formed?

AC: Not a formal group, no. Just we used to get in the hallway when there was noting else to do either it was raining, or something like that, and we'd just go in and sing. It was weird, we didn't get in trouble.

CM: Were there talent shows, or community centers where people played music?

AC: No. The only thing we had close to that was what we called the Black Room, where we met these Pan-Africanist guys who taught us how to play drums, and as you know I've been playing drums since --

MN: Wow. Now wait a minute. That's amazing, this is in Morrisania?

AC: Well that section, but yes. This is on Prospect Avenue, a block away from where I lived, one of these road houses, or whatever, and in the basement of that these guys bought out this basement and all they did, or all *we* knew that they did was a lot of incense, so you know [Laughter] we just thought they were African oriented and they played –

MN: Now this was in the late '60s early '70s?

AC: This was probably in the mid 60s, because that's when I learned to play.

CM: You called it the Black Room?

AC: We called it the Black Room. [Laughter]

MN: Was this while you were still at Saint Anthony of Padua?

AC: Yes, it was during that time.

MN: Like 6th, 7th grade?

AC: Yes, we kind of used to sneak in there, because of the drumming.

MN: I'm trying to sort of parallel this with the political, you know, events of the time. Were you very aware of the Civil Rights Movement?

AC: Embarrassingly, not. And I'll tell you what the main embarrassment was, when I was walking down the street, going to school and a Latino brother at Saint Anthony's said to me, 'did you hear what happened?' I said, 'what do you mean what happened?' 'Did you know that Dr. King got shot?' I believe that my time frame is right, and I think this is the experience. No! It wasn't Dr. King, because I knew who Dr. King was. It was must have been the signing of the Civil Rights Act. Oh, that's what it was because '64. And he said, 'do you know what that means for you folks?' I go, 'no.' And it was that day that I went home to my Godmother and said, 'how come I don't know this stuff? And I'm supposed to?' He told me about that, and never again.

MN: You mentioned that you're ambivalent about your experience in your Godmother's, you know family –

AC: That's a nice word [Laughs]

MN: Could you elaborate a little bit?

AC: Well my Godmother was very strict and I think her mentality was she was going to raise a boy who was going to become successful and grows into a wonderful young man. I think that the method and the tactic of doing that were not the right methods and tactics. Let me just say I don't beat my children, and not because I don't believe in that I don't do that because I don't understand, because of my experience, how that relates to discipline, or – I was beat with an extension chord. And here are the things that caused the beating, a needle in the arm? No. Hanging out late? No. I was falling down and tearing my pants. I was scuffing up my shoes and getting holes in the sole and I was afraid to say that I got hole in the shoe. And then when she found out, I would get beat very ---

CM: Now you mentioned that she had her own –

AC: Two daughters?

CM: Was there a difference in attitude toward raising girls as opposed to boys?

AC: Yes, it was noticeable. Plus, here daughters were a little bit older than I was and they were very iconoclastic to be very frank with you. I used to watch some of the stuff they did, I said these are two rebellious young women, so what's going on here. But I saw some intense times when it came to disciplining them. But it was the worst time of my life.

CM: Was this comparable to what your friends were going through?

AC: Absolutely not. Absolutely not. Claude, what we were doing was, you know, if there was anything I took that garbage out and I stayed maybe five minutes longer that I should have, in front of the building, it was silly– well *I think* silly stuff.

MN: Well, I had a little bit of a similar upbringing, so.

AC: Really? So you know? My godmother is still alive, and my wife doesn't understand why I don't call her frequently. I just *can't.*

MN: Was the world – when did the world outside your neighborhood start to get your attention? You know, and you start to think of things happening politically, or socially.

AC: Saint Raymond's when they bussed us all in, there were about four of us going home one day, and we were looking at these young white kids on our school ground, and we went over to them, we were watching them run track and we said, 'oh it's amazing.' And the kid said, 'don't them. Don't talk to the colerds.' And I said *whew*. At Parkchester at the time was predominantly white, and so we realized, something is not going correctly here.

MN: So this was an experience you'd never had in your own neighborhood?

AC: No. I mean it was a safe haven, even with the white folks that lived there, no one made you feel like you didn't belong.

MN: So this was your first major exposure to racism?

AC: I would – I didn't really define as such then. I hate to be corny, people thinking differently about me than I never knew, I didn't know if it was quite racism.

MN: So there wasn't a discourse about Civil Rights in any of your households going on?

AC: With my godmother, yes. Because then Dr. King became an icon in the house. As tough as my Godmother was, she was a fan of Malcolm X, so obviously I became a fan because it was easy. You know, people like Farrakhan at the time, it was like I went through high school, those were heroes for me, they talked about stuff that she believed – my godmother was very anti-white. I remember her saying, you know, I don't care who you fall in love with, who you marry, just never bring home a white girl. I didn't understand that, to be very frank with you. I go like, then why is that, is there something different? I think she was playing in her own biases and probably experiences?

MN: Now was she of Caribbean ancestry or from the South?

AC: My godmother was from the South. Her mother was from North Carolina.

CM: I was going to ask, you mentioned your schooling in Catholic schools, as you understood it, how would you compare or contrast your experience in Catholic schools with your friends who may have attended public schools?

AC: There was no needle in my arm at the end of the day. I could look out my peephole I could see the guys I was playing baseball with during the day, skin popping at the time.

MN: When did the heroin hit your area?

AC: I became aware of it – it was in my neighborhood when I was a young kid, but I became aware of it when I started living with my godmother because I became aware of more things. She was a nurse at Morrisania Hospital, so she would constantly tell me what was coming in the O.R. and so she scared – it was like scared straight. So I knew what that was all about.

MN: Now did you ever see people like nodding out or –

AC: Yes, it was one of my favorite pastimes, watch the guys and laugh at them. Never saw women at that point it time.

MN: When was this?

OL: Was this '60s, '70s?

AC: This was during my – so I lived with her, what I remember most is my early high school years, so –

MN: That would be like middle 60s?

AC: High school was '72 – no wait wait. College, '76 I graduated. So '69 to – then the remaining years. Actually I do remember some of it from elementary school because this one guy Rodney Crooked Head, he used to rip us off, take our money, and buy drugs, and we would see him later on the stoops, over there nodding.

MN: Now he would take it physically?

AC: Yes, he'd go over in your pocket at take it. [Laughs]

MN: And he would just come up to you? Was he a big guy?

AC: He wouldn't say a word. Rodney Crooked Head was feared, he was always doped up. He would just walk up –

MN: He would do it to kids?

AC: To us, yes. He was just like, alright, come here.' And you'd just hopefully walk away and not get hurt. I don't know how much he was taking those days, a dollar, maybe two. Because you had a bus pass, you didn't really need, you know.

MN: Now was were some of the public schools some of your friends from the neighborhood went to?

AC: PS 22, PS 54. Then when we went to high school people ventured out over here, Roosevelt, Evander Childs, Morris, yes a lot of different ones.

OL: With the kind of household you were living in, did you have an escape strategy? What I'm asking is, did school become, sort of, your idea of this is how I'm going to get away form this?

AC: No. Yes I understand you clearly. I didn't escape from my neighborhood, my neighborhood was, to some extent, my escape. Once I was out of my house, so when I was out of apartment 42, *anywhere* was my escape. So school was a haven, but I wasn't going – I didn't feel school was enabling me to escape my environment, I needed to be out, I didn't like being where I lived with my godmother.

CL: You mentioned that you went to Saint Raymond's School for boys and then there was Saint Raymond's Academy for girls, did the two ever come together?

AC: At social functions, that I could never go to, that's the only time. I could never go.

MN: Oh you were never allowed to?

AC: No, I was never allowed. I even made the basketball team freshman year, and I couldn't stay on the team because I had practices everyday.

MN: See, I didn't know you as a basketball player.

AC: I was pretty good, ask this guy. [Points to CM] I played here. For a year I played for P.J. Carlesimo. [Laughter]

MN: I was playing for [Crosstalk]

AC: Okay, so there you go.

MN: So you were on the team here?

AC: When there was J.V. I think that last year that there was J.V.

CM: But you did make the team at Saint Raymond's, but because of your godmother's restrictions you couldn't continue?

AC: I couldn't, yes.

MN: Now did you ever – were you aware of the live music clubs in the neighborhood? Was that something? In Morrisania, along Boston Road?

AC: I was aware of them, because of the older brothers and sisters, and my godmother's daughters, but I never went to any of those.

MN: Did you ever go to anything at the Hunts Point Palace?

AC: No, I know of it really well. Probably, I did, cotillions. [Laughter] Cotillions, yes! Cotillion balls, I had to escort my cousins I'd do the little thing. Yes, I remember those.

CM: Now we've talked about your Bronx experience growing up, did you venture up to this area, the Fordham Road area at all for shopping?

AC: Yes, Alexander's. Yes, I did all the stuff. This was another escape, so to speak. But I didn't do it until maybe my first or second year of college – not college I mean high school, when my godmother gave me a little bit more freedom. I remember sitting in the theater watching Guess Who's Coming to Dinner by myself, I came up here was it the RKO or the Palace? I don't remember. Valentine?

CM: There were several, one was on the concourse.

MN: There was Lowes Paradise, the really big one. Then The Valentine.

AC: Valentine, yes the circular market.

OL: That must have given you some insight into her don't bring home a white girl rule? [Laughter]

AC: I never really understood that. As I started to mature, and understand that racism that exists, it was never a desire, to be frank with you. Might sound corny, but *a lot* of friends who were white women, who helped expose me to things that she didn't, that just came from bitter racism, I guess. To things where – many of them were my colleagues, many of them I came to for help, you know.

MN: Now, in the late '60's and early '70's significant parts of the Bronx began to deteriorate and even burn. Was that something you were aware of?

AC: I was aware of it, through observation. I don't know too many people who were displaced. Many of my friends, if a fire occurred, it was accidental in my friend's homes. So I didn't see that sort of transformation by physically be there. When I went to Fordham – I came here those were really kind of my last days of living in the Bronx. Because my godmother moved to Florida and my godfather went a year later so I went to the Bronx just to hang out with some of my buddies.

MN: So when you were living at Fordham you no longer had a Bronx residence?

AC: I did for my freshman year.

MN: By the time you came to Fordham, Fordham was seen as a safe street to shop for African-Americans?

AC: Yes. Well yes and no. Because I remember, you know Thomas Rowe and all those other guys, our first night here on campus we walked down Fordham Road, and we saw a motorcycle gang and we all went back inside the campus because they made us a little uncomfortable. So I don't know. But I never had a bad experience on Fordham Road when I was coming up here on my own.

MN: Now what about reading. At what age did you start reading on your own?

AC: Well on my own, it's very interesting, Father Mien, who I had told you about, who brought us to this program, we had an intense reading of Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, Before the Mayflower, so he introduced me to literature that was relevant to my culture. He also took us to events Dance Theater Harlem, Schomburg, you know, we did a lot.

MN: And this was before you went to Fordham?

AC: Yes.

CM: In fact if you could explain to us a little bit more about the Archbishops project, who the young men were and what –

AC: Sure, it first started out at young men, today it's young men and young women. And it started out at Our Lady of Lords where Father Mien was one of the priests, and it went into the high schools to help develop the leadership skills of young black men, with the intent of leading you to the priesthood. We rebelled, I was the second group, we said well the greatest contribution that black men can make is not necessarily in the priesthood. So he taught us to rebel, he taught us to challenge the status quo, he taught us to protest, you know. And so he brought us into the program with intense summer book reading, you know, I mean a book a week, during the summer. A lot of cultural stuff, and a lot of writing. Maybe that probably got me interested in writing. And you were in

it for about two years. I was fortunate because I got into it, I think, in my junior year, and I think you're brought into it in your senior year, because its that year and then your first year in college. So then I've been affiliated with it for quite a while.

CM: Can you tell us a little bit about your cohorts or your friends from the program?

AC: Most of my friends you probably know who went to the program. Ted Shaw. Ted Shaw is a buddy of mine, just left LDF, most of the friends are doctors, lawyers, businessmen, scholars, doing what you guys do. Only one, only one out of maybe 500 became a priest, a Jesuit.

MN: Do you know him by name?

AC: Yes, Greg Chism. Father Chism, I can't get used to that. [Crosstalk] Yes, so Father Greg Chism, we really respect, he was in the first group. So we have a great track record of success, but we don't publicize that.

MN: So this was in Manhattan so –

AC: So it started out at Lady of our Lords, and I think it went to Resurrection Parish.

MN: How would you get there?

AC: I remember bus, I don't remember train. I think I remember cutting across town, I took probably a couple busses. And every week we would have a meeting, we would have to read these books in a week so we would discuss them, and then we'd do the social things and the cultural things on Sundays. Different theaters. The first guy that took me to a restaurant to help me understand what all the silverware meant. This guy is just amazing.

MN: So when you were growing up you didn't eat in sit-down restaurants?

AC: My godmother used to take me to Frank's next to the Apollo, only to see James Brown.

MN: *Really*? She took you to see James Brown?

AC: She loved her James Brown, that's where I met Governor Rockefeller.

MN: So and then you'd eat at Frank's?

AC: Yes. It always kind of coincided with my birthday. I have a few fond memories [Laughs] it's not *all* negative stuff. Yes, we would eat at Frank's place, or whatever it was called. And the big deal was as a family we used to go to Patricia Murphy's –

MN: Patricia Murphy's, yes I know. With the popovers, remember those?

AC: Yes, I used to order collard greens, or fried chicken and she goes, [in a whispered voice] 'you can't get that here.'

MN: Do you remember ever eating at restaurants in the Bronx?

AC: No never. I know that. That's really clear to me.

MN: Now was your godmother a good cook?

AC: Yes, absolutely. Sweet potato pie, good pig feet, big old pot on the stove. [Laughs]

CM: You had mentioned Father Mien, do you still maintain contact?

AC: Yes, we're still close. He still cares about our welfare, he's got ties to all my children, you know, married me.

CM: Were there other men and women who played a role in your early formation through high school?

AC: Probably teachers. I mean, to be humble, you were one of the professors here in college. [Laugher] But in high school, a few, but not many. Because remember, I was very isolated, my godmother –

MN: What about Saint Anthony of Padua, were there any teachers there?

AC: The priest.

MN: Which priest?

AC: Father Stelts, when he was there. Father Ryan, I don't know if he's still alive –

MN: He's still alive. Monsignor Ryan?

DR: We just interviewed him last week.

AC: Monsignor Ryan? No! I think he's left-handed. Red hair? [Laughs] Maybe I'll get over there one day.

DR: He was stooped over like this. But yes, he told me he had bright red hair.

MN: And he said girls used to have a crush on him.

AC: Oh he's exaggerating. [Laughter] He was in charge of the alter boys.

MN: At one of the parishes in the South Bronx, I think he's at Saint Luke's.

AC: Saint Luke's? I went to visit him one day, I went to visit him.

DR: I'm going to have to tell him.

AC: Tell him, Carter – he was the one who help us divide up our family to make sure we wouldn't go to a home. Father Ryan. Just say Carter. Ask him about –

DR: You should see his –

AC: His digs. My oldest brother Robert, but they called him Robin, he was father's pet, yes he loved junior. So those were the priests, and the reason why they had an influence was because I was an alter boy, so those are the days it was in Latin, so didn't know your Latin you know Father would beat you. [Laughter] So yes, they protected me, they kept me out of trouble, fear of God. [Laughter]

MN: Now, did you always know you were going to go to college?

AC: Nonnegotiable, absolutely.

MN: And this is from the time you were in elementary school, or more from the time in high school?

AC: When my godmother came into my life. And I almost missed this opportunity, because I was going to NYU in the Bronx campus and they moved, they ended that school, and I didn't want to go to the New York campus.

MN: So initially you went to NYU in the Bronx?

AC: No, that's where I wanted to go. When I was looking at schools, and Fordham became appealing because my godmother was moving, and there was a campus here.

CM: So did the archbishop's project help you with the college –

AC: Oh yes, we went on college tours, which was the other thing we did, college tours. And Father's checker cab, it was a black checker car and he used to take us to Wesleyan, to – his attitude was everything you should achieve, should be the best, you have the time to do the crap, so you want to focus on the best. So you want to read the best books, go to the best schools, see the best movies, see the best plays, meet the nicest people so they can be your best friends.

MN: Wow, one more thing about the sort of political atmosphere. Do you remember seeing people in the streets of the Bronx who were selling papers for Muhammad Speaks or the Black Panther's paper?

AC: Yes, I used to sell them for the brothers I used to go to their place, their store, to get the shabaz pies –

MN: Now where was that store located?

AC: At the record shop. [Laughs] And then there was one on our block as well, but eventually that record store was sold, I guess maybe by them, so you can actually stop getting your Muhammad Speaks on the street and you can get it in the store.

MN: So were there people selling Mohammad Speaks on Boston Road?

AC: Boston Road. And that's where you'd get your bean pie, and you Philly steaks sometimes.

MN: Were there ever any Black Panthers on Boston Road?

AC: Only what I read about was as close as I could get –

MN: But it wasn't something visible like that nation of Islam.

AC: No I didn't see that. Maybe people emulating that, but no, not real.

MN: Did any of your friends join the Nation of Islam?

AC: No, but some of them became Five Percenters.

MN: And when did that start?

AC: That probably started – in my freshman year of college I used to come back a lot, and see the different guys I grew u with going in different directions and some were Five Perecenters, some were this, some were that. Some of them stood on soapboxes and just got the –what to you call that thing? Got converted. Found Jesus – what was that called? The Jesus preachers?

MN: The Israelites?

AC: No, I'll think of it in a second. Because it's very prominent, they like converted. Born again, yes that's it.

MN: Was your godmother Catholic?

AC: Yes, she was Catholic.

MN: So what was Fordham like when you first set foot in it?

AC: Wonderful. Wonderful. The best place ever. This was it. This was heaven. Away from home, I was on my own, I did the things I thought I could never do

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

AC: and I think I did them well. I found what my passion is in life, communications. I met some of the most wonderful people in the world. I met my first wife here, but that's another story. [Laughter] Some of the friends still remain my friends.

CM: You mentioned individuals Thomas Rowes, I know you're good friend of Denzel Washington's at Lincoln Center campus. Maybe you can tell us about some of the people.

AC: Well the one I stay close to the most is Denzel. Denzel was the best man in our wedding. He's my daughter Ashley's godfather, and I'm John David's godfather and we talk fairly often, when he's in town. We lived in the same dorm, I believe it was one of the houses. I don't know if it was C house?

CM: So he was living in the Rose Hill campus and going to Lincoln Center?

AC: No, not right away. He was going to school up here, because we took some classes together in communications, we started out as pre-med. We started out at pre-med here, that's were Doc came from, Doc came from the basketball players because when I was carrying my big text books going to class, they'd say, 'where you going?' I'd say, 'I'm going to class,' I say whatever the course was. They say, ' you going to be a doctor?' I say, 'yes, that's what I'm trying to be.' Frank Hayward and Kenny Charles, they were both members of the basketball team, and they both gave me that name.

MN: They both took several of my courses.

AC: They recommended that I take one of your courses.

CM: Maybe you could tell us something about the men's basketball program then, and some of the stars of the team I guess.

AC: Actually, it's interesting, back to your earlier questions probably when I first recognized the differences in terms of race because it was while I was here, that we were playing Holy Cross at Rose Hill, where someone yelled, and we weren't playing Holy Cross, 'You going to make this another Marquette?' Because we had all black players.

MN: On the varsity?

AC: The varsity. Because you had Hayward, Lightborn, Earl Lightborn and Kiddy Charles, Wendol Harlond - -

MN: Wendol Harlond was from Brooklyn.

AC: - - who now is a fraternity brother, he's in Washington. And sometimes they played Moriarty, Kevin Moriarty in there.

MN: By the way, in terms of Denzel, the barbeque place we're going to, Mr. Johnson grew up with him.

AC: What's Mr. Johnson's first name?

MN: Duane. Duane Johnson. Is where Johnson's barbeque and he's from Mount Vernon.

AC: Mount Vernon? Mundy Lane area?

MN: Well you'll talk to him when you get there. He'll give extra food.

AC: Okay.

CM: So except for Mr. Moriarty, the men that you mentioned are African-American?

AC: Walter Douglass.

MN: Walter Douglass, right.

AC: Who I'm still in contact with. Well they actually became our big brothers, basically. Particularly because we had an interest in basketball but it was through those guys that I learned to distinguish, or determine, my own principles and my values. I listened to everybody but I didn't necessarily believe a lot of things, because I think our athletes had a different level of exposure that I didn't necessarily have, so they had a different perspective on things. But it was through them that I learned some of the realities. It was when Whistle, the African-American, or black ball players, would help me understand his mentality, which they thought was kind of racist, if you remember. It was after Phelps left, and Whistle came in he started Daryl Brown, one of the athletes, I started kind of to look at the athletes a little differently I didn't have a read on whether he was racist or not, that wasn't my point of view, but I started to listen to a lot more, and became aware of things that I wasn't aware of. Because even my big brothers, I didn't have a lot of interaction with them until I actually came here, so I was building a lot of my perspective based on these experiences.

CM: So when I knew you and worked with you, I'm sure the same is true with Mark Naison, you know, we were here during the day. What was your world like during the evening in terms of the students on campus?

AC: I hung out. I guess we had the Black Room up here, whatever it was called, with Gary Olson –

MN: Who was the West Indian guy?

AC: – west-Indian descent. Yes, I worked with him. And that's where we had poetry.

MN: And that was called?

AC: Unity House. Something House. The Black House was when I was –

CM: So the student organizations were S.A.L. or S.A.F? What was it called?

AC: It was Society for African ---

CM: S.A.L.

AC: Yes, I was part of that. S.A.L. and I also worked for the school newspaper, The Paper.

MN: When did you become involved with WFUV?

AC: One day, he said to me [Laghts] and you probably don't remember this. 'I want to talk to you about leadership.' I go, 'Leadership?' He goes, 'yes. Leadership is when someone hands over something over to you, and you take the reigns.' I go what are you saying Dr. Mangum?' He says, 'I've been doing a radio show and I need a leader to come in and take it over.' I said, 'okay.' So that was my lesson on leadership, and I loved it. [Laughs]

MN: And how often?

AC: Every week.

MN: And what was the hour of the show?

AC: I believe we were 9:00 to 10:00 or 8:00 to 9:00 on Thursdays and then they changed – we were so effective. We started out with a lot of guests, then we did some music stuff, we did some jazz and Thomas Roads joined me as a co-anchor. A lot of things were relevant, it was purely a search for truth and knowledge. And one day, they wanted to change our hours from 3:00 to 3:30 on Monday afternoons, I said Claude, in his spirit, I said what do we do? He said 'you're a leader, what do you think you should do?' He didn't give me the guidance to do this, but what I did was we took our last show, and we

brought in the communicator Ed Michael at the time who is now Suhier Raif – I forget his last name. Brought him to our show, and he was with, I forget the radio station, but he does a jazz show every so often – or he used to do a jazz show on Colombia's station and brought in another guy. And we talked about communications, something I was studying at the time. We stalked about communications, and we talked about what Fordham was doing from our last show 9:00 to 10:00. The next day I was called to the dean's office, it was the guy, the military guy, the guy that looks like a –

MN: Krauly!

AC: Krauly. [Laughter] It was funny because at this point –

MN: The ex-marine.

AC: Ex-marine. I said, you know, I felt good about what I said. You know this college, I should start to understand rebellion, be a little different. So he talked to me [in scratchy old man voice] 'your radio show last night, you're talking to people about the problems at Fordham.' I said, 'no, I didn't talk about the problems at Fordham. I talked about the problems with our radio program, and why you're moving us from prime time a half hour. I think it's because we're effective.' So he says, 'you told.'– And then I said, I had mentioned the subject of racism. 'You told the world that Fordham is a racist institution.' I said, 'no. No Dean Krauly, I told the tri state area.' [Laughter] He liked that. He turned red as a beat. I walked out, I was doing well as a student, what was he going to do, kick me out?

MN: Were there any Jesuits at Fordham who you developed good –

AC: Father McMahon. Father Ed McMahon. After graduating had wanted me to go onto law school, and actually I was able to get into Seaton Hall –

MN: What this George McMahon? Or Ed?

AC: George. I said Ed? That's the guy on TV right? [Laughs] He and I became very close even after graduation.

MN: If you could say a few words about George McMahon, because he's a very important figure in our institution.

AC: I'll start with a very sad thing. Because when I came here to bring my daughter to the school, one of the things I wanted t accomplish was to see Father McMahon and he took me to Mary Wiegel, and my relationship with Father McMahon was built on basketball, you know, he always said, 'you're so nice during that day, but you're so mean on the basketball court. What's that all about? All those elbows pushing around.' [Laughter] South Bronx Ball. So when I came I here I actually saw him, and when I saw him he didn't have a clue who I was. But he said to me, 'are you here to take me to a basketball game?' There's no basketball that day, and I said I think he sees something. I said, 'what do you do now?' He says, 'well I go to work everyday.' At a desk in his room, he says, 'I come to my office.' So I don't think he even, you know, was able to really – And that was sad for me. But I have nothing but fond memories of Father McMahon. I used to have lunch with him fairly regularly when he was down at Lincoln Center. And it was through Father McMahon that I was able to get my niece –remember my niece Jaynah? – through school. Because he said well talk to Father McMahon after you helped me. I said, 'look Father she flunked she flunked out of here, but she needs to be back in this school, she *needs* to be.' And we got her in, and she did real well.

MN: Could you also describe your first meeting wit Dr. Mangum and in 205 Dealy, and that whole scene.

AC: Well I think I was taking some courses at the time but I think our first real meeting was – we probably talked, it may not have had anything to do with school, but I was fascinated with this radio thing. I was just really kind of fascinated by that, and to be very frank with you, there were not a lot of black professors at this [laughs] so here was one. And a lot of the older guys I'd talked to had mentioned that, so I said you know I've got to know who he is. I want to know who he is. And then we got into a lot of different things. And then the radio is really what kind of brought us together. Then I started taking some more courses, and that's when I actually literally fell in love with Mel Dixon. I really respected him a whole lot.

CM: A Wesleyan graduate.

MN: He was a brilliant scholar.

CM: Now were you in the HEOP program?

AC: I was.

CM: So maybe you can tell us what role that played in your Fordham career?

AC: Well it got me in school with some money, to be honest with you. But as you probably remember, you know, I got a little rebellious when I was here at Fordham. I didn't think that the HEOP had a lot of emphasis on black folks and that was the extent of my conversations with Doug. I said you know, 'we need a few more counselors in here who look like me and we need to see from you some more – some kind of attention, paid to blacks folks.' We were passing through, but it seemed to me at the time – and it was so much being rebellious it was a clear observation that the catering, I thought, was going to the Latino students. We addressed that, I don't know how much was really being done, but – and I didn't feel like I was suffering, in any way. But I just felt that it could

be better if we did that, and so that was my motivation. So I didn't really participate in a lot of stuff, I got my tutors, you know, I found actually a black woman who tutored me in English and something else. Mary – she worked for?

CM: Curtis!

MN: Mary Curtis. I remember her.

AC: Associated Press. I followed in her in followed in her footsteps.

MN: She was a very good student. She wore glasses?

AC: Yes.

MN: Yes, I remember her.

AC: It was like my first time seeing a black woman, a student. I'm just like –wow! She's smart, I just fell in love with her. You know it's like, look at this. I got a tutor, and not only is she my tutor but she's smart. I was the man.

CM: Were you here during the time of Father B. Agrum?

AC: Yes, I remember him I'd taken some of his classes in theology.

CM: So here we have Father Agrum, a black Catholic priest. Can you tell us a little bit about –

AC: Yes. He was – I liked his classes because he was very animated and he allowed us to challenge him. I remember Milton Tillman challenging him when Father went on his thing about Reverend Ike. [Laughs]

CM: Was it Louis Tillman?

AC: Louis!

MN: I used to play with Louis – basketball with Louis all the time.

AC: Yes he used to get up there. Yes Louis. But Milton Tillman was my classmate. But I remember Father B. Agrum, I didn't have much of a relationship with him. He was strictly faculty, he was strictly a professor, I do remember some fond conversations, and it was necessarily around theology, but I didn't build a relationship with him. I don't know why.

MN: Tell us a little bit about Jack Jackson. Did you have much contact with –

AC: [Laughs] No we didn't, because Jack was so aloof. I don't know if you remember Jack was pretty aloof. And then all of a sudden I said wow. Two guys were very very aloof, and Jack was one, and so was John Jamble. These guys were like untouchable. [Crosstalk] But no, Jack, it was all perception, Jack was a real down to earth, but people took him the wrong way because he dressed according to the times. So here's this guy nobody knew, who we found out was doing academically extremely well. Right? Wore the gold glasses, the hat –

MN: I'll never forget the first time in my classes he was wearing a red had, red jacket, red pants and sunglasses and I said, what the hell is this? And then he got the only A on my midterm and I realized this guy is *brilliant*!

AC: But we kind of made him aloof. We felt you know – we shouldn't associate therefore he didn't associate with us. John Jamble was like noticeable aloof because he felt he was better. I mean you could tell him, we had this conversation not to long ago. When we met at Darryl's house, Denzel was in town, and John was there. But, Jack was –

CM: So this is Darryl Gade?

AC: Darryl Gade. Yes.

MN: Is he still in Brooklyn?

AC: Darryl's in Harlem now in a brownstone.

OL: What was Denzel Washington like?

AC: A lot of people didn't know him as well as I did because we took classes together, we played basketball together and we just kind of hit it off and it was really pure because we were in pre-med together, we both got hit hard together when the professor thought – We had this conversation – that we couldn't do well because we were black.

MN: And you were told that?

AC: Yes. [Crosstalk]

MN: Can you give us some names? Who told you this?

AC: Dr. Freud told me that in communications.

MN: Can you spell that F-R. Can you spell the name?

AC: Freud? What was his name? No, not Freud [Laughs] I'll give you the name in a second. I'll tell you what he said and then it'll come back, because I never forgot. He said to me, 'HEOP students don't do well in this class.' I remember saying, 'well we'll definitely have to have an exception.' [Laughs] Have to make an exception.

MN: Now there were a lot of people who said that toward HEOP students.

AC: Well because his class was based on short story writing, and the assessment of the short story was by the class. And the class liked every short-story because I brought in a black perspective right? A little bit of my growing up. And I got a B both times, that's okay, you know, writing is subjective, but I was happy with that, you know, a B is good. At the time. A B now is like [Laughs] – I teach at NYU they yell at me when I give them a B. But, I got that B but he made it clear to me that you're not going to do well in this

class *because* you're a HEOP student, and took that to mean something else. Because HEOP has helped me get through school. And then it was professor Wakin.

MN: *Ed Wakin*? Communications?

AC: Was he the chair of the department?

MN: He's the chair of communications.

CM: Not Wakin. Fairlin?

MN: Not Jack Fairlin? No, it wouldn't have been Fairlin.

AC: This was – I thought – I want to say it sounded like it was Froind? Or –

MN: It could be. We didn't have that much contact. Jack Fairlin was one of the few people that was friendly with us.

AC: Wakin was not. No he was not. I didn't have a lot of interaction with him because he was a chair. So that was the other time, that was in communications. And then in science it was – because that's what caused me to want to drop out of pre-med and then go into communications. It was – he taught, I think he taught biology because I remember in his class we had the lab where you had to prick your finger and you had to do the blood test, and then it was we did the Drosophila fruit fly thing and like I remember all that stuff, because have that in high school. It's probably appropriate that I forget who he is.

CM: With all of these challenges that you were going through, where did this sense of confidence and determination come from, can you sort of trace –

AC: Oh, Dr. Mangum – Mangum was fooled as well. Confidence is something that's evolving as we speak. I had lunch I believe, or dinner, in Paris a couple weeks ago with one of my mentees, I was there for a conference, and she said to me, 'you exude so much

confidence,' and I laughed and I said, 'Thank you. I have no confidence here.' I was trying to find who I was, I was struggling with what I wanted to become. Because I didn't know where communications was going to lead me, and it was only after –I would say not too long ago — that I realized that the sum total of all my experiences, and I had to realize that that sum total is like still evolving, but maybe in the past, don't blow you away, maybe the past 10 years I realized, you know, I'm contributing something I'm not recognizing that value that people say I'm giving, maybe I got some skeletons, maybe I got some things over my shoulder, but I realized how good I really am at what I do. And the main thing that brought that to reality was I started teaching at NYU last year, in my field, at the graduate level –

MN: At the graduate school of communications?

AC: So it wasn't a lack of confidence. Because I don't have any fear that I can't accomplish something, but I positioned my life in such a way that what I do is behind the scenes, and so you will never know who I am. Because if I write a speech for you, if I do a communications – I'm not out front. So my feedback had to come from some tough people, you know, the chairman of the board, and this and that. So if they do recognize me, you'll never know that. So what does it take? And what it took for me was more of this. Than this outward showing of like there's a confident young man. So I'll be honest with you in the last 10 years I started to realize that you know what? I got what it takes. I can do this. But, you know, in college here –

CM: You know I was just thinking here you have three faculty members, and what advice would you give faculty in your having experienced Fordham at this earlier time.

What advice would you give faculty in terms of working with students? Perhaps what advice would you give students who are going through institutions such as this?

AC: Sure. Very good question and the advice is not unlike the advice I give to some of our senior leaders, and it's not unlike the advice that I follow. Be very very receptive to the new generation. The new generation I believe, more so now than ever at any point in time, will be responsible for how we shape our future. I really believe that. And this new demographic these young folks, this multicultural, or what Mayor Dinkins, who I used to work for, called the gorgeous mosaic, is more receptive to the things that we tried hard to accomplish. The coming together of cultures, right? The coming together of different mindsets, they really epitomize what the definition of diversity is all about. Because it's not just about, you know, representation, or you know, sexual orientation – it's some of that as well. But it's diversity of *thought*, *perspective*, *ideas* only have a culture around them that is, in my field, what's really causing our communications field to explode. The way they handle and look at social media, the way their perspectives around multitasking. right? I think, what I would say to faculty today is to be patient with that. Because when I was disciplined, I was disciplined to look at things this way. It was a channel because you can only be good when you get that down, then you get this down. It's not that your teaching of me was bad, it's just that that's how I was focused. I always tell when I speak to students, I want your learning to be like this, I want you to see the world this way. Actually when I write speeches for people in hindsight and when executive as me how did they do in their presentations, the only way I'm only able to give them good feedback is because I'm *way* in the back of the room. Because I can see this, right? If I'm up in the front, where they want me to sit, I can't see the response. So I would say,

be very receptive to that because now, and particularly for what you do in this sense and what you guys have taught me when I was one of those student; the opportunity to expand the interests in this field, in what we're trying to accomplish in a world. I'm being really really big on this one, it's going to sound really like you know I'm out there but what's going to make this place, the place that we all can be proud of the efforts we put in, it's going to be this new demographic. So when I look at my children I'm *encouraged*. My son just participated in a protest at school to bring down the prices in the cafeteria, I said, 'why you not taking money to school anymore?' He says, 'because I'm protesting dad. The prices are too high.' In two days the prices came down. That's high school, *Catholic high school*. Students still will be receptive to what we have to offer, because you may never get this perspective again, we are older than your parents. Okay? In some cases we are. So this perspective that we have is part of your education, it's part of your learning. Right? And if you don't understand the trials and tribulations that we've gone through in *all* kinds of phases. You know, our personal missions with trying to solve these issues relating to race relations, teaching, you know, working, the things we had to go through, the civil rights. You need to understand that because that's your foundation because that will never go away, don't hang onto that as a crutch because that should not be what leverages you today, if there's anything we can give you it is your ability to think independently but at the same time don't discount that road your on, was paved by some people who with blood sweat and tears made it possible for you to walk on that. I think that message still has to come. And you know what, that bottom line is like I tell my students, be smart. Whatever it is you choose to do, I don't care what it is, just be smart about it, so no one can ever knock you off your pedestal and I'm not talking

about knocking you off your pedestal by challenging your intellectual capacity, challenging who you are, because being smart is not about your intellectual capacity, it's about your ability to stand on your principals. And if someone knocks you off that pedestal, right? Because you don't have a foundation, then you won't be successful. I experience that everyday at work. People are basically not asking you your capabilities, or can you write that? I can write a speech blindfolded, this is more than that they're asking you basically, why you are here? Why do you belong here? So I tell them a lot, don't be ashamed or afraid to reveal your authentic self. If that – you know when I grew up it was like, they can't challenge what's up here, you know keep that strong. They can't challenge what's in here, and that's got to be authentic, that's got be real, and that's what I would say to the students today. And that's what I do say to students, I say that to my children, where is your passion, and marry that passion with reality. I'm very passionate about playing in the pros, but is that my skills? Marry that passion with reality, and I think you'd be successful.

MN: I want to switch to something, but it's kind of connected, in terms of what people can see that may be in front of them, but not recognize. You were at Fordham from 1972 to 1976 and, you know, Dr. Mangum and I were there. In 1973 Cool DJ Herc held his first party in 1520 Sedgwick and were you aware of what was going on musically with these DJ jams in the Bronx? Or were you more of a jazz oriented person?

AC: Yes, I grew up on whatever WRBR was before it was WRBR –

MN: Yes we remember that.

AC: -- and I brought a lot of vinyl to this school and my records were some of the music used to motivate the basketball team because remember at one point I lived in a suite with

all those guys. And so I grew up on a lot of that, and I did grow up on a lot of James Brown to be honest with you but my music tastes were a little eclectic at the time in relationship to my peers. Alright, because I was not into rock, I wasn't really into hip-hop well hip-hop wasn't really a big thing then, although rap music became, you know Kool Mo Dee and those folks, kind of became important in the genre, but I really grew up on sort of like avant-garde, you know I was listening to – and Ted Shorts got me involved. Charlie Parker, things like this, Theolonious Monk, and folks like that.

MN: I mean I still remember going with – do you remember Bob Bennett, was he here when you were or here, or he had left?

CM: I think Bob was gone.

MN: To the only McDonalds in the Bronx which was on Gunn Hill Road, listening to Pharaoh Sonders.

AC: Pharaoh Sonders, wow.

MN: You know we'd drive up to McDonalds, which I thought was gourmet at the time. And you know Roshawn Rosenkur?

AC: Went to his funeral.

MN: Really?

AC: Yes, which was on – I wasn't invited, I went as a – That was the guy with the two flutes right?

MN: Right. Now in looking back on your Bronx experience, do you feel that was one of the foundations that made you the person that you are today, was it because of that, in spite of it?

AC: Truthfully no. What made me the person that I am today, had nothing to do with my geography. Because remember the times that I was actually there we didn't have the kind of situations that we had later on. So I wasn't trying to escape, as I said before. My neighborhood was my fortress. To be very frank with you, I did see gangs, I did get mugged, and all that stuff. I never really had fights, you know, arguments with your friends, I never really – I didn't learn like street you know. So no, what did it for me was marrying into relationships, like with Father Mien, that made me understand the purpose, you know, the purpose for my existence and that's really what did it for me. So when I talk about the South Bronx to people, like where were you born? I say the South Bronx with pride, but they all have a context, they have a context based upon what they read. 'You went to Harlem?' Well, I grew up in the South Bronx. 'The South Bronx? *My God* it must have been rough.' No, it was actually wonderful.

CM: I was curious, you know the ongoing research that is the goal of the project, are there other Fordham contemporaries of yours who grew up in the Bronx that you might identify, that we could pursue?

AC: I'm not sure. I need to think that through. And I've been thinking about that since you invited me because I know Jack invited me here, I don't know of too many, that's weird, at least I didn't have too many interactions.

CM: Certainly, I guess living in the dorms that made that?

AC: Certainly that changed some things. But I was close to the community population as well.

CM: Were you involved – you know we talked about the radio show, were there any student organizations that you were involved in that did community service or outreach?

AC: No, not that I know of. Any community service I did Father Mien got me involved, I didn't do much that I remember. I do remember having some tutoring stuff I used to do with an elementary school. Came back to my block fairly often, I wasn't really at the time, embarrassingly so, I wasn't really motivated by a lot of community service. Because of my upbringing, it's not an excuse, my community was where I happened to land, because I didn't have a lot of sense of that. Because you know you look at your parents, you're family's separated, like where's your home? So Fordham, I wasn't kidding, I was like whoa! It's like I died and went to heaven. And we had gates around here, like I was safe too, we had security, it was good. And I knew the Bronx, which was my motivation, I leave this campus any time I can go anywhere.

MN: Okay well this was an amazing experience, thank you so much for sharing. And now we'll hit the streets and get you to Johnson's barbeque.

AC: Sounds good. Thank you, I appreciate it really.

Interviewee: Anthony "Doc" Carter
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