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Bronx African American History Project

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Jackson, Sheila and Ann Myers

Mark Naison

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Transcriber: Christian Contreras

Mark Naison: Wow Okay, so just, uh, you know

Sheila Jackson: And you're going to ask all the questions. So, it...you can make it as short or as long as you'd like,

Mark Naison: What I, oh, let me just sort of say how we've been doing this because this I think will be like our sixth interview? Uh, I, what I do is ask each of you kind of to sum up your lives before you joined. You know, tell us a little bit about your family, where you grew up, you know, how you became ex... first exposed to the sorority? Uh, you know, civil rights and activist experiences. And, we take it from there. And then, you know, how, uh, work with the chapter has, you know, enriched your life, and then we leave it up to Saudah to, uh, follow up.

Saudah Muhammad: Well, no, I, we don't have to ask any questions this time, because we kind of got like a mini interview of them already, so, we... we won't have any on our end.

Mark Naison: Okay,

Saudah Muhammad: So [inaudible]

Mark Naison: So let me know when you're ready to start. I'll start with Sheila, then move to Ann, and then, uh, we'll take it from there.

Saudah Muhammad: Okay.

Sheila Jackson: And [Saudah speaking inaudibly] we are ready when you are.

Mark Naison: I'm ready. So remember, you have some sort of signal when was your start?

Sheila Jackson: Oh, Professor Naison, I'm a pro now, so we'll just edit out this part, and I clicked record just now.

Mark Naison: Okay, so Okay. Hi, Sheila Jackson, welcome

Sheila Jackson: Good mor-

Mark Naison: to, uh, the Bronx African American History Project, Eta Omega Omega collaboration. So, uh, Sheila, if you could start by telling us a little about your family, where you grew up, um....and where you went to school?

Sheila Jackson: Well, I'm, it's good to see you again. Um, I am born and raised in New in Harlem, New York.

Mark Naison: Ok

Sheila Jackson: I was born in Harlem Hospital. Um, I'm the youngest of two, two children. My s...my o...my sister is older. And, um, and I am a legacy because she is a member of the sorority as well.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: I am a Catholic school kid. I went 12 years to Catholic school. All Saints Elementary and Cathedral High School for Girls in New

Mark Naison: Right

Sheila Jackson: York.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: I then went on to Morgan State College in Baltimore, m... Morgan State University

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: in Baltimore, Maryland. Um, I then, I've done my postgraduate work at the City College of New York and at Fordham University.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: Lincoln Center.

Mark Naison: Right, and [coughing] uh your and, and, uh your profession is um...

Sheila Jackson: Educator, I retir-

Mark Naison: Educator

Sheila Jackson: I retired, I retired as deputy superintendent of schools in New York.

Mark Naison: Wow!

Sheila Jackson: I presently reside in Chesapeake, Virginia.

Mark Naison: Okay, um, so uh... when you were going to Morgan State did you know you wanted to be a teacher or wanted to be an educator?

Sheila Jackson: I knew I wanted to be an educator and I knew I wanted to be an AKA, yes.

Mark Naison: So both of those things. Okay.

Sheila Jackson: Yes,

Mark Naison: So,

Sheila Jackson: Yes

Mark Naison: Uh Ann, tell us a little bit about your uh family background and upbringing.

Ann Myers: Well, I grew up in Virginia,

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: and AKA was all around me. I grew up in a AKA environment. So, um... it has always been there. And I went to uh public schools in Virginia Mecklenburg County.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: After that, I attended uh Virginia State uh University now. And, I took classes at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry. I finished a Master's at College of [nourish shell?] and learning disabilities.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: And my, I was certified in regular ed as well as special ed.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: Most of my years were in uh special ed. I worked in uh private schools, private Lutheran School uh for a few years. I worked in private special schools. Most of my time was in uh New York and Mount Vernon. I taught in the Bronx in New York City s- ... uh system for three years. I was in Richmond, Virginia for one year and liberty County, Georgia for three years. And then I came back to Mount Vernon and I retired um i- ... from the Mount Vernon city school.

Mark Naison: Mhm. Now, did you also know from an early age you wanted to be an educator?

Ann Myers: I never I wanted to be an educator [Sheila chuckling]. It just happened.

Mark Naison: Uh huh

Ann Myers: I grew up in an environment, my grandparents were educators, all my aunts, uncles, it was just around me. And as a child, it was difficult. Because you were put in a certain category, oh, your mother's a teacher or your everybody's a teacher. And I felt that, as I grew up, and if I had children, I did not want them to have that experience of being put in a category that you are different because your parents are educators.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: So, when I came to New York, I was really looking for a summer job. This was after I left uh Virginia State, and by that time, I had gotten married. And uh with the, well I wanted...I was a psychology major. My desire was to be a psychiatrist [Ann chuckling]. And then I found that I needed to go to medical school for that. And I said, I don't think I'm going to be able to manage that. So back when I got to New York, I was looking for summer job.

Mark Naison: Now what year was that when you came to New York?

Ann Myers: 68.

Mark Naison: 68

Ann Myers: 1968. So I was looking for summer job, and everything directed me to education, because that was basically my educational background. And I, special education was new and upcoming then because the years before, children with special needs were just called slow.

Mark Naison: Right, yeah

Ann Myers: So they had actually, uh while I was at Virginia State, they had actually uh created a program called Special Education. And that was new. It never heard of it. So I started taking classes in that area, which uh put me in the category of education. And the first place I work was Westchester ARSC, which, which was a school for severely handicapped.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: Children. I worked there for a few years. And then I went into the public...well, no, the private school, a Lutheran School in uh Mount Vernon, and from there to the public school.

Mark Naison: Right, now, uh both of you, you know, are uh coming of age in the 60s. Uh, were you involved in activism in that time um at all? Uh, in school or in the community?

Ann Myers: Mm-mm

Sheila Jackson: I wouldn't say ac- ... I wouldn't say activism, but I but I was part of the youth group of the Harlem [cough]...of the Harlem NAACP

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: and I was um, and I was hired in one of the first summer programs for [hare you act?].

Mark Naison: Right, mhm

Sheila Jackson: And so, that that was, that was kind of my limit. Yeah.

Mark Naison: Uh huh, but you weren't involved in uh any of the uh the the student protests in the 60s? Uh...

Sheila Jackson: No, I was not.

Mark Naison: Okay, what about you, Ann? Uh...

Ann Myers: I really was not. But at Virginia State, there were a lot of restrictions we all had to be well, the girls had to be locked in by nine o'clock at night and stuff like that. And around, what was it uh 66 or 67, the students decided that they weren't having that. So many of the students just refused to go to class. And I was in the midst of that, but I went to class [Mark and Sheila chuckling]. And so I was maybe one of the two or three in class. And um, being uh...

many of the professors at Virginia State were family friends. So I could not get away with anything. Everybody was watching me at all the times

Sheila Jackson: Mmm

Ann Myers: that my mother would show up on campus any old time [laughing] so I had to keep myself uh... so called in check.

Mark Naison: Ok uh, now uh, when you tr- ... uh joined uh the e- ...uh the Eta Omega Omega chapter uh, what made you choose that chapter as opposed to some of the other chapters in New York City? I, I know there was [phone notification] one other one. I'm not sure if there were more.

Ann Myers: Well, for me, I joined that because there were members in the chapter that knew my mother. And they invited me into that chapter.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: And my mother was a, you know, sorrow from the 50s, early 50s.

Mark Naison: Now, was your mother and living in Virginia, or was she, did she also come up to New York?

Ann Myers: No, she was well, really at that time she had moved to Kentucky.

Mark Naison: Uh huh

Ann Myers: While my father had died when I was an infant, and this was like 20 some years later when she remarried

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: and my stepfather was a professor at uh Kentucky State University.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: So she moved to Kentucky with him.

Mark Naison: Mhm, so, but she, even though she was primarily Southern, she knew people in the chapter that was in the Bronx?

Ann Myers: Yes, she uh, well her, my stepfather's uh brother, and, and wife were uh in the Bronx. And in fact uh, across the street from a sorror, who actually sponsored me,

Mark Naison: Uh huh

Ann Myers: and there were relatives connected with my stepfather that knew my mother.

Mark Naison: Mhm... Now, what about you, Sheila? Uh...how did you end up in this particular chapter?

Sheila Jackson: Well, my, my god sister, is in the chapter. Sorror Carolyn Bowman.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: And she knew that I had pledged while I was on campus at Morgan. And for a lot of different reasons, I had not completed the pledge period

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: at that time. So when I'm, when Eta Omega Omega was taking on a graduate line, she contacted me and asked me if I would like to go, would like to finish or pledge in graduate chapter [phone notification]. And that was how I ended up in Eta Omega Omega. My sister had pledged, and um, and was a Tau Omega sorror, but at the time, Libby was not active. So I, I accepted the sponsorship from the Bronx chapter.

Mark Naison: Right, now, when you joined, were, was a large percentage of the chapter composed of educators, or were you the exceptions?

Sheila Jackson: I want to say they weren't they were primarily educators. Right, right, uh Ann?

Ann Myers: I think so, yes.

Sheila Jackson: Or retired educators. Yeah.

Mark Naison: So that's very [inaudible]

Sheila Jackson: I mean, and when you say educator?

Mark Naison: I mean teachers, in, in, in

Sheila Jackson: Social workers?

Mark Naison: Yeah.

Sheila Jackson: Yeah. I mean, yes

Mark Naison: Human

Sheila Jackson: I mean yeah because

Mark Naison: service occupations.

Sheila Jackson: Yes. Because certain, because my god sister is a, is a, was the social worker.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: And so I have to, I have to say, in some form or fashion, they will all affiliated with the education system, primarily. Yes.

Mark Naison: Right, so that's that's very... Is that, is that typical of uh Alpha Kappa Alpha chapters around the country? That a sizable portion, or this is a more unique to this chapter in New York City?

Sheila Jackson: Um I, I don't think so. I mean, that the chapter now has physicians in it. We have sorrorers in the chapter that are that are doctors

Ann Myers: Attorneys

Sheila Jackson: Say again, Ann

Ann Myers: Attorneys

Sheila Jackson: Attorneys

Ann Myers: Lawyers

Sheila Jackson: Sure.

Ann Myers: Police officers.

Sheila Jackson: Mmhm

Mark Naison: So, uh how many members did it have when you pledged? When you joined in 1978?

Ann Myers: When we came in, we made a big number of 30 for the chapter.

Sheila Jackson: That's right, that's right.

Ann Myers: And there were eight of us

Sheila Jackson: And there were what, eight of us, nine of us on line?

Ann Myers: There were eight of us.

Sheila Jackson: Eight of us.

Mark Naison: So, this was a big group that came in to uh something that may had only a little more than 20 people.

Sheila Jackson: Right.

Ann Myers: Correct.

Mark Naison: Uh huh...And now, and n- ...what is the membership now?

Ann Myers: One hundred and, how much more? Forty?

Sheila Jackson: One hundred and forty.

Mark Naison: Wow! So you basically single handedly built this [Mark, Sheila, and Ann laughing]?

Sheila Jackson: I would not say single... I would not say that [laughing].

Ann Myers: There were many additions after we came in [laughing].

Sheila Jackson: Yes

Mark Naison: That's a great story. I mean, um what, wh-... why, why do you think that the , the chapter has grown so much uh since you uh first became associated with it? What's the uh the draw?

Sheila Jackson: I think... I think it's I think it's the work of the sorrows. I think it's the work they do in the community. Um, I think that um once the once our undergraduate chapter was established, you know, I, I would I would have to say, the sorrows and the work that they have put in, in the community.

Mark Naison: Mhm. Now when did you foun... uh uh start an undergraduate chapter, can, affiliated with this, with uh this chapter? Is this uh fairly recently or uh shortly after you entered?

Sheila Jackson: No, it was, it was, it was around the time I became Basileus, but I don't think they would...I know they were not charted while I was Baselius

Mark Naison: What is uh...tell me what a Baselius is

Sheila Jackson: The president of the chapter.

Mark Naison: Oh, wow, okay so uh President Jackson.

Sheila Jackson: No, just sorrow works [laughing]

Mark Naison: So of community initiatives, which ones do you feel proudest of? Of uh, you know, wher-... because uh clearly something is happening here that brings people in. What, which are the community initiatives, do you think, most attracted people, or most kept people en- enthusiastic?

Ann Myers: One area that I saw was one of our uh programs, the rites of passage

Sheila Jackson: Mhm

Ann Myers: And that has involved High School young ladies. And some of them, at least two, maybe three, who went through that po-, program and went to college, and their desire was to join our membership

Mark Naison: Uh huh

Ann Myers: And they have come into our organization.

Mark Naison: Mhm...Now, when you do the high school work, i- does this go through a teacher at a particular school who uh uh recruits people? Or uh did the, was the recruiting entirely done by people in the chapter?

Ann Myers: I think is basically the chapter because uh flyers was sent out, uh I guess flyers and word of mouth contact, and have an open house to explain the information, the situation, the program to the young ladies. And after some young ladies have gone through the program, they were so excited with, with the outcome that they share the information and some of their friends came in the next year.

Mark Naison: Are there particular high schools which contribute uh a larger portion of the young women in this program?

Ann Myers: I don't know.

Sheila Jackson: I don't

Ann Myers: So Sorrow

Sheila Jackson: I don't know either. And, and I've not been active in the chapter for quite a while but but when I was in the chapter, we kind of had a cross section of of the schools. I'm not, I don't recall where they met.

Mark Naison: Uh huh

Sheila Jackson: But I know that there was a real effort to reach out to, to young women in the Bronx.

Ann Myers: And I think they sent the flyers to all of the schools

Sheila Jackson: To all the schools [inaudible]

Mark Naison: Or, just high schools, or middle schools as well? Did you

Sheila Jackson: High school.

Mark Naison: In high school,

Sheila Jackson: High school, right Ann?

Mark Naison: So, you know.

Ann Myers: Mhm

Mark Naison: Right. So...

Sheila Jackson: High school because, because the the because the the scholarship is also focused on helping young women that are ready to go to college.

Mark Naison: Okay. So what are some of the components of the rites of passage program? What, you know, what are some of the activities uh for those people who are not familiar with it?

Ann Myers: Well, they, one thing they have I guess, resume writing. They have uh assistance in applying to colleges.

Mark Naison: Oh, wow.

Ann Myers: Um, financial management

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: They do a, they do a big piece on on uh, on on on um on racial justice and racial issues. There's a center right now that Laverne always takes them to down it's on the, it's on the east side. I can't I don't like I said I've been away and out of New York. Thank you so [Sorrow Donna?] [the *** center?] is what I'm trying to remember as well as etiquette.

Mark Naison: Uh huh, so uh it does sound like a lot of important skills to prepare you, you know, for college and professional life.

Ann Myers: And also they have uh for um celebration, Martin Luther King Day, we always have um... give to the community uh donations and it's they have usually select a center in the South Bronx, where items will be taken and the people in the community [phone notification] can come and take whatever they want and need.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: Each year, the young ladies have volunteered that time with that.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: So they are encouraged to volunteer and give back to the community as well.

Mark Naison: Wow. Um, okay, the weekend retreat, the arts, uh going to

Ann Myers: Mhm

Mark Naison: Broadway shows. Um, so, uh and this program is still active?

Ann Myers: Yes.

Sheila Jackson: Far as I know it is, yes.

Mark Naison: Great. Um, so do you remember the names of any of the community gr- centers in the in the South Bronx where uh the young women went and where, uh you know uh there were donations of uh of gifts?

Ann Myers: Uh What is the I don't remember the center in the South Bronx.

Mark Naison: Gwen Bl-

Ann Myers: Gwen, Gwen Bland

Sheila Jackson: Gwen Bland

Ann Myers: Gwen Bland is one

Sheila Jackson: And Forest House.

Ann Myers: And there's another one too [inaudible] Forest House

Mark Naison: And Forest House that I know has a long history in that community

Ann Myers: Mhm

Mark Naison: Our senior community.

Ann Myers: Mhm

Mark Naison: I was thinking forest house would probably be a fairly likely, you know uh uh uh, subject for this.

Sheila Jackson: Mhm

Ann Myers: I think we started at Gwen Bland because we have... had a sorrow that was the director there.

Sheila Jackson: Mhm

Ann Myers: That was uh inside project there where we could started um right where we had someone to make the connection.

Mark Naison: McKinley Community

Ann Myers: Mhm

Mark Naison: Center, I know that uh

Ann Myers: Mhm

Mark Naison: Yeah. Well this is uh it's a it's, it's a great, great story of building something. Uh, so, um in terms of c- current activity, uh is there anything new that has developed in like the last 10 years with a chapter? Um, or uh it's more a continuation of, of of current pro- of you know, past programs?

Sheila Jackson: Well, I think here again, I think Ann might be able to answer that better than I because I've been gone from the chapter

Mark Naison: Uh huh

Sheila Jackson: Down here in Virginia for almost that long at this point.

Mark Naison: Right, oh so Ann, you're still living in the New York uh metropolitan area?

Ann Myers: Yes. In the Mount Vernon.

Mark Naison: In the mount, Mount Vernon, and uh does the rites of passage extend to the Mount Vernon public schools as well as the Bronx schools?

Ann Myers: Uh, there have been young ladies from from uh Mount Vernon, yes. In the beginning, it was centered with the Bronx. But now we have extended it um

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: Beyond.

Mark Naison: Mhm...Okay, um, well, is there anything that I've left out that you would like to say about your experience with this amazing organization? And uh, if um, you know, assume that this is, [inaudible] this goes into the public domain with the other Bronx African American History Project interviews. Uh, anything you'd like to leave people with about the importance of organizations like this, especially in the this country, as it is now? Uh...

Ann Myers: I think the important thing is for people to understand that we are a giving organization.

Sheila Jackson: Mhm

Ann Myers: We look out for the community where we see this as a need

Sheila Jackson: Mhm

Ann Myers: We try to help there.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: Unfortunately, the highlight is usually on the negative aspects that may happen with some of I'll say, the undergrads, the younger people

Sheila Jackson: Mhm

Ann Myers: But that's just a small cloud.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: But the big thing is, what we give, what we do, how we share.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: And, and I'm sorry, Ann,

Ann Myers: It's okay

Sheila Jackson: And, and I would say, I would say that most, I would say that all of the Divine nine, which are the Greek letter organizations, but in particular Alpha Kappa Alpha, we really get skipped. We really learn skills that take us through life.

Ann Myers: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: I mean, a lot of the skills that I learned or that I acquired while I was in active soror. However, they however, the experience worked out, if it helped me in my career, because I was able to handle a lot of the stresses that I encountered as I went up through the ranks in education.

Mark Naison: Yeah

Sheila Jackson: I was able to really handle those situations because of the situations and experiences, and, and workshops, and conferences that I had gone to as an Alpha Kappa Alpha woman.

Mark Naison: Fascinating. Well, since my wife is uh, is a principal in the New York City public school system

Mark Naison and Sheila Jackson: [Both talking, but unclearly] [Mark Naison laughing]

Mark Naison: And then COVID, it's a total

Sheila Jackson: I would

Mark Naison: nightmare.

Sheila Jackson: I have, I have to tell you, when I moved to Virginia, I did some work for a while with the State Ed Department of Virginia

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: up in Richmond. And I must tell you, I am very happy to be retired [Ann Myers laughing] in COVID.

Mark Naison: Yeah, oh, my God. I it's uh, she's working 12 to 14 hour day.

Sheila Jackson: I know she is. Bless her heart. So tell her she has, tell us she has my deepest sympathy. I was [laughing], I was a principal for seven years.

Mark Naison: Yes

Sheila Jackson: That's one of the hardest jobs in the system.

Mark Naison: Absolutely. Um, no, but it's, it's, you know, look, I mean, these interviews, uh the people I have met have been truly extraordinary individuals. And if thi-, you know, if you bring extraordinary individuals together, I mean, uh uh sparks will sometimes fly. But, you know, uh at the same time, there's the the chemistry can be incredibly positive.

Sheila Jackson: Absolutely.

Mark Naison: Um, so, uh yeah, I mean uh, this is uh, it's a real privilege to uh, to get to know all of you and talk to you. Uh Saudah, do you have any questions that you'd like to pose to uh Sheila and Ann?

Saudah Muhammad: Uh, my only question is, how does it feel to be healthy line sisters, after all these years?

Sheila Jackson: [laughing] I think it's, I think it speaks to, I think it speaks to our pledge process.

Ann Myers: Yes.

Sheila Jackson: You know, I mean the, I mean, for for me, the answer is simple. It speaks to our it it speaks to our pre-, to our pledge process. And um, and even, even now, I live in Virginia, and I still miss my Eta Omega Omega sorrows. You know, not, not that we always agree. But we knew...

Ann Myers: But that's okay.

Sheila Jackson: Huh?

Ann Myers: But that's okay.

Sheila Jackson: But that's okay. That's okay. We knew how to disagree without being disagreeable.

Ann Myers: I like that phrase. Uh... And the thing when we came in, it was a lot different, because there was a much smaller group than we have now.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: And uh we actually knew everybody, we had some type of relationship with everybody. Uh now, you know, they uh, the new ladies are members of the chapter. And some unfortunately, we don't even know their names and maybe their faces. So that's uh one slight disadvantage of having a larger group, because when you're smaller, you know, everybody, you know everybody's mood. And you can tell when somebody's really not having a good day, and you know, how to deal with it, you know, you give them a little, you know, little pat on the back, you know, it's okay. Or maybe after the meeting, you call and say, Hey, how you doing? I hope you're well. And um, so that's uh a great advantage we had with the smaller group.

Mark Naison: Well, there's also something that I noticed that, a lot, the people I've interviewed, for the most part had southern backgrounds, uh uh a experience growing up African American in the south, uh you know, often going to HBCUs

Ann Myers: Mhm

Mark Naison: And as you're saying and have these family connections. Now knowing the demographics of the Bronx, the the recent people of African descent are mostly coming from uh the Caribbean or West Africa

Ann Myers: Mhm

Mark Naison: And don't have that his, you know, that history of connections to HBCUs and Southern African American life. Uh, so I wonder, does that operate in the chapter uh, or are you still getting people who are from predo-, whose background is predominantly African American rather than Afro Caribbean or African?

Sheila Jackson: Hmm.

Ann Myers: I think we have a mixture now.

Sheila Jackson: Mhm

Ann Myers: Now in the early, early times, um it was basically American.

Sheila Jackson: Mhm

Ann Myers: And then as the years went to get more from the Caribbean, and then as you know, now you know, we have chapters all over the world.

Mark Naison: Oh, wow.

Ann Myers: So that involves um in the Bahamas, uh in Germany

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: And uh Africa. Um, a few countries in Africa. I don't remember exactly how many but two, three countries in Africa that have chapters. And I had the pleasure of going to visit the chapter in Germany last year.

Mark Naison: And what, and what city was that?

Ann Myers: Um, where did...Um, we stayed in Hamburg

Mark Naison: In Hamburg, okay.

Ann Myers: Mhm

Mark Naison: Because I know Berlin pretty well, but I haven't been in Hamburg.

Ann Myers: Yeah, that's where we stayed.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: And the chapter there uh has sorrorr from variety of places. In fact, uh there was one sorrorr that lives in Italy. But she will meet them once a month for

Mark Naison: Right

Ann Myers: For chapter meeting.

Mark Naison: Oh, that's wonderful that the organization has gone international.

Ann Myers: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: But to go back, to go back to your question um, Sorrow, you also have to understand that when Ann and I came into the chapter, we were the baby sorrows. So even though I was

Ann Myers: It was getting to 30

Sheila Jackson: Right, even though I was single, and she was newly married, we were the youngest folks in the chapter.

Mark Naison: Right, mhm

Sheila Jackson: And that, and on occasion that can tend to bind you together.

Mark Naison: Uh huh

Ann Myers: Yes

Mark Naison: Yeah, uh no, but it, it sounds like, you know, it's it's it's a big difference between having 30 members and 140 members.

Ann Myers: It is

Sheila Jackson: Without a doubt

Ann Myers: It is

Sheila Jackson: Without a doubt

Mark Naison: Has the pledge process changed since you uh joined? Or is it pretty much the same?

Ann Myers: [Chuckling] uh...

Sheila Jackson: I went, I went to an HBCU, so I can tell you it has changed [Mark Naison chuckling]. I'm not I'm not really at liberty to discuss how it has changed

Mark Naison: Uh huh

Sheila Jackson: But take my word for it. The Pledge period is very different from when I was pledged in 68.

Mark Naison: Yeah, I, I could imagine I had friends in college who found the, uh, the Omega Psi Phi chapter at Columbia.

Sheila Jackson: Okay.

Mark Naison: And uh, I had some, so I have some inkling of what you're talking about.

Sheila Jackson: Yes

Ann Myers: Mmhm

Mark Naison: Um, so, um but today, uh, it's up here, it's not uh a tremendously burdensome experience, but still memorable? Is that a fair assumption?

Sheila Jackson: My understanding is that it is now I've got, I've got a great niece getting ready to go off to college next year. Should she... should she decide to pledge and go AKA, I'll know, you know, if, how different it is. But my understanding is that things are very, very different now.

Mark Naison: Right.

Ann Myers: Mhm

Mark Naison: Well, um, A- uh...April do you have any questions?

April Fowler: Um, no, I don't have any just really enjoying, um, the interview.

Mark Naison: Uh

April Fowler: And I, you know, I get I can understand what both um sorrow Sheila sorrow Ann are saying in terms of their, the connection because Salah and I are line Sisters, we pledged together in 1989. So yes, and I think, um, it is a testament right to your process

Ann Myers: Mhm

April Fowler: How you continue to stick together and remain, you know, sisters

Ann Myers: Mhm

April Fowler: Throughout this time and share experiences.

Mark Naison: Mhm

April Fowler: So yeah, I would, I would definitely agree with that.

Mark Naison: Ok

Ann Myers: And one thing, I noticed the process, yes. Now, my daughter uh joined a sorority in Virginia in 94, I believe. So I went down uh for that. And yes, they it was much different than back in the time when uh Sheila and I were initiated.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Ann Myers: Not in a negative sense or a positive sense. It was just different. It was very nice, very well done, but just different.

Sheila Jackson: See, I was pledged twice. I went on line in Alpha Delta chapter at Morgan State. And we had to... we had to be disbanded for several weeks because the night... the night we became initiates was the same night that Dr. King was assassinated.

Mark Naison: Oh boy.

Sheila Jackson: So that really made a big difference. And then, and then we had a much longer pledge period, and it interfered with my graduation. So um, so you know, so I, I really pledge twice.

Mark Naison: Uh huh...well, [inaudible speech] wha- what's interesting to me and and again, having met such extraordinary people, I also found out that one of my most talented former students, who's one of the most important political consultants in New York City, is uh an Alpha Kappa Alpha. Her name is Tiff-

Sheila Jackson: You shouldn't be surprised.

Mark Naison: No, well I'm not now

Sheila Jackson: You should not be surprised

Mark Naison: Uh, I'm not now having, uh

Sheila Jackson: Oh, ok

Mark Naison: But, uh

Sheila Jackson: But just to be clear [Mark Naison laughing], AKA women are doing some things.

Mark Naison: But that, uh, you know, if, if you yu there's a networking aspect that may be involved here as well

Ann Myers: Yes.

Mark Naison: Because knowing my friend, if there wasn't that aspect of it, given her business, she probably wouldn't have joined. So, you know, if you're a powerhouse person, and you want to meet other powerhouse people, this may be a path.

Sheila Jackson: But but let's, let's keep in mind, that the networking with powerhouse people extends beyond our sorority at times.

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: Because now that I'm now that I'm living down here in Virginia, I have to tell you, the Greek life, um especially among retired people, is ver- is quite active. So I'm, I'm in other organizations with ladies that belong to Delta Sigma Theta

Mark Naison: Mhm

Sheila Jackson: You know, so it it it does extend beyond our pink and green borders.

Mark Naison: Got it

Sheila Jackson: But that, But but that's an example of what you're saying. If, if you're that type of person that enjoys interacting, then you are going to be interacting, period, regardless of what or of what your Greek letter is.

Mark Naison: Mhm, right. Mhm...Okay, well, uh, I'm, I think, uh, out of questions, but I'm, once again, uh, thrilled to be connected to, uh, this amazing organization and the the people in it, who are uh making such a contribution to uh building a better society uh for a lot of people. So thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk to you.

Sheila Jackson: Thank you

Ann Myers: Thank you

Mark Naison: And uh, so just make sure that you know, everybody signs release forms, and we can post this on uh the Bronx African American History Project, uh, database, which is consulted by people all over the world. Uh, you know, it's an you know, so uh this is in now in the public domain. And we're very proud of the connection to this chapter. So thank you for uh for inviting

Sheila Jackson: My pleasure. My pleasure

Mark Naison: Saudah nagged me mercilessly [Sheila and Ann laughing] to finally get me to do this. And it's a gri- it is.

Sheila Jackson: Aren't you, aren't you happy that she did.

Mark Naison: Oh, yes, I am. Uh, and today, this is my eighth Zoom meeting, and I started it I was exhausted. And now I'm kind of energetic again [Sheila and Ann laughing]. Uh, Because uh it's it's contagious. You're

Sheila Jackson: Excellent, excellent

Mark Naison: Your energy and joy is contagious, so thanks.

Sheila Jackson: Excellent

Mark Naison: Uh, okay, take care. Good luck with everything and uh, you know, uh things are looking up in the country

Ann Myers: Good

Mark Naison: For a lot of those hard work.

Sheila Jackson: We pray, yes

Mark Naison: Uh, Is Stacey Abrams and alpha part of it or?

Sheila Jackson: I don't, I don't know.

Mark Naison: Uh, Since that's the other hero here uh is what what...She's a delta

Sheila Jackson: She's a delta.

Mark Naison: So, she is a Greek person.

Sheila Jackson: Yeah, well you know, I always tell my delta sisters that everybody is entitled to make one mistake in life [Mark Naison laughing]

Mark Naison: Because, you know, uh, you know, though, Kamala Harris and Stacey Abrams changed the country.

Sheila Jackson: Absolutely.

Mark Naison: You know, in this uh very critical moment

Sheila Jackson: Absolutely.

Mark Naison: And so,

Sheila Jackson: And a, a lot of and a lot of the female managers for this impeachment are delta women.

Mark Naison: Really?

Sheila Jackson: Yes.

Mark Naison: Okay.

Sheila Jackson: Yes.

Ann Myers: Mhm

Mark Naison: Mhm...so, uh, that gives me even more to think about [Sheila and Mark laughing]
Okay, take care. Thank you so much!

Sheila Jackson: Thank you

Saudah Muhammad: Thank you [inaudible]

Mark Naison: Bye, bye.

Sheila Jackson: Bye.

Ann Myers: Bye.

Sheila Jackson: Bye, sorrrors.

April Fowler: Wait, I, I think ma- Madam Vasalis you wanna

Saudah Muhammad: You guys are amazing. [Sheila and Ann laughing] I was thinking let's give you like five minutes just in case you wanted to join but it it went it was wonderful

April Fowler: No

Saudah Muhammad: It was really good

April Fowler: Excuse me because I'm getting ready to go to the bank and meet the money people too [laughing]