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Summer 6-6-2022

Whiting-Hogans, Monica

Mark Naison

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Mark Naison (MN): Okay, hello. Welcome to another interview with a leader of the Eta Omega Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. And today we're interviewing Monica Whiting Hogans, who was a leader of the chapter a few years before this. And as always, we begin our interviews by asking the interviewee, tell us a little bit about your family and your family background before we get into your involvement with the sorority.

Monica Whiting Hogans (MWH): Okay, well, good evening, everyone. As you know, I'm Monica. My family consists -- well my mom is still living -- but my mom is from Halifax, Virginia. And my dad was born in Hayneville, Alabama, but he was raised in Chicago, Illinois for the majority of his life. I am the baby of the family. So my father was previously married, he had four children from that union. And my mom had two children from her union and then when they got together, I was the one who bridged the gap. So out of my siblings, let me see, it's myself and I have a brother and a sister who are still remaining. I was an aunt at three days old. So, my niece, we are three days apart and we are the same age. I don't have any children, any human children, I should say. But I do have a little four legged furbaby. His name is Nemo. I am a widow, my husband passed away in 2017. As far as -- I have all these sisters and brothers --- so I have, the last time I counted, I think it was like 35 nieces and nephews in total.

MN: Wow. Where did you grow up? In what part of the country?

MWH: I grew up in Mount Vernon, New York where I am still born and bred. I am a Mount Vernon -- as they call it -- the knights. So I am a Mount Vernon knight through and through. I went to school, matriculated at Immanuel Lutheran, where Anne Myers was one of my teachers. Yes! And then from there, I went to Mount Vernon High School. And then from there, I went to Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. And then I just recently got my master's with a dual concentration in finance and accounting from Mercy College. And now I am an accountant at Iona college.

MN: I actually saw that when I did a little research on you. And also your connection to Morgan State through hbcu.com.

MWH: Yes. *laughing*

MN: Class of 1993 I believe.

MWH: Yes, I am.

MN: Okay, so was your first contact with Alpha Kappa Alpha at Morgan State? Or did it come later?

MWH: It came before them. My first contact was with Miss Anne Myers.

MN: Wow. So she exposed you to the sorority when you were still in high school?

MWH: Well, actually, I knew her in elementary school. So, Anne always carried herself with grace, with class. Always, you know, giving. So her daughter – she has a daughter and a son -- her daughter is a year ahead of me and her son is, I think, a year behind me. But we would go down. So her roots are also in Virginia, so she would offer to take us down to Virginia, my mom and I, and we would drive down with her. She would drop us, you know, take us down as far as Richmond because she was going a different direction. But we would ride down to Richmond, all five of us in the car, and just, you know, have a good old time. And then on our way back, she would scoop us up and bring us back to New York.

MN: So and you knew that this sorority was something you wanted to be identified with at an early age?

MWH: Well with Anne and then again, as you mentioned, when I got down to Morgan, that is when I had the full exposure of seeing all these young ladies on the campus with their pink and green, doing community service. So that was where the vast majority of the exposure came from.

MN: Now, were you ever tempted to join another sorority? Or was the... *laughs as Whiting-Hogans looks shocked* pink and green overwhelmingly dominant?

MWH: The pink and green was overwhelmingly dominant. *laughing*

MN: Right. So when you graduated from Morgan, did you move back to Mount Vernon?

MWH: The next day.

MN: So, are there other members of Eta Omega Omega who are from lower Westchester as well as the Bronx? Does the chapter, you know, include a lot of Westchester people?

MWH: Westchester members?

MN: Yeah.

MWH: Well, yeah, there's a good network in our chapter who are from Mount Vernon. I'm trying to think, do we have any? Well, we used to have some members who were like in White Plains, but we do have a good number of members, while we're Bronx chapter, a good number of members who are from Mount Vernon, and I'm trying to think, um, any other Westchester areas? No, I don't think so.

MN: So, who recruited you for this particular chapter? And when did that take place?

MWH: Anne Myers. *laughing* Anne Myers was the one who sponsored me into Eta Omega Omega, and that -- I was initiated on June 5, 1994.

MN: Wow. So this is only a year or so after you graduated?

MWH: Yes.

MN: Now, did you know you were going to have a career in finance and accounting when you graduated from Morgan? Was this something you studied in college?

MWH: Yes, so my degree from Morgan is in accounting.

MN: So when you joined the chapter, where you immediately put to work involved in, you know, fiscal management, and those sorts of issues?

MWH: No, not right away. My first office in Eta Omega Omega was actually nominated chairman, and that was in 1995. But then, as I continue to, you know, maneuver my way through the chapter, and attend different meetings and get on different committees, that's when the financial acumen started to kick in.

MN: Yeah. Because that's a very valuable skill in any nonprofit organization. So what were the activities of the chapter that attracted you the most? Obviously, you had a very positive image of the organization. Are there particular initiatives that you gravitated to right away?

MWH: Um, all the ones that pertain to health and to the black family. So my first exposure to Eta Omega Omega and their activities was their rites of passage program, which was in 1994, in May. Sor Anne took me to that particular culmination ceremony. And so from there, just seeing, you know, all that, you know, the young ladies and they're dancing and the speeches, so I knew that it was something I wanted to get involved in. And also with the health piece. So I've been involved with the health and even participating in some of the walks, although my ankles didn't like that, but I still wanted to do some of the walks that the chapter was participating in.

MN: Now, how many people were in the chapter when you joined in 1994?

MWH: It was a small chapter, I want to say like maybe 50?

MN: Wow. And now it's over 200?

MWH: No, no, no. It feels like it, but it's 126.

MN: Oh, okay. That's still a lot bigger than when you first joined.

MWH: Yes, yes.

MN: So you've been involved now for, you know, close to 30 years.

MWH: Yes, 28 years.

MN: What are some of the things that you see as highlights in your time in the chapter?

MWH: Some of the highlights for me?

MN: Yeah.

MWH: Oh, well, becoming Basileus of the chapter. Winning Basileus of the year, two times.

MN: I saw that! Twice.

MWH: And so far, I am the only Basileus who has achieved that. Some of the other highlights, I guess, would be when I was asked to chair one of the regional offices, and that was, what, 2000. I was also asked to be the chairman -- be the registration chairman for our cluster three leadership. Another highlight, oh, when I was asked -- so at the time when I was in the chapter, we had a President and the Vice President and a co-chair to the Vice President. So when I was asked by, at that time, it was Sor Laburne (sp?), to be her co-chair, I was like, "Oh, I'm just getting here." And then also to chair and co-chair rites of passage, which is our signature program. So you know, all eyes are on you when you're doing this signature program.

MN: Right. Now is rites of passage exclusively in the Bronx or is it also in Mount Vernon?

MWH: Well, the program runs in the Bronx. So because -- for my love for Alpha Kappa Alpha, Eta Omega Omega, you know, even though I'm in Mount Vernon, I make my way to the Bronx. So initially, Sor Anne would pick me up, you know, to take me to the different chapter meetings, to different programs. And then I, you know, I learned my way with the subway system, even though I'm not far, but still take the subway if needed. And then when she left, you know, also to learn how to get to different programs, taking the subway or leaving with the other sorors, you know, if they were going that way. And then finally, in 2000, I got up the nerve to learn how to drive. So then I was able to take myself and pick up other sorors and go to different programs and chapter meetings.

MN: Well, this raises to me an interesting question. Has Mount Vernon now become an extension of the Bronx?

MWH: Well, you know, Mount Vernon is like, if you -- well, where I lived, at one point, if you cross the street, I was in the Bronx. So they're right next to each other. So it's, you know, most people like when I went away to college, and I said, I was from Mount Vernon, "you in the Bronx?" "No, I'm in Mount Vernon, but it's very close to the Bronx." So I wouldn't say it's an extension, but it's because we're so close together, and especially the area that we serve, you know, I guess you can say it kind of like melts into each other.

MN: Yeah. Um, and I think more and more people from the Bronx are moving into, you know, Mount Vernon and Yonkers. And so, you know, that's the reason I asked the question.

MWH: Okay. Yeah, absolutely. There are a lot of people who are coming from the Bronx to Mount Vernon. And, you know, I can't speak for Yonkers, but definitely coming into Mount Vernon.

MN: Okay, I'm gonna turn it over now to President Donna -- unless there are things that you would like to reflect on about your experiences at Morgan State? You know, because a lot of the people who we've interviewed who went to HBCUs came from the South initially. But as someone who came from Mount Vernon, was Morgan State -- was there any culture shock there? Or was this a fairly smooth transition for you?

MWH: I'm going to say was a fairly smooth transition for me. Um, yes. Because I also have freshman orientation, so I think by the time I got to school in September, all the other shock at warn off. You know, being on my own. And also because I wasn't -- so one of the reasons I picked Morgan State -- I only applied to HBCUs. My mother, she said, "Did you apply to any schools in New York?" "Yeah, yeah, sure." She was like, "Really? How did you do that? Because I didn't give you the money to pay for the application." I was like, "Yeah, you're right." So I, um, I applied only to HBCUs. And Morgan was the closest one to New York that I got accepted to. So but I also have legacy at HBCU -- at Morgan State. So I have a cousin who was a professor there. And I had two other cousins who matriculated there. So when I got down to Baltimore, they were in Aberdeen, they just said, you know, look, we're a phone call away. If you need anything, just call us. We'll come and get you, come and take you for dinner or whatever. So knowing that I had family that was in the area, that kind of lessened some of the shock for me.

MN: Right. Now, did many of your classmates apply to HBCUs? Or was this, of your friends, what percentage applied to, you know, northern schools and what percentage apply to HBCUs?

MWH: Of my friends, the ones I had a close knit, it was about 80% who applied to HBCUs that including Morgan, Harris, Howard, Norfolk. We all kind of knew that we wanted to go to an HBCU. Some of the others they didn't want to, you know, trip the light fantastic and get out of state, you know, they wanted to be close to home. I was on the first thing smoking.

MN: Now, did you have guidance counselors and teachers who encouraged the HBCU? Or was this something that came out of your own family or, you know, your peer group?

MWH: My counselor did not encourage HBCU, which everyone kind of finds as shocking because she was also African American. But she, you know, there was some other things that, you know, my parents had to kind of talk to her about as far as academics, but my family is -- I have family who went to HBCUs. So I have Morgan State, Tuskegee, North Carolina, Virginia State. So I have a family that attended HBCUs. So that's all I knew.

MN: Ah, okay.

MWH: Yeah, my counselor, she, you know, when I mentioned it, of course -- as most people who don't know, don't take time to find out about HBCUs -- "Oh, you really want to go to an all black school? Oh,

you know, it's a party school, you're probably not going to get as great a job." And, you know, I just, you know, I gave it a blank stare, like, "Okay, well, let me find out for myself."

MN: In terms of the chapter, is there a large percentage of Eta Omega Omega who attended HBCUs? Would you say?

MWH: It's not half, I would say it's about maybe 30 to 40% who went to HBCUs. And our chapter we're still outnumbered by those who are not HBCU. But when it's time to represent HBCU, you know, we come out strong. You know, you can't miss us! *laughing*

MN: Thank you. Okay. President. Donna, would you like to take over? And I'll interject as appropriate.

Donna Joseph (DJ): Okay. Good evening, again Sor Monica. This is definitely a pleasure.

MWH: It is for me too. I was nervous.

DJ: Don't be nervous. I will say, Professor Naison touched on some of your earlier years. But if you could give us your fondest memory of Eta Omega Omega. One of your earliest memories entering Eta Omega Omega.

MWH: It would be going to the first rites of passage in the day, because immediately after the culmination ceremony, it was the 30th chapter anniversary. And it was held at the NAACP on 219th Street and former International President Mary Shai Scott, she was the keynote speaker. So you know, just to be in that, you know, be around her and just see so many of the women because I was in awe, still like, "Oh my gosh, oh my God," because I still wanted to be a member. So that was -- that's my earliest memory of Eta Omega Omega.

DJ: And so tell us, can you tell us the date you were initiated and how many members came in with you?

MWH: Absolutely. June 5, 1994. And it was 12 of us and I was number seven.

DJ: And out of the 12 of you, how many have ascended into leadership positions like yourself?

MWH: Oh, my. Okay, let's see. It will be myself. Monique as grad advisor, Patricia Dawn, Tammy Okis Tabitha Cottigus (sp?). You mean elected positions?

DJ: Yes.

MWH: Okay, so, yes. Veronica was anti, so that's five. Yeah, I believe it was five out of the 12.

DJ: And currently Dawn is president of her chapter as well?

MWH: Yeah, she's president and a charter member.

DJ: And so with more than half of your co-initiates being in leadership positions and you being a member of the sorority for almost 30 years, how do you think that has impacted the chapter? And I would even say regional and cluster leadership.

MWH: By me having leadership? I just wanna make sure.

DJ: You and your co-initiates, because I think over the life of the 30 years, I know when I came in there, many of you were on leadership positions, but have stayed consistent in leadership positions over the years. So how do you think that has impacted the chapter and I would even say the local sorority?

MWH: I think when you have members who have been in leadership for multiple years, um, it enhances the chapter, it gives the chapter someone, a go to. You know, like, you have a map. And you have resources, and you're able to lend those resources cluster wide, regionally and internationally. Because, you know, we're always growing, we're always learning. So, while we have these leadership skills that we have, and we're still able to use those, we lead, we're also learning and taking from that. So it's something that's a continuum. So I think it impacts the chapter to let them know, "Okay, listen, just because you were in a position one time doesn't mean that that's it, you know, one and done." You continue to grow and thrive and go into other positions, and just be a resource, be a mentor if nothing else.

DJ: Thank you. I know you spoke of Sor Anne, I know she'll be on this list, but can you tell us members that influenced you and impacted entering the sorority but also your sorority experience?

MWH: Impact? Well, let me see. Charter member Thora Dudley. So when I came into the chapter, you know, Sor Thora was still very, you know, vibrant in the chapter and we were part of the chapter corral. So you know, we'd go to her home, and just be in awe and amazement, just to see a woman who is completely blind. And you know, she would tell us things that we didn't know, drop little pearls of wisdom for us, you know, while we're practicing. You know Sor Anne. Sor Pauline L. Monsanto. Professor Naison asked about the finance, so if anything, I got into finance from Sor Pauline, and I don't even know when it happened. It just did. So now, it's so funny. Like I have, you know, sorors in the chapter always called on Sor Pauline, but now they're like, Sor Monica, and I'm like, No, that's Sor Paulina. Like now it's Sor Monica. So I'm Mercedes Roe, she passed away. And Sor Dorothy Sharp Heart, she also passed away, but, you know, they would sit with us, especially we went to Rosalie Hall, and just, you know, I would watch them still be vibrant and come into programs, and they were up in age, so to see them, you know, get around to do things, that was something that I admired. Sor Stephanie Stewart Motley. She's no longer in the chapter, but she was also one who co-sponsored me. We also went to the same church, so I got to see her do things, you know, as far as community service at the church, she would bring me along just to do things.

MN: What church was this, by the way?

MWH: Unity Baptist Tabernacle in Mount Vernon, New York.

MN: Okay.

MWH: Yes. Let's see. So Laverne, she was very instrumental, although she scared me at first. Her bark is bigger than her bite, you know. But she took me under her wing, to be her co-chair when she was vice president, and also appointed me to be chairman and co-chairman of rites of passage. I could think of others, Phyllis Ford. Sor Phyllis has a driver's license, but she doesn't drive anymore, but I would pick her up and we would have our little chats in the car, especially when I was president, you know, just giving me little gems, you know, about how to how to work with sorors, because, you know, when you become president, whether it's a sorority or whatever, you're going to get all these different personalities. So she would give me little gems and then also, "Don't be president and not get married!" *laughing* So that was the other thing. She was like, you know, don't let being a member stop you from having a love life and having a relationship. So, um and then, okay. Sor Irma Clement. I did, we had two Irma's. I didn't know Disco (sp?), but she did come to our initiation. But Sor Irma Clement. When I was president, and even now, she would write me little notes to let me know you're doing a great job. I love what you're doing for the chapter. Keep it up. The same thing with Sor Lucille Thomas who's passed away, she was another one who was always in my earring guiding me. Um, and then -- she doesn't think she mentors me, but she does -- that would be my president, Donna Joseph. I admire her. I look up to her, you know, because sometimes, you know, you need somebody to just give you a little tap to say, "Okay, let's pivot. Let's think about this. Let's look at it through a different lens, different view." So those are most of the sorors who have impacted me who have, you know, helped me with my journey through Alpha Kappa Alpha.

MN: Okay, I have an interesting question. And it may seem to be a little far afield, but I certainly have a lot of people I'm in touch with are very upset about what's happening in the country right now. You know, with the January 6 insurrection and the hearings. Does being part of this amazing organization give you a perspective on these events that gives you hope?

MWH: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Um, just to know that members of Alpha Kappa Alpha, they're out there in the trenches, you know, taking leadership roles as far as Vice President of United States of America, Senate, congressional members, and knowing, you know, giving us messages to say, "Okay, listen, we know this is happening, but we have to fight the good fight, we have to stay in the stay in the trenches, we have to mobilize together." Because sometimes when you look at people who aren't in an organization -- this isn't saying anything against them -- but they don't want to always get involved, they just want you know, just to the sidelines, and let's just see how everything plays out. Whereas with Alpha Kappa Alpha, I'm sure the other organizations, like no, we can't just stand on the sidelines. We have to work together, we have to, you know, find a way to beat the system if we can't work within the system. So, and I was never really one who was too much like an activist or a political but, you know, this helps me to keep my eyes on the prize, and keep my ear to the ground and say, "Okay, what's happening? What do I need to know? What do I need to do? What do I need to sign up for? Who can I speak to help them know this is what's happening?" You can't just sit around and just watch the world go around. We have to be involved.

MN: Thank you. That was actually what I was hoping you would say. Because I, you know, there are a lot of people who are discouraged, and I'm trying to, you know, rally them. But it's nice to know that

you're on the same wavelength about this. And that this organization is both people on the same wavelength.

MWH: Absolutely.

MN: So thank you for that.

DJ: So on the heels of that, Professor Naison's question, in terms of the sorority, when you ascend it to President of Eta Omega Omega, do you -- can you tell us who the international president was, and, you know, the challenges that were going on then and some of the programs that we implemented under your leadership?

MWH: When I became President, that was -- what year was it? -- I was elected in 2010. I should know this, because one of the sorors used to call me a "Little B", for little Barack. *laughing* She called me a Little Barack because we were, you know, in the trenches pretty much the same time. So, um, and I guess that's why, you know, like, there were things going on with our chapter -- nothing's ever rosy and pretty. There's always going to be something, you know, everyone's not going to always get along. So to know that the chapter will deal with it, some things going on in the chapter, some challenges. So there was also some challenges President Barack Obama was taking on, that's why she called me Little Barack. She was like, "Listen, if he can do it, you can do it." But during that time, it was launching new dimensions of service. That was the platform. And LENDS that was -- no, that wasn't Carolyn, was it?... Just trying to think of who was the president, the International President?

Sudah Muhammad (SM): Wasn't it Donna?

DJ: Dorothy Buchanan.

MWH: Oh, because -- yes, yes. Dorothy Buchanan, she was our international president.

DJ: I think you came off of Carolyn House Stewart. But um, so do you -- from that time period, you served two terms. And so were there any programs -- I know, you mentioned rites of passage -- were there any other programs that stood out that were maybe different that impacted the Bronx at that time period?

MWH: They weren't different, but we had our health fair. And during that time, we were also able to get the mammography, the mobile van to come out so that women who weren't insured could come and get a free mammogram. We had a playground project, so we were going around to refresh different playgrounds in the Bronx. We did domestic -- well, it wasn't, it was for those who are survivors of sexual assault. So, you know, like, when they go to the hospital, and they have to have a rape kit or anything done, they're pretty much left without the essentials that they need to put on, you know, as far as undergarments. So we had a program where we supplied undergarments to them, to make sure that, you know, they at least felt -- because you're never going to feel the same when you're a victim -- but at least, you know, to give you a sense of "I have something new to put on when I'm leaving out of this particular situation."

DJ: Was there a program that touched your heart especially? I mean, that just touched me, you reminded me, wow, of that story. But I wasn't sure, maybe there was another program that that touched you.

MWH: Um, I'm trying to think because we've had so many programs. So at the time, I think we were also still doing St. Luke's, to work with our seniors, to bring them, you know, just a little bit of hope and joy, some snacks -- although we gave them sugar free cookies, they were like "where's the sugar?!" -- and put a little programs for them. So I enjoyed going to St. Luke's especially with the seniors, because, you know, a lot of seniors don't have family and friends to come visit them. So to know, to see them, you know they would come down to the recreation room, you know, quick, fast in a hurry when they knew that we were coming just to brighten up their day, play bingo with them. So I really enjoyed that.

DJ: And so we fundraise to raise money so that we can execute these programs of service. While you were president, can you share with us what the main fundraisers were?

MWH: We had a pink crystal ball and the boat ride, which the boat ride has been a staple of Eta Omega Omega since probably before I came into the chapter. I know in 1994, we wanted to serve a lot. So, but we had the pink crystal ball, which was a pretty good, I think we did that for a good few years, to raise money for our scholarships and our programs.

DJ: And so, while you were president, can you tell us about the chapter turning 50 years and what that celebration was about?

MWH: Turning 50. That was a momentous occasion. We had it at the Green Tree in New Rochelle, the Green Tree Country Club. And you know, I have -- I think maybe I don't know if I got a little overwhelmed with it because at one point I couldn't even make chapter meetings. Sor Donna had to take over for me for a meeting for one of the meetings. But we had a charter member, Sor Tanner, she came back to participate with it. We had our regional director at the time was Constance R. Bizarro, she came to celebrate with us and just so many dignitaries. Ruth Hassle Thompson and the brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha, but it was just -- to see all of us come into the room with our pink and green, our masquerade mask. It was a beautiful occasion, especially to be president at that time as we turned 50. So, you know, when I look back, I have to like, wow, that was a pretty, pretty awesome thing.

DJ: Absolutely. And so I think you, you've mentioned it, but I wrote another question on here. Since you've been in the chapter, you have uninterrupted service, I mean, almost from undergrad to now. So you've gone through different stages of life. And so you told us about the women that impacted you. Do you think, when you were president or even in your other leadership roles, that you impacted others in their upcoming leadership roles?

MWH: Initially, while I was in the seat, I'm gonna say I didn't think that I impacted others. Just because - - so when I became president, I will chapter had pretty much just come out of, um, there was some challenges, you know, we had one of the members, you know, she was removed from her seat as president, then we had another member, she had to take over as president. So, you know, there were

some feelings with members about, you know, everything that transpired with that. So I had to kind of fight to kind of bring us -- I won't say to fight -- but kind of had to work to smooth it out to get sorors to feel sisterly and loving and friendly, like everything is going to be okay. So, um, it's not until now that maybe I can see that I did have some impact with members who want to go on to lead and who want to go on to mentor. But while I was in the seat during that particular timeframe, honestly, I couldn't see it.

MN: I have another question. So you're now in a leadership position at Iona College?

MWH: Yes.

MN: Again, I do research. That's what I do for a living. So *dog barking*

MWH: That's the furbaby.

MN: Okay, um, how does it make you feel when you're in this large organization to have this sisterhood behind you? Is it as a source of strength to you?

MWH: Absolutely. It is a source of strength. Especially like for some days when I'm feeling down, I know that I can rely on my sisters. Like with any family, you have some, you know, mean things or angst or whatever. But when we have a crisis, members will show up and show out. And I can, just speaking for myself, I've had some things happen, you know, like, when my sister passed away. She lived in Albany, and we have members who are in the Bronx and Mount Vernon, but they came up to Albany for her funeral. And that was after rallying to help with funeral expenses. So when -- I walk around proudly wearing my colors and wearing my letters, because I know that outside of God, my sorors give me strength.

MN: Wow.

MWH: Yeah, they do. I mean, you hear people say, "Oh, if you had anything going on just call me." You know, a lot of times you take it as lip service, but there are sorors that I can call at one o'clock in the morning or text at three o'clock in the morning, or, you know, say "Hey, can you go with me for a walk?" Or can you do whatever. And so knowing that I have that because sometimes you can't even get your family members to answer a text at two o'clock in the morning, but to know that I can rely on my sisters for whatever. It's just what -- like when I was unemployed, and I threw my back out and I mean, it was very, very painful. And I couldn't afford the Cobra and I had two sorors pay the Cobra so I could go get what I needed done for my back... You can't beat that... And I'm trying not to get teary eyed about it.

DJ: So with all of your experience with leadership, and then the life experiences of sisterhood and service. And you went from, I'm trying to think of '94, things that were going on in '94, all the way through today. Like Professor Naison said, things that are going on in the world. What do you think on the chapter level is a pressing issue or concern that we need to focus on now moving forward?

MWH: As far as in the chapter?

DJ: Yes.

MWH: Um, well, I guess through my years watching, for me, it's being sisterly, having manners and respect. And I don't know if it's, because if it's something that's cultural, I don't know if it's something that's because of the age gap. Or just because, you know, generation, or the timeframe. As we're moving on in years, instant gratification is like the thing, you know, everybody needs to have instant gratification. Everyone -- I shouldn't say everyone -- a lot of people have this self entitlement. So you get some members who come in, you know, like, "Yep, I'm entitled to this." Which you do have all the rights as a woman of African [descend], a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha, but I always still feel like there's a hierarchy. So I guess if we can just kind of, you know, learn to respect one another, learn to listen to each other. That's also something that -- you know, people they hear, but they don't listen. So take time to listen to each other and just take time to genuinely -- as Vice President Kamala Harris said, she said, the sorority is her family, let's treat each other like we're family. Like we're meant to be sisters, you know? We're not all going to break bread in each other's homes, but let's still be sisterly and act like we're -- you know, be a part of this organization, and not just put up a front for everyone to see, "Oh, they all get along," when inside we don't speak to each other. So that would be something I would want us to work on.

DJ: Okay, Professor Naison, do you have? Or I guess I should ask the members if you have any questions.

April Fowler (AF): I have a question. I have a question for Sor Monica. So Sor Monica, just giving sort of like your leadership projectory, right, from when you first became a member and positions you've held and president of the chapter, then you served in leadership on a regional and cluster level. Do you have any inspirations for any international positions? Inspirations? Aspirations I should say.

MWH: I do. I have had my eye on being a part of the international nominating committee, being a regional representative for that position. As far as going further, I think I'll just take it, you know, one little nugget at a time, one little pearl. *laughing* Start there. So it's just a matter of -- so another thing. My sorors see the confidence in me before I do. So once I can get the same confidence that everyone else sees in me, then I'll, you know, I'll jump in with both feet.

MN: Do you have any aspirations of running for public office in Mount Vernon?

MWH: That's never really been something that I've been interested in. I like to work in the background. So I'm a board member for the Mount Vernon Daycare Center, which is the oldest daycare center in Mount Vernon. So working in that capacity, I enjoy that way.

MN: I'm trying to be your campaign manager.

DJ: She's the mayor of Mount Vernon. She's the lieutenant governor of Mount Vernon. *laughing*

MN: This is very powerful. It's interesting what you said about respect. Because during the pandemic, as a professor, I had an issue with students conducting themselves in ways that I would have

considered disrespectful, and it was occurring in a fairly broad basis. And you know, my colleagues were noticing it as well. And so, you know, I think it's important for people to set a standard in the face of that.

MWH: Absolutely. I mean, you know, I think sometimes we don't want to always talk about it. But it's something -- we don't want to talk about in the broad spectrum, then we'll talk about it, you know, like, oh, we need to learn how to show respect and have deference, but it's something that we need to get back to. And then also, the organization itself, our sisterhood, a lot of times, they focus more on the business aspect. Which is great, we need to have a strong business foundation, but don't take away from what the sorority was founded on, the principle of sisterhood. I think, you know, to be able to have a balance, sometimes the scale skips, it leaves too much towards the business part and we forget the sisterhood part. So, I think if we can get that balance back, then I think then that's when the respect, the manners will come back. I mean, you know, right now, our chapter, we're pretty strong on trying to make sure that, you know, we do things right and engage in making sure we have the manners and being polite. But, you know, every once in a while one of us skips a beat, and we got to real them back in.

DJ: Do you think that, I mean, you compared the business versus the sisterhood side. Do you think that the pandemic impacted that? And do you see us kind of going back to normalcy in the post pandemic era?

MWH: Absolutely, I think the pandemic definitely kind of swung the pendulum a little bit more towards business, because being a part of a sorority it's about being touchy feely also. Because, you know, you get to see your sisters, you get to work side by side, you're in the trenches, you know, you get to do things. In the pandemic, everyone was in a box. By the box, I mean we were all on zoom. You know, we were in our own homes. Also, you know, your home, well, sometimes by yourself, the frustrations of that builds up. So, now sometimes you just forget manner, they want to just get down to business, cuz I gotta get off this box. So, I think, coming out of the pandemic, it's gonna take a some work. Because, you know, some people have been in the box for almost, what, we're going on three years? So, learned behavior has to be learned, again, on how to do things, because now you're coming back into the fold. And you've been on your own for so long, and it's like: okay, no, no no, remember, we're in this together, no woman is an island.

DJ: And so if you have to leave a forwarding message for younger members, 20, 30 years ahead of us, what would you leave as a forwarding message for them?

MWH: I would encourage them to, well, one, be engaged. And when I say be engaged, don't just come to chapter meetings and once we sing the hymn and the gavel is hit, and everything's done, you run out. Be engaged, get to learn about other sorors. You know, sometimes you got to sit at their feet, just to learn different things, a different perspective. Run for office. I would say, definitely get to know sorors outside of your chapter. Go learn, go to different events within the cluster, go to things in the region, get to know your international offices if that's what you aspire to do. But don't forget the history of Eta Omega Omega. Always put that in the forefront. And your love for Alpha Kappa Alpha, if that's in your heart, let that be in your heart. Let it flourish, and do the things that keep the sorority and the chapter

alive. Sometimes I say to myself, I'm doing too much. But when you're doing it, and it's love in your heart, it's never too much. Just grow and learn in the organization, in the chapter, and make your mark, but don't make your mark in such a way that you hurt other sorors' feelings.

MN: Wow. Thank you. I just want to say something because this is probably about the 11th or 12th interview that I've done. And it's been such an inspirational experience for me to be with people who are so positive and so willing to work together towards a goal. You know, it's no accident we're, as I said, we're a society in trouble. So to be around people who are not only individually talented, but who are committed to working together for the betterment of all, it's been important to me to keep my morale up. You know, because a lot of people look to me to be a leader, but you can't do that alone. You need to feel connected to people. So this connection, in its own way, has been very important to me. Even though Soror Saudah had a push me to start it. So I look forward to these discussions. And I'm inspired by them. And this is certainly some of the things you said today were very inspiring to me. You know, that I'm gonna take into other things that I'm doing as reinforcement. You know, keep moving forward. Don't get discouraged. And what you said, do things with love in your heart.

MWH: Absolutely. Absolutely. No, thank you. Eta Omega Omega is the only home that I know. We have Sor Saudah, Sor Donna, Sor April, they came in from an undergraduate chapter. So, um, for me, it's, like I said, it's the only chapter that is home, but it's not the only chapter that I know, because I've been able to work with other sorors within the cluster. And again, you know, when sorors see something in you, they always want to build you up, like my president. She asked me to be the chairperson for our Founders Day, which was the first virtual Founders Day. But it was such a success. So again, I wouldn't trade Eta Omega Omega for the world. I wouldn't trade Alpha Kappa Alpha for the world.

MN: Okay, now I want to take the photo, I always take the post on social media. So let me get my camera ready. And everybody. I'll tell you when it's ready to smile. Come on let's work today, my cell phone. Okay. Let me get the phone down from me. So okay. Thank you. And thank you for a great experience and, you know, keep inspiring people and who knows, maybe you will run for office.
laughing

MWH: Thank you. Thank you.