The "Seven Sisters" Interview Transcription

A group interview with Marilyn Allman Maye (MAM), Marilyn Holifield (MH), Aundrea White Kelley (AWK), Myra Rose (MR), Joyce Frisby Baynes (JFB), and Jannette Domingo (JD) conducted by Anisa Knox (AK), Haydn Welch (HW), Laura Laderman (LL) and Maria Mejia (MM) on November 2, 2014.

The alumnae featured in this footage were part of the Black student protest movement at Swarthmore College, 1968-1972. They were invited to be interviewed by students enrolled in Black History 90G - Black Liberation 1969: Black Studies in History, Theory and Praxis during Garnet Weekend Fall 2014. Each of the women, known collectively as "The Seven Sisters," were interviewed individually October 31, 2014 with the exception of Bridget Van Gronigen Warren who was interviewed in Panama via Skype on October 29, 2014.

The historic gathering of these six alumnae provided students with a unique opportunity to capture their recollections of the role they played as student activists and co-founders of SASS [Swarthmore Afro-American Student Society], in their own words. Two of the alumnae Dr. Myra Rose and Dr. Jannette Domingo, at the urging of their peers, also offered detailed narratives of their highly successful professional careers post-Swarthmore College. Footage of the narration of their remarkable careers has been edited from this group interview. Visitors are encouraged to view and listen to the individual interviews of Dr. Myra Rose and Dr. Jannette Domingo, where they will also find the additional footage regarding their personal reflections.

HW: Thank you so much for being here with us today. My name is Haydn Welch.

AK: My name is Anisa Knox.

HW: And if you could please introduce yourselves, starting with you [*points at Marilyn Allman Maye*], with your full name and class year.

MAM: Marilyn Allman Maye, class of 1969.

MR: Myra Rose, class of [19]70.

JD: Jannette Domingo, class of [19]70.

AWK: Aundrea Kelley, class of [19]70. Well, I'll just leave it at that.

JFB: Joyce Frisby Baynes, class of [19]68.

MH: Marilyn Holifield, class of 1969.

AK: Excellent, and so we are going to get started into the interview. Myra Rose, you shared your understanding that Sam Shepard gave you the name the "Seven Sisters." Bridget van Gronen [Gronigen] has noted that while you were all politically active, the Seven Sisters were first and foremost a friend group. So can you please talk a little bit more about your relationship as Seven Sisters?

[*unidentified*]: Myra Rose!

[*laughing*]

MR: We were, and I think Bridget - by the way her name is Bridget van Gronigen is how you say her name.

AK: Okay.

MR: We were primarily a friendship group and the political stuff just came as a part of our development - I guess becoming college students and away from home and all the other sort of things that go along with that. The Seven Sisters name came from the men, we didn't call ourselves the Seven Sisters, I can tell you that for sure.

[*unidentified*]: Absolutely.

MR: And the only thing that I can recall is having a conversation walking through the campus one day with Sam Shepard[1] and he was making a comment about how - I guess the perception was that we all traveled around in a little group or something along those lines. It was a very fluid group to my thinking, in and out. We did do some things that were unusual in terms of Swarthmore's campus, in that we ate together for certain meals and certain other kinds of activities, along those lines. He called us the Seven Sisters because there happened to be seven of us and you know, the whole Seven Sister female college thing in this area.[2] We all knew about it, and somehow it caught on and the guys just referred to us as the Seven Sisters.

MAM: I'll just add that we weren't all in the same class [year] - so Joyce was the most senior of us, in that she came in 1964, and Marilyn [Holifield] and I came in [19]69 -

MR: [You] came in [19]65.

MAM: '65, right, thank you. And the four others including Bridget came in '66. So its not as if

[1] Sam Shepard was the first chairman of SASS.

[2] The term "Seven Sisters" also refers to seven liberal arts colleges. They are Bryn Mawr College, Smith College, Wellesley College, Barnard College, Mount Holyoke College, Radcliffe College, and Vassar College. All were initially women's colleges, although a few have become coeducational.

we started out all in the same cohort, but we bonded. Marilyn Holifield and Joyce were big - they had a Big Sister program, I don't think - do they do that now, when you're a freshman you come in you get a Big Sister?

[*unidentified*]: Yes.

MAM: Oh, they still do that. So Joyce was Marilyn Holifield's Big Sister. And I was a math major like Joyce, so we always used to study together and she would encourage me to stick it out with math. Harold Buchanan was also a math major. Was he a math major?

[*unidentified*]: Yes.

MAM: So we bonded with that. There were different things that brought us together.

JD: But I'd like to say that although Joyce was officially Marilyn Holifield's Big Sister, we all sort of looked at her as a big sister -

MH: Yes, she was our big sister.

MAM: Collectively.

JFB: You know when you have seven you need someone who has to be -

[*laughing*]

JD: She could also drive -

[*laughing*]

JD: - So that was important too.

MAM: And I think there was another component, which you can correct me if I'm wrong, but there were some class differences when we came here. There were certainly people here whose parents could have paid the whole tuition easily and who had lived - they were Black, I'm talking about Black students now - who were solidly middle class to bourgeois, if you want to use that term. I don't think any of us were quite in that income... I think we were all on scholarship right?

MR: Yeah.

MAM: I don't know how conscious it was but I think we just felt like we were normal people. We were kinda down to earth people, we were all on scholarship and our families were kind of normal as far as socioeconomic stuff. You know there were people here who could trace their

roots to celebrities. I don't want to call names, you know but there was one of our classmate's whose grandfather was a famous - if I said his name you'd know he was a historical celebrity, and she'd come through four generations of that. And there were other people [one] whose father was a judge, and we weren't in that group. I think that also bothered us that we felt that we were - we understood each other.

HW: Can you all tell us about the founding of the Swarthmore Afro-American Student Society, what was your initial vision for the group and how has that vision changed over time?

JD: I think the pause is because it was such an organic development, in the sense that it's hard to say, for me anyways, it's hard to say exactly what the moment was when it became an organization. Maybe some others with a more detail-oriented memory can do that. I think it's important to understand that it was an outgrowth of doing a lot of other things together. Just as the takeover was an outgrowth of having a history, as long a history as you can have as college classmates, a history of doing things together and talking together and debating issues together, expressing concerns about college life together. Singing, everything from singing in Sharples to going to Philadelphia to go to a show. So I personally cannot say exactly what meeting it was that turned into an organization. But I do know that part of the vision was to reach a larger percentage of the students at the College, of the Black students at the College, to have a voice that the College could hear in terms of making changes that would not only bring more Black students but also improve the conditions and the curriculum for Black students. So that's kind of like the basis of it, but perhaps others could talk about that meeting and I don't even remember did we have a constitution or things like that I don't know.

AWK: I agree that the organization grew out of the relationships that were developed over time. I think one of the things that helped me survive here was being able to be with my sisters in particular, sisters and brothers. Studying together and doing things together as Jannette has already said. And over time as we began to talk, some of the issues that we talked about ultimately we wanted to be able to do something about. Yesterday Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot's lecture, the McCabe lecture, focused on view, voice, and visibility.[3] And I thought that was so appropriate because of the view of who we were and our view of the college, and not having a voice and wanting to have a voice and seemingly our culture being invisible and wanting to have that visibility all of that was wrapped into what eventually became the Swarthmore Afro-American Student Society. I think those were some of the impetus, some of the driving factors behind our development.

MAM: I think there was a practical dimension; we needed to get funds to do things, to bring in speakers. We needed a budget to pay them. The vehicle that other students seemed to have were

[3] Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, Swarthmore Class of 1966, delivered the McCabe lecture at Swarthmore College entitled "On Goodness in Education: Disrupting the Discourse." An online video of the lecture can be found at: http://www.swarthmore.edu/garnet-homecoming-and-family-weekend-2014/mccabe-lecture-sara-lawrence-lightfoot-66.

these student organizations. So just on a practical level, if we going to do some of the things we were talking about, where were we going to get the money? We knew other student groups existed, and we tried to figure how one gets a student group officially so they get a budget. I just remember there were discussions about a budget.

AWK: That's an important one too because those groups weren't addressing any of our concerns.

MH: And in formalizing our relationships into an organization, it was an empowering thing that allowed us to move forward with confidence that once we reached a consensus on how to move forward, even on social things, getting funding for a particular speaker, we decided who we wanted to speak and didn't have to go to someone else to allow us or give us permission to identify a particular speaker. So in formalizing our organization we could exercise our prerogative in terms of how we wanted to move forward.

JFB: Yeah I think the concept of power was a really important one, because we really felt very strongly that we needed power to be able to make change, in order to do that we needed some kind of a formalization of a group. We had seen SDS, Students for Democratic Society, and the kinds of things they were doing. We were feeling, they're not really addressing the issues of Blacks. The more we talked about it the more powerful we became just as a people because we felt very strongly about the fact that we had a lot to offer and people weren't recognizing it. So we began to say, lets formalize this and lets try to make ourselves known and make an impact on this College.

AK: At the Swarthmore Black Alumni Network [SBAN] Panel yesterday, Russell Frisby said that starting with students that were freshmen in 1968, SASS moved toward a more collective decision making group and away from "following the Marilyns."

[*laughing*]

AK: So was your leadership style as the Seven Sisters and how does that affect gender dynamics in SASS?

[*laughing*]

[*unidentified*]: Woah!

MH: Well, first of all -

AWK: I don't think that's exactly what he said.

[*unidentified*]: That's not what he said -

[*unidentified*]: It is!

[*unidentified*]: It's close.

MH: That's a version of it.

[*Interviewees speaking simultaneously*]

MH: He said a version of that. I think that -

MAM: It is very interesting.

MR: It is.

MH: I think that from the very beginning our style was collective. I believe what his comment is reflecting is that Marilyn and I had strong personalities, but also I think we were very talented and we were using our talent for the benefit of the organization. I do not think there was a decision that was ever made that did not have a collective consensus basis.

[*Interviewees voice their assent*]

MH: There was never ever a decision solely made by even one Marilyn or two Marilyns or Seven Sisters. Every decision that I can recall was -

AWK: Was collective.

MH: - Was collective.

[*Several interviewees*]: It was.

MH: If there is one thing I recall about SASS at that time: it was so new, so embryonic that there was no way that decisions were not made collectively.

[*Several interviewees*]: That's right.

MR: That's absolutely correct! I think what he was responding too, was the strength of the Marilyn personalities. It's still there. You know, it didn't go anywhere. And -

[*laughing*]

MH: But I'm quiet and reserved.

[*laughing*]

MR: You have learned.

[*laughing*]

[*unidentified*]: That's so funny.

MR: I'm just gonna let y'all know. I saw you all as these radical, out there folks. I said "Oh my God, where did that come from? I've never experienced anything like this before." I'm very serious. The intellectual strength was so compelling that you did become an entity called "the Marilyns." That's how I think that got perpetuated. And the men, I'm sure they felt it, if I could see it and feel it, I know the men felt it. And I think that that's what Russell was trying to say. That, you know, these two intellects were pretty tough. [*side comment, unintelligible*].

[*Interviewees speaking simultaneously*]

JD: But he was not here, when any of us were here.

MR: He was.

MAM: He was the last to come.

MH: His freshman year was our senior year.

MAM: He had only been there a few months.

JD: Okay, but what he and a couple of other alums from the later seventies repeated what he was saying in various ways. They emphasized that SASS became a group that operated by consensus, and that was underlined several times.

MAM: I heard that.

[*Noises of assent*]

JD: Saying that in contrast to the original, what they perceived to be--

[*Multiple voices saying "That was wrong."*]

MH: So let the record be corrected, that comment by Russell may have been from the eyes--first

of all from a freshman, looking at seniors. Over the forty years hence, that view may have been embellished somewhat in his mind. But as a freshman, looking at juniors and seniors making decisions--that just may have been his singular view. But every decision that was made was a collective decision.

MAM: Now I do want to ask a question. Was Don Mizell in the same class as Russell or the class above?

AWK: Class above. Class of '71.

MAM: So, after we left in '69, we have to think about what Russell was also experiencing. Because when we all left, including Clinton, Don was really the leader, he was the most senior person who had been in the takeover. And it wouldn't surprise me if Don had a different style. So for two or three years, what Russell experienced may have been more of a top-down kind of style. And he just assumed that that's the way it had been before. I thought about that when he said the comment, because I was wondering, where did he get that, what changed? And I was thinking, well Don was the leader, and I know everybody looked up to Don. So Jim, who I talked to over the years, he came in '73, the year we left.[4] And when he came Don was the senior most person. And Russell was next, because he was the next tier. So we don't know what happened between '69 and '72.

MH: But we can correct the record, that that comment was inaccurate.

[*Interviewees speaking simultaneously*]

MAM: And it's so funny, because as one of the two Marilyns, when I just reflect on my role, I have never thought of myself as extraordinarily leading. I could be in denial. We all could have these things. I know that I am influential, and I know I had a lot of leadership experience because I had been chairman of my student government in high school, class president. At a small school, but I was very able to handle myself. But I don't have that recollection. When I just sit and think, I don't remember myself being extraordinarily a leader more so than anybody else.

MH: I think the idea of having opinions and offering opinions might have influenced Russell's perceptions. Who were the people offering opinions?

AWK: I've never felt that I was not able to and did not offer opinions, and was involved in discussions, that I was involved in decisions. I think that we could all say that. So I really do think that a lot of it is, as you suggested, that he was a young freshman coming in and probably not fully understanding the dynamic. Remember as a new person, he had not developed those relationships that had been born out of two to three years' worth of interaction with one another.

[4] James White, class of 1973 arrived at Swarthmore College in 1969.

MAM: And an interesting person is Harold Buchanan, who was the one male, right? Never had a title, never had a visible role, but who worked very closely with us. If there was ever an eighth brother, sister? It was Harold.

[*laughing*]

MH: He was the bedrock. He was so reliable. He had very, very solid thought processes.

MAM: The Seven Sisters, he was the brother.

MR: He was our brother. In the family that was the Seven Sisters, he was the brother.

JFB: Now he had the passion that we had for this movement.

MAM: And totally supportive.

MH: Trustworthy--just all the qualities in a person that would make him just fabulous. And the thing about Harold is that he never wanted to take a front seat [*Other interviewees assent*]. And he still to this day is a foundation for SBAN, Swarthmore Black Alumni Network. And he is reluctant to take a front seat. But as you can see from yesterday, he was front and center in the photo archive that was done. [*Other interviewees assent*]

JD: So I think that's one reason that we would not have called ourselves the Seven Sisters because that would exclude a very important part of our group. So it's only now, with the other people using this term so freely, that we have sort of accepted it. But amongst ourselves we always say "And Harold." So we would not start out as Seven Sisters, because then we have to add on another important component to it.

MH: And the thing of it is, I'm not sure whether that term wasn't somewhat pejorative in the beginning. [*Various words of assent from other interviewees*]. And it may still be pejorative in terms of the image that it tries to create.

MAM: Because the single sex schools typically don't have males in their campus, right? There was a sense in which we didn't date any of the guys here. So that's another little piece of this history that--maybe since you're taking the video, let's not-- [*laughing*] We dated guys off campus. And I don't think that it was because we hated the guys, they were not interested for the most part.

JD: They were not interested, or we were not interested?

MAM: The guys here? I think it was mutual.

MH: I think it was both. It was both.

MAM: There were too few of us, let's put it that way. We'll be charitable. There was just too few to choose to make good matches. And I think there was a little bit of resentment that we were not, I don't know --

[MR]: We did not chase them.

MH: One note of correction, and I was going to say it earlier, Bridget Van Gronigen -

[*unidentified*]: Yes she did.

MH: - Bridget Warren.

MAM: Eventually, though.

MH: She married Ferdinand Warren, a matchbox marriage. So I think she goes by the name of Bridget Warren these days.

[*unidentified*]: Right.

MAM: But she was dating outside also at the time.

MR: For a couple years.

MAM: So that's just an interesting little thing. Seven Sisters is like spinster, kind of, little overtone there. But it's fine.

[*Interviewees speaking simultaneously*]

MR: I think that's correct.

JD: That would be historically correct.

MH: It was pejorative.

MR: But we didn't care! It didn't bother us. It didn't bother me.

MH: It really was pejorative. We didn't refer to ourselves as Seven Sisters, we still don't refer to ourselves--I mean our friendships are based on our bonding around common interests, common values, common core values. And a collective sense of trust and dependability.

MAM: And just one last thing, I know you want to move on, but I just think it's interesting that the facilitator, Sharon,[5] who was interviewing me the first time, she kept saying "But who was the leader, who was the leader?" And it's so interesting, the way we were raised in this society; people just have to believe there's a leader. There's one person who's gotta be behind this thing. It just can't be organic. And I kept saying, "We didn't need a leader!" We really didn't. We all were leaders. Whoever who had the idea of the day was in charge of the days' conversation.

MR: It was just different styles.

MH: Underneath all of that was a genuine respect for each other.

HW: I was wondering if you can describe the process of developing a Black Studies concentration and later the Black Studies program at Swarthmore?

MH: Well the concentration was in existence and was something that we worked on. What happened afterwards, we don't know.

MAM: The Black Studies program was after us.

MH: We had no idea what the Black Studies program is today. Once we graduated, I don't know if anyone was ever contacted by the college within 10 or 20 years after we graduated, except for the general -

MR: Alumni stuff.

MH: - alumni request for donations.

MAM: We did create the concentration, because we all have it on our diplomas, which is kind of a miracle. It's surprising that in '69, I have that on my diploma with a concentration in Black Studies and I think back…when did we get that in place, we must have done good work.

[*Multiple voices speaking at the same time*.]

MAM: We made it up.

JD: I forget the number of courses we had to take and it was certainly, they counted the courses, self-taught course, perhaps some existing Anthropology courses –

MAM: A couple of courses with Legesse. Politics of Africa.

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[5] Sharon Marsh Brown, Swarthmore College, class of 1976.

MH: There was an urban economics course.

JD: We kind of cobbled something together from existing courses and courses that we created and I think maybe even courses we had taken elsewhere, at Penn.

MR: We actually had someone teach a course here. There was a historian. The guy...Sterling Reading, I think…was he from Cheney or Temple?

JD: J. Saunders Redding[6] and Leonard Barrett.[7] These were professors that came from other...Leonard Barrett was from Temple and Saunders Redding was from Penn or Temple?

MH: He might have been from Lincoln.

JD: Yes! He was from Lincoln. Leonard Barrett, I remember he taught on millennial movements and among them was Rastafarian movements at the time and I remember that was a course we took in an auditorium. So a lot of people were interested in it. But it was something we initiated bringing that professor here. In order to get the concentration, it was not something that was organized under the auspices of any existing department or any faculty member taking charge of it or the college pre-approving that this is the selection of courses. We put together a selection of courses and we said that this constitutes a concentration. And it was acknowledged.

MAM: I think it was like 5 courses something, what would be like 15 credits, 4 or 5 courses.

MH: I also think...I remember that the College was not going to call it a major and the College was not going to call it a minor.

[unidentified] Or a department.

MH: I believe there were negotiations, so what are you going to call it?

JD: A concentration is definitely a step below a minor. I don't think it was 15 credits because that's -

MAM: We didn't even have credits in those days.

JFB: That's true.

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[6] According to the *New York Times,* J. Saunders Redding, professor of literature, became the first black faculty member at an Ivy League university when he taught at Brown University in 1949. See Fraser, Gerald C. "J. Saunders Redding, 81, Is Dead; Pioneer Black Ivy League Teacher," *New York Times,* March 5, 1988.

[7] Dr. Leonard Barrett, professor of Religion at Temple University, authored Soul Force: African heritage in Afro-American Religion (1974) and the Rastafarians (1988).

MAM: We never had credits in those days.

JFB: It was probably a number of courses.

MH: It took a great deal of effort to get even the label concentration.

MAM: To put it on our diplomas that probably was won and hard fought. They didn't want to recognize any of this being intellectually valid or legitimate.

JD: I think according to Professor Dorsey, five people got that concentration in 1969. I don't know who the five are?[8]

MAM: I know I have it.

MH: I have it.

JD: Okay, so, three of us. I don't know, who else?

MAM: Maybe Harold, maybe a couple of the guys.

JD: Yeah, maybe Harold.

HW: I was wondering if you can discuss the Black Philosophies of Liberation course which was student taught in 1969. So if you have any memories of that you would like to share?

MAM: I have the notebook, which is now missing. I think Professor Dorsey ran out to see if she can find it. They did photograph it. I can just say because...what we did was, we sat down together. Each week we met and we decided which period of the Black liberation struggle from slavery to the present. So we went all the way back to slavery, every Black liberation struggle we could figure on, we may have gone to Africa, I don't remember. We might have done Africa later on. So let's say it was 14 weeks or 12 weeks, so we divided it up. One or two of each took a week and we knew from the beginning which week was our week and our struggle, and we had to come in with the books to read and the reading assignment and the lecture or discussion, and we also said we wanted to include food from the period and even I think clothing of the period. I remember us dressing up for some of these things. We were very creative. I know we took great pride and we knew we did not this to be a dry intellectual exercise that it was going to be very holistic and we were going to create a mood and I think we had music of the period. We went all out. I remember somebody made spoon bread. Does anybody remember that?

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[8] Marilyn Holifield, Harold Buchanan, Marilyn Allman (Maye), Jannette Domingo, and Michael Graves earned a concentration in Black Studies in 1969.

MR: I think it was probably me. My mom was an expert at spoon bread. She probably did it.

MAM: Ok. That was way back and historical and most of us didn't know what it was. We got the literature, we got the book list and I think there was a professor, a white professor, who agreed to kind of sign off on it because it was the first time I think we had a student run course like that. There may have been one other white student run course parallel, I think this was the beginning of student run courses. We may have been the first. A white professor, I guess he was kind of a liberal. Whoever. I can't remember who he was. I remember he was officially the person that was going to sign off on it. I don't remember him attending the sessions. I don't remember an outsider being there. It's possible he may have stuck his head in once or twice. I think we met in Bond or the Lodges. We had a kitchen nearby. You have the notebook so you could see the different subjects we discussed. Does anybody else have any other memories, details? I just had the notebook, so it helped bring it all back for me. But I remember the spoon bread.

AK: Now we would like to talk about the 1969 occupation of the Admissions Office. How did SASS develop the idea to stage the sit-in?

AWK: Again it was a matter of deciding that something had to be done because it appeared that the number of black students was diminishing over time. There wasn't any responsiveness for the request for black faculty and staff who were not janitorial staff or kitchen staff and there wasn't any apparent movement by the College to address what was important to our needs. So we decided that something had to be done. I think that we had a non-violent approach to action. Martin Luther King was an important figure to us. He had been assassinated not too long before. The tactic of sit-ins was growing within the Civil Rights Movement and that may have influenced our thinking as an approach. How can we get the attention of the administration?

HW: Do you recall how many black students were originally involved in planning the sit-in or an estimate, ballpark number?

JD: Here we go again.

[*laughing*]

AWK: There was such a small number of us in the first place. I would suggest, my first inclination would be at least half of the black students on campus were supportive of doing something to get the attention of the administration.

HW: Do you know why some black students would not have been as on board to participate in the sit-in as the other half of the students?

AWK: Because just as with any other population group there's tremendous diversity, and tremendous diversity of thought and political perspective. African Americans are no more monolithic than any other population group. Just as it would be unexpected to have every, I don't know, Latino student agree with a course of action, that's the same thing at issue here. I think also, the income divide that Marilyn [Allman Maye] mentioned earlier may have had some influence. There were some students perhaps who - I'll just leave it at that. The income divide, that's a form of diversity as well, so that may have had something to do with it.

MR: There were also a series of events, and I can't remember the details of what they were or how they unfolded, but it was just a series of insensitivities and affronts, I guess is the way to say, that was coming from the college administration in terms of how they were interacting with us. It just kind of piled on, to the point that it's like, "Okay, this is ridiculous and we've got to do something about it." My recollection, of course, is I focused on Hargraves, or whatever his name is -

MAM: [Frederick] Hargadon.

MR: Hargadon. He was -

MAM: The Dean of Admissions.

MR: He was the Dean of Admissions, and he was just - It was difficult. One of the things that when we start talking about them publishing stuff in the library or releasing information and stuff like that. It was just a series of things that were just terrible. And it's like, things that really -

JD: Things that really said that they did not respect us, as individuals, or as a group. That, you know, "we can publish demographic data on these [Black students]." That we were like subjects, as opposed to students that they cared about in ways that we wanted to be cared about and cared for. So you have concerns like, the number of incoming students. But, that's also intersecting with the manner in which the college administrators that we dealt with responded to us. There were the kind of the objective things, and also those objective things were enhanced, if you will, by the interpersonal style of relationships that also said, "You're here, but we're not really that concerned about you as a people or as individuals."

MH: And when you look at it, decades later, there's no rational basis for understanding why the college would publish to the student body the demographic information of the Black students. They didn't publish the demographic information about the white students. And there's no way to understand that, even today. I suspect there may be some sense of lingering injury from our inability to understand: what was the purpose of displaying the demographic information of a small subset of the College student population, for use I suppose, by other students.

JD: It's like being a test subject as opposed to being a student who is, like every other student, part of the student body. They were publishing information - again it's, why? We're students, we're not subjects. You're not reporting an experiment, or are you? Is that how you -

MH: And the thing of it is, if there's one thing that is emblematic of - in today's language [microaggression] but it's a major-aggression, I suspect I would call it - if there's one thing that's emblematic of the insensitivities that lead or that led to a sense of being wronged, it is the refusal of the College to rescind its decision to publish that information. And to this day, there's never been an explanation. There has never been an apology. There's never been a recognition of the insensitivity with that moment.

MAM: And I just have a few additional thoughts. I think that the College always seemed to be feeling a need to apologize to its constituency, the white constituency, for whatever integration might do. So, you remember in the video [Shayne Lightner's *Minding Swarthmore*], they talked about, "what if this one Black student came, and he hooked up with a white girl, and they wound up with a mulatto child?" They had to protect the others. And I think in a similar way, we were considered "at risk." I never thought I was at risk, but there was this language that we were at risk. Why? I don't know.

JD: By definition.

MAM: By definition there was a risk in bringing us -

JD: [*laughing*]

MH: And Marilyn [Allman Maye], by any definition, you were not at risk.

MAM: And I was not at risk.

MH: You graduated with a double major, inducted into Phi Beta Kappa.

MAM: [*laughing*]

MH: You received Honors, I believe it was with distinction. And one thing I want to point out for the record, each one of us is highly accomplished.

MAM: Yes, that was one of my points.

MH: Each one of us has doctorate-level degrees. Each one of us has had a career that is exemplary of the best that our society could ever hope to achieve. So, the notion of being at risk is very, very offensive.

[*laughing*]

[*unidentified*]: Right.

MH: If we were labeled at risk students, the fact that that label was so wrong, so inaccurate is demonstrated by the careers and achievements that each of us has accomplished.

MAM: Yes. I hope we get to speak to that a little more. So I think, trying to understand the brain, the thinking for these people -

[*laughing*]

MH: But see, but that's just wild speculation.

MAM: That's true.

MH: We cannot identify the mindset of the privileged few that were governing this college.

MAM: Right, it would be speculation. And it is my speculation that they had to say to their constituency -

[*laughing*]

MR: You're going to speculate!

[*laughing*]

MAM: It is my speculation that they had to talk to their constituency, and put them at ease somehow, that this experiment with these at risk people was being managed.

JD: Right.

MAM: And here's the data, and you can look at it for yourselves. We'll take care of it.

MH: These are other eighteen-year-olds!

MAM: Right.

[*laughing*]

MH: These are other twenty-year-olds that had access to the college library.

JD: This was not a faculty seminar discussion -

MAM: Right, right.

[*Interviewees speaking simultaneously*]

JD: - or the Board of Managers.

MH: It is insulting that this information was made available to other teenagers.

MAM: But, I want to go back to the question you asked about why some of the Black students were not involved, and just make the comment that it's been so interesting as we've looked at the pictures that Harold [Buchanan] found of the [1969] sit-in. We just fall out on the floor laughing at some of the people that we see there in the pictures.

MR: Who were there!

MAM: Who never were part of SASS. Who we are shocked - if we didn't have a picture, we would swear it didn't happen.

MR: [*laughing*]

MAM: Because we don't remember them being there, and we can't imagine them coming in there. We know that towards the takeover, they felt that between the two evils, they'd better get in there with us. Which is amazing, I mean, that's the only interpretation I can have. That something shifted for them, in the reality outside that made them come in [during the sit-in]. And we were always willing to take anybody in, if they had a change of heart, we didn't have a litmus test or anything. But we're just stunned at some of the people that came in, and why they didn't come in before, why weren't they part of SASS before, I think is the question you were getting at. And Aundrea was saying, this is where the diversity comes in.

But I think in any population, just like in America today, you have a small group of people who see the environmental danger. They see what's going on with whatever. And then, the masses of people, kind of: "Oh, it's not so bad. Oh, it's a long time off. Oh, it'll be a hundred years." And then, everybody else. And I think we were the ones saying, you know, "this is a real problem." And then other people, "oh it's not so bad." It's just the degrees at which people get energized. But then, there comes a point when the most lax person says, "you know what, I better go with those people in the forefront because, in the end, I think I'm better off with them than out here." And I think that's how I view that transition.

JFB: And also the pressure they probably felt from outside when asked, "gee, why aren't you in there?" How could they really answer it? They didn't feel comfortable with their answer, so they felt well maybe it's better to go inside.

MR: I think it would be really interesting to just talk to them, because I don't know.

[*Interviewees speaking simultaneously*]

MH: Did anyone interview some of the students that were not supportive?

[*unidentified*]: - Second wave.

AK: Yes, I did.

MAM: And did you get any insight?

AK: I think - [*laughing*] - let me see. I don't think we're at liberty to discuss -

MAM: Oh.

[*unidentified*]: Oh, okay.

AK: - what happened within the interviews.

MH: At midnight when we push the button for the database.

[*laughing*]

MR: We'll get to see what was going on!

[*unidentified*]: We'll figure it out.

AWK: I would just like to make a comment about perspective. I mentioned this in my interview with you Laura, and with Nora, there's a book out called *Fit for Friends, But Not for Friendship* [*Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice*]. And it's written by a Quaker [Donna McDaniel and Vanessa D. Julye], who looked back into the history of the relationship between Quakers and slavery, the abolition of slavery movement. And how, yes, there was a great vocality about the wrong of slavery, and a great movement towards abolition. But, when it came to - there was an allowance for Blacks to become Quakers, but always removed. Paul Cuffee[9] was a black Quaker in Massachusetts, and

[9] Paul Cuffee or Cuffe was a Quaker of indigenous (Aquinnah Wampanoag) and West African (Ashanti) descent.

he helped build the meetinghouse in whatever the town is -- Dartmouth -- and all the Quaker members of the meetinghouse who died are buried in the cemetery, but Paul's grave and his wife Alice's grave are way way way in the back over yonder. You couldn't be buried with someone -- this whole concept of being liberal and accepting -- fit for friends, but not really for friendship and inclusion. That's how I felt here at Swarthmore, again, not really included, not really part of the fabric of the school. Allison Dorsey mentioned today that she could only find one picture of any Blacks on the campus before our era, and that was of Maurice Eldridge, back in '61, he graduated in '61. So there was that whole attitude towards us. I don't even know that the first wave of us would have been in. I learned yesterday that there was this Rockefeller scholarship and that that was how we were able to all come. I know I received a full scholarship and I'm appreciative of my opportunity to learn at Swarthmore, it's a wonderful school and intellectual environment, I made great, smart friends. But when I heard that this school, who's one of the wealthiest, most endowed schools in the country, had to wait on Rockefeller and the pressure that was going on at the time in higher education to admit Black students, more than one or two here and there -- if there was a real interest in being supportive of African Americans, descendants of slaves, why did it take so long and why did it take external money? The other thing, and then I'll stop, is perspective is so interesting. That's why Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot's comments on view were so appropriate I think. Just the very naming of the action as a crisis -- I never, until I read the article called the "Crisis of '69," I never even heard the word crisis. To me, it wasn't a crisis. To me it was, OK, you know what, we got to do something, so we're going to do this.

MAM: It was an event.

AWK: It was an event, it wasn't a crisis to my perspective.

JD: But from the perspective of the college it was a crisis because their perception of themselves as a Quaker, liberal, place -- as I would put it, they had reached the limits of that paradigm. The contradictions of the way in which Quakers have actually operated in the world, the contradictions of the paternalism and the liberalism. This was all being revealed in the way that they were dealing with us. Now you have our intervention as it were that creates a moment when they need to look at, well, we're good, but you're saying we're not good enough. This is a crisis. Your view of yourself as almost perfect was being challenged. For the College, this was, I think, a crisis.

MAM: Courtney Smith, he had gone out on a limb to have Black students, and now it had blown up in his face. And what would the haters say to him. You know, see.

JD: But it's the same paternalism of Governor Pearson bringing culture to the natives. It was the same inherent contradiction in the Swarthmore tradition being confronted with people who saw the contradictions and were demanding change. This was a crisis in the way that an institution

sees itself. Do we try to suppress them, do we change? How do we move forward from this point?

MAM: How do we handle it?

JD: Hopefully they all graduate and the next ones will be better.

[*Interviewees laughing, talking over each other*]

MH: It's like I was telling Aundrea, that when I was growing up, my father went to Tuskegee Institute down in Alabama, and as I was growing up, as dangerous as Alabama was for Black people during those days of Jim Crow, our family would get in the car and go back to Tuskegee every Founders Day and almost every homecoming, and it was that sense of belonging that my father had for Tuskegee Institute. The absence of that sense of belonging is reflected in the insensitivities that we've been discussing this morning and has created that challenge of, how do people embrace the investment that we made by coming to the College, and the College recognizing that even though we received that great education from the College, we still made an investment in the College, and the College may at some point acknowledge that our investment in the College is worthy.

AWK: So within SASS, how did students deal with any tensions that arose among themselves, and also, do you feel that issues of colorism, and I know you mentioned class before, can you just explain a little bit about how those issues influenced the way that black students interacted with one another?

MH: Well, first of all, that question assumes a lot of things that may not have been true. I'm not aware of tensions. Just because people choose to adhere to different thoughts about how you achieve change or whether even change is necessary doesn't mean that there's tension. Just because people pursue different interests doesn't mean that there's tension. If I want to have dinner with Aundrea and Joyce that doesn't mean that there's tension with the people that I don't elect to have dinner with.

AWK: That whole concept of colorism -- just look, we're all sisters. I don't understand the question. I wonder if someone had made a statement to you or to someone that even caused you to raise the question.

MR: I don't think we had any of that color thing going on in SASS. I know that as we became more politically conscious or politically aware our hair changed. Everybody's hair changed. Some people's hair changed, and some people's hair didn't change. But it was very interesting to me that what was going on in terms of people's political consciousness and growth really manifested on their head and how they dressed. This was really whether you were Black or

whether you were white. It was really very interesting. Even if you look at Laura, in terms of your roommates, in terms of what happened to them, in terms of who did develop a political consciousness and those who remained the same, it was very interesting I think and it all manifested in the hair.

MAM: So let me just say a little bit in terms of possible conflicts. All good stories have conflicts, there's got to be something. Within SASS -- you're asking within SASS -- I'm trying to think about when we might have had spirited debates. I think there was, for example, a former student we mentioned who, he never graduated, and he was older than most of us, who was very present when we were having our initial SASS set up. In retrospect, we look at him as possibly a provocateur who might have even been an FBI informant. I won't name him on the video, but we sometimes had a feeling that there were people coming into the meetings to cause trouble and to make suggestions that were going to get us in trouble deliberately. We just had instinct that we wouldn't go along with that, but that could have caused some tensions, some conversation, some debate. There was this more radical SDS group, Students for a Democratic Society group who would try to come in and try to say -- because there was a few Black students in the diversity who were both part of SASS and were part of the white antiwar movement. We considered ourselves part of the antiwar movement, but we were not going to be subject to these white students. So we would go to the antiwar demonstrations but we were not necessarily overt card carrying whatever. So you had some students were communists, some who considered themselves radicals, or whatever. And there were some blacks who went with them for a lot of stuff and would come back with some of that talk. And why do we need to do this separate thing, why don't we align with the masses and do antiwar? The enemy is the capitalists, it's not really race. So there'd be some debates about that politically with them. Some of those people, it was like, you go with them, they're not coming in and taking over. There were white students who wanted to join SASS. We fought for a long time to be exclusive. They kept trying to make us say we were being exclusive. That exclusive of course was from their perspective. We weren't thinking about them, we were trying to do something for ourselves. We kept saying that, it's not about being exclusive; we're just trying to do something for ourselves. They kept wanting to put that label on us, that we were being exclusive, and it was a big thing. There would be some Blacks that would be inclined to want to agree because maybe they felt some pressure from their friends that it wasn't nice to segregate ourselves. There were some, on the continuum between left and right, there were some differences in terms of view and I would say that there was some political tension; it would have been like that. As far as the male-female thing, I don't know that it was overt, but it might have been a little bit of an undercurrent. I don't know that the students who were really not big on SASS, I don't remember them ever coming to meetings and having debates with us because they just didn't go.

AWK: They had different interests.

MAM: They may have had tensions outside, but we always took the idea that even if they didn't

join, at any time, if they wanted to be part, they would be welcome. That was always our idea. It was never like a clique and we were the insiders and they were the outsiders. That's why they could come into the building after we did the takeover and there were no recriminations like, now you're coming. The door was always open, any time you discover you're Black.

[*laughing*]

AWK: That's funny.

MH: As you mentioned before, we don't know what happened in terms of SASS after and we do not know the details of let's say Don Mizell's leadership style [*Interviewees agreeing*] and maybe that created some tensions.

MAM: There were tensions after we left. I have been told that by people.

MH: So, but in the initial group, I think among us, even though we may have had different perspectives on things or how to do things, I just don't remember that we had real tension.

AWK: Quite frankly, we had to be cohesive in order to implement the action.

MAM: That's right.

AWK: We could not have done it and stayed there as long as we did, leaving after Courtney Smith died because of concern and out of respect for him, not because we thought we were responsible but out of respect for him, but we couldn't have completed the action unless we were very cohesive.

MAM: And that's the point.

MH: I just don't remember tension of any significance.

JD: No one went to the Admissions Office and said, listen I don't know who these people are who are about to come into this.

MAM: If they did they were from outside.

JD: No one attempted to sabotage the action.

MAM: Not from inside.

JD: Not in advance and not while we were inside.

MH: We don't know what went on after June of 1969. We can't speak for that.

JD: Myra may have some ideas since she was on campus.

MR: Amnesia. Amnesia. Was I here? What did I do my last year? The only thing I remember was applying for medical school.

JD: Were you on campus at all?

AWK: Just in the fall, and then I went to student teaching in North Philly. After I walked out of that Admissions Office I have a complete blank out.

MR: You might have a better memory maybe if Bridget and I talked about it, because we were right across the hall roommates for each other for a long time.

AWK: I seriously don't remember that --

[unidentified] You should see the photos.

AWK: -- the meetinghouse, or wherever we went, I don't have a recollection.

MR: I really believe, I'm a physician, and I really believe it's a form of PTSD that developed following that takeover. Because, if it happened to one person, two, but when it's three people, I'm going, OK. This is a phenomenon. I think that the stress of the takeover or the aftermath or something led to just big gaps in terms of what we remembered.

MH: But I also think, and we may not acknowledge it that much, but we entered graduate school and our careers at a time when we were basically the first. There was incredible stress that we perhaps have not acknowledged that accompanied our careers from the day we left Swarthmore until now because we were new to that whole world, even in education, the corporate sector, the medical field, and there were all kinds of dynamics -- the racial dynamic, the female dynamic [*interviewees agreeing*] that I'm sure operated to create stresses on us that we perhaps had never ever paid much attention to.

MAM: I also want to put in my point for faith because when I look back at some of the things that were accomplished I say, you know, there is a God. I don't care what ya'll say. [*Interviewees laughing*] I don't know how some of this stuff got done. It's just a miracle. It has to be.

MR: And we all graduated.

MAM: Yes, and I deeply believe that God was with us. We all believed in God, we would sing,

we would pray, and I just think we were doing the right thing, it was the time, we were doing what we were supposed to do, and so where we might have had gaps, God kind of filled it, little angels might have come and done some kind of thing because I can't explain how we got that concentration. There are things I can't explain, how did we all meet? What happened in the gap? [*laughing*].

[*Interviewees talking over each other*]

AWK: How did we all get out of here?

MAM: How come we're not all crazy, sitting here talking out of our heads? We've got to give you God some praise over here.

JD: We also really felt, I think, a sense of responsibility, interestingly enough, that we were responsible for taking this action, that it was up to us, that this was the right thing to do and that, in spite of the fact that we were many of us graduating at the end of that semester, in spite of the fact that we had a lot of work to do --

MAM: Scholarships at risk.

JD: -- and scholarships at risk and parents who wouldn't understand and so on, we felt that this was right, and we had to do it, we were responsible for taking the action. And I think we also, in spite of everything, had a faith in Swarthmore that Swarthmore would respond, that it was worth doing this because it would cause change.

MH: And it would make Swarthmore a better place.

JD: So we cared enough about Swarthmore and we believed that it was a place that future Black students should attend and would do well, and that we had a responsibility to make it a better experience for them and that in so doing, it would be a better college.

HW: Do you have anything else you'd like to share today, perhaps about how your participation in SASS influenced your future careers or lives of activism?

MR: I think it just carried forth, in terms of, when I left, I didn't necessarily join another Black student group or anything like that. I was immersed in trying to get through medical school or whatever, but I think that the political sensibilities that you developed, you carried with you, and it went forward. When it came time for me to step up and be a leader -- because see I was never a leader -- I was one of those foot soldiers, that's my interpretation of what happened. But one of the things that Swarthmore taught me was that it was possible to lead without being the leader, and that you could accomplish a whole lot of stuff without actually necessarily getting the credit

for it but really being the spiritual and the intellectual engine behind what would happen. That sort of thing carried forward I think and really helped me a lot in terms of what I ended up doing.

MAM: Tell us what you did, Myra. Don't be shy.

MH: It's important, it needs to be there that each one of us has had a career and has made contributions to society that the world should be proud of.

[*Two of the interviewees, Dr. Myra Rose and Dr. Jannette Domingo, share the stories of their career paths after graduating from Swarthmore College. Visitors can find the footage of their stories with the individual interviews*.]

AWK: So there are few people who know about the accomplishments of the Seven Sisters, let alone many members of Swarthmore African American Students Society. Myra's story and Jannette's story are one of many and as I'm sitting here listening to their accomplishments, what they've done for so many, I don't know if the College has even invited back anyone other than Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot to come and speak, give a lecture, and here you have just two examples from this little small group.

MH: It speaks to the point of invisibility. It speaks to the point of the invisibility of the nearly 1,000 Black alumni. Maybe Mary Schmidt Campbell from our class is the other person that they invite back for the various lectures, but our point is that within that community of 1,000 Black alumni, that all of us would probably be amazed at the stories big and small, at experiences and accomplishments that all of us have had.

MAM: Right. And the tie-in to SASS for me is that we were all activists forever. We've always been activists. It never ended.

JFB: That's what I was feeling too, that we all became change agents no matter where we went, whatever environment we were in. We would take a look at it, we would assess it, and we'd say, "how can we make it better?" and there would be action that would be taking place.

HW: Thank you so much.

AK: Thank you.