

Dr. Myra Rose Career Excerpt

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 alumna, Dr. Myra Rose featured in this footage was part of the Black student protest movement at Swarthmore College, 1968-1972. She was 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. At the urging of her peers, Dr. Rose also offered a detailed narrative of her highly successful professional career post-Swarthmore College.

MR: I did the usual sort of things in terms of medical school. I decided to specialize in hematology and oncology. I did my fellowship and what have you. I actually entered private practice for a while. I went to school in Massachusetts so we believed that universal health care was coming, and that was right behind what I wanted to do, because I didn't feel that anyone should have to pay to be well or anything along those lines. I always had a sort of socialist bent in terms of that medicine was a right, it was not a privilege, to be able to be taken care of. At some point I started working with a brand new medical school called Morehouse School of Medicine. When I was finishing my fellowship I tried to get a job with them because I knew that I wanted to teach and I wanted to give back and all that sort of stuff. To make a long story short, I eventually ended up in that school as a faculty person. I think I was the second person hired in my department, and I went on to become, three times, the interim chair. Remember now that Morehouse College, which is separate from the Medical School, is a male institution and so the Morehouse name is a male thing. I didn't fit the description of what a chair of medicine was supposed to be, but I had the talents to do the job, and so I did the job, over and over and over again, until they eventually, once they figured out that I was the one to do this, they eventually made me the chair. I had an unorthodox career in that I was elected to be the chair of medicine by the faculty. The dean didn't appoint me. They never recognized what other people saw in terms of the kind of leadership style that I had and the sort of things that I did. We grew from a very small department to where we now train sixty residents a year. I've got about fifty faculty people. We're the most financially secure portion of the clinical enterprise. All those other sorts of things; It has been a journey. The things that I learned at Swarthmore: in terms of independent thinking and questioning things and understanding that you can do what you want to do if you can figure out how to do it and what to marshal in order to get things done. That spirit I learned not just at Swarthmore, the classes, but in the interactions that I had with SASS and with my sisters.

[unidentified] Tell us about the Grady Hospital.

MR: I was working at Grady Hospital, which is the public hospital. I believe that healthcare is a right for everybody, which is part of the reason that I left private practice. Grady serves the poor population, primarily of Fulton and DeKalb Counties which are the counties that make up the city of Atlanta. We also trained most of the doctors that work in the state of Georgia. It's been a very fulfilling career because I don't have to worry about whether someone can pay for

something or not. I don't have to worry about, is somebody going to be able to take care of my patients. It was a very freeing and an expression of who I was to be able to build this sort of program and to move it to where it is now. Just before I came here, my predecessor -- I'm 66 years old, I can't do this forever -- so they finally got somebody in to take over my position. I was the Chair of Internal Medicine. I was in charge of all the medical doctors and some specialists for all of Morehouse School of Medicine. When this guy came in, he was just amazed in terms of how did you get all this done. I didn't realize it. It had been thirty years. The kinds of skills and the kinds of things that I saw at Swarthmore helped a lot in terms of being able to --

[unidentified] Nobody else would take care. That's what I'm so impressed with. On top of everything else, she goes in and she takes care of these desperately ill people.

[unidentified] And what was your role at Grady?

[interviewees talking over each other]

MR: I was working so hard. I used to joke with all the deans and the presidents. I said look, when I leave, you're going to have to hire four people to do my job. And the answer is, they are hiring four people at this point because I was the chair of Internal Medicine. I was also taking care of patients at Grady Hospital and I had clinics and I would do consult work on the patients throughout the hospital. I was also at the same time the Program Director for the Residency Program so I had all the residence trainees and I was doing all of this at the same time and I was the Medical Director for Grady Hospice. [Do] you know about Hospice Care and that sort of thing? One of the most fulfilling jobs I've ever had was as the Hospice Medical Director. It helped me to crystallize a whole lot of stuff. I was doing all these things and juggling all those things. This is what you had to do at Swarthmore. You had to read all this stuff. As I go back and think about it, I say how did I, a science major, do all that stuff to get through Swarthmore and do all these things that I so vividly remember with this group of people? I don't know what I did. Apparently, it taught me how to multi-task and do all these things at the same time and get 'em done. I've got kids. *[everyone talking]* I think people were bugging me and I had all these jobs and doing all these stuff and they were saying send me something and Marilyn kept saying send me something. So I said I can't do this anymore. What I did was, they had recently done...I got a humanism award and they named a lecture for me. *[laughter]* I also got a Humanism Award from the Gullah Society, if you know anything about them. I had that from a few years ago as well as and they now named a Humanism and Medicine lecture for me at Morehouse. I sent them an excerpt from that and these were things people said about me and it was so nice. It was just so nice. I'll shut-up now.