

Interview with Aundrea White Kelley (AK) by Nora Kerrich (NK) and Laura Laderman (LL) at the Swarthmore College Black Cultural Center on October 31, 2014. Aundrea White Kelley, originally class of 1970, graduated in 1972 with a major in Sociology and Anthropology. She was a member of SASS and one of the Seven Sisters. She participated in the take-over of Parrish in 1969. The transcription is word for word with the exception of unnecessary conversational words such as "so" "um" and/or stutter starts which have been edited for the sake of cleaner reading and clearer understanding. Mrs. Kelley's January 13, 2015 edits to this transcription appear in [brackets].

NK: So can you introduce yourself?

AK: My name is Aundrea Kelley and my maiden name is White, Aundrea White Kelley, Swarthmore College class of 1972. I originally was in the class of 1970 but I ended up not graduating til 1972 because of family and health issues.

NK: Ok wonderful. So I'm Nora Kerrich and we're interviewing at 11 am on October 31st, 2014. Ok so to start off with we wanted to get some information about how did you decide to attend Swarthmore College and what was the application and admissions process like for you?

AK: Well that's interesting because I learned about Swarthmore College by looking on the bulletin boards at my high school. I went to Girls Latin School, it's an exam school in Boston, and the guidance counselor really wasn't that helpful about talking about college plans for me. But what I always used to do was look at bulletin boards, and there was a flier that listed a number of the Quaker established colleges including Swarthmore. And because I was raised in the church and so forth, I found it of interest to perhaps attend a Quaker-based college. So I found out about that one and I also found a flier about Barnard College which is part of Columbia, and decided that those were the two colleges I wanted to apply to. When I went to visit the guidance counselor at my school, Mrs. Sullivan, she said that I shouldn't apply to either school, that I wouldn't get into any of them. That I should apply to Wheelock College in Boston or Simmons College and that I should try to go into teaching. She told me under no circumstances should I apply to Swarthmore or Barnard because I would be wasting my time. But I was a really strong student academically in terms of my grades and I scored very well on the SATs and I just decided I was going to apply anyway. And we heard back directly from someone at Swarthmore. My parents couldn't afford for me to come to the campus for an interview. So the college arranged for me to interview with, I guess an alum, who lived in the suburbs of Boston, so I had the interview with her. I ended up hearing back from the college and I was accepted into the colleges that my guidance counselor told me to apply to, and I was also accepted into Barnard and I was also accepted into Swarthmore. And the reason I chose Swarthmore was the financial aid package

NK: So were you involved with the founding of SASS and what role did you play in the group once you joined SASS?

AK: Yes, I was involved in the founding of SASS, and my role was the first secretary of the organization.

NK: And what did that entail?

AK: Keeping notes [laughs] for all of the meetings, basically, attending all of the meetings. But yes, so I was extremely involved and it was an important part of my experience here at Swarthmore College.

NK: So what was the founding process like, to be involved in discussions about founding the group and using space, that sort of stuff.

AK: I have to think about that, in terms of *the* process because basically you're talking about an evolving set of circumstances, almost an organically evolving experience. It would almost be like what's the process in growing? Its organic, so it's difficult to, for me anyway, I'm sure my colleagues will do a much better job perhaps being able to pull out some of the discrete steps. We're talking about a group of students who felt that the college needed to do more for students of color, and began to talk about that and eventually form the organization. I can remember discussions about what it should be called and that kind of thing. But I don't really remember anything about the process of interacting with the college to have it established. And so I may not have been directly involved with those conversations. Where my secretarial role was to really record our... talk about our meetings or to put information to paper about our meetings.

NK: So we know Sam Shepard graduated before the occupation of Parrish, though he returned to support the black student protest in January 1969. We were hoping to get some memories that you had of him, if you had any.

AK: I don't really...you know I...if I saw a picture of Sam, I think I remember who Sam Shepard is.. Remember I was... I just don't remember that much about him directly perhaps, I'm sorry. I don't have the answer to the question, I just don't remember. I would imagine that the Marilyns would because they were, and perhaps Joyce, because they were ahead of me. He was... I think he graduated or left the college before I may have even enrolled as a freshman I don't know¹.

NK: That's okay.

AK: I'm sorry.

NK: No, its fine.

AK: That's my worry I was telling you about.

NK: We also wanted to hear if you had any memories or stories about being a part of the... there was a student run course that happened sort of like prior to 1969 there was a Black Liberation Philosophies course where students would read different texts and discuss them. We have notes

¹ Sam Shepard graduated in 1968, at the end of Aundrea White Kelley's sophomore year.

from I think Marilyn Holifield or Marilyn Allman Maye I'm not remembering which of the two Marilyns. I was wondering if you recollect being a part of that or...

AK: Was it a formal course?

NK: It was a student run course.

AK: Well I certainly remember reading a lot of books on black philosophy, books by folks like Malcolm X and LeRoi Jones who then became Amiri Baraka actually by the way came to the college, we brought him to do a lecture. I'm trying to think of some of the others. I can see the covers of the books, but I'm not remembering the titles of the books.

NK: Some Marcus Garvey maybe..

AK: Well Marcus Garvey, you must have read my file because my thesis to graduate was on Garvey and Garveyism. I read a lot about him and his philosophy about black liberation. So I don't know if I became interested in him as a result of that particular course, it could have happened, We also, I don't know if it was that course or some other course, I remember we went into Philadelphia to see Father Divine, who was a famous quote unquote preacher who basically was looked upon as a god by his followers. He had this methodology of bringing his quote unquote followers together around the dinner table and would provide these elaborate dinners and he would sit at the head of the table and his wife would sit in one of the seats and then, in our case we were visiting so... I can remember going to see Father Divine. There were so many other books that we read that I'm blanking on right now. I'm sorry, I just don't remember.

NK: Yeah that's fine.

AK: I'm sorry, more may come back later.

NK: Yeah well maybe not so specific to the course, but do you remember any sort of, just in terms of the books that you read while at Swarthmore or that sort of informed discussions that people in SASS were having around politics?

AK: Sure Malcolm X, LeRoi Jones, Martin Luther King's writings were very influential.

You'll notice that when we took our action it was a nonviolent action, more of a matter of just being determined to pursue what was right as opposed to being militant in the negative sense.

Then there was a whole stream of consciousness and thought about what Eisenhower termed the military industrial complex that was a philosophical perspective on how the country was being run that ran through a lot of our discourse in those days. Apparently one would say that we're a country that's governed by the people for the people of the people by the people for the people but when you look at how things play out, you'll see that this military industrial complex always got its way, always received the benefit regardless of who was in power. You had the very beginnings of the Black Power movement. Ultimately the Black Panthers, and Huey

NK: Newton

AK: Lewis, I think it's Huey Lewis.² So you had that streak, so you had the nonviolent MLK stream, the Malcolm X stream that said the way forward was to be, to broaden, he brought in a different perspective than MLK, a non-Christian perspective, a Muslim perspective, which actually in the end he seemed to be more welcoming of all different colors and so forth, which wasn't true at the beginning of his life. Military industrial complex issues, and then the whole Black pride. Because you know when you grew up in those days as a person of color, especially as an African American, the legacy of slavery was still very strong, the separation was strong. That's probably one reason that SASS had to develop because in those days there really wasn't that much mixing amongst folks of different races and even my class I think had about maybe, what were there, seven or nine of us in my class? I came in originally in 1966 in the class...originally of 1970. I can remember going to the very first mixer because I was so excited to be in college and I can remember reading signs for a mixer, and so I went to this mixer but I felt pretty much alone and folks were doing things that having been raised in a strict Christian household I saw people drinking beer and I was like 'haaa' I was horrified and I went to the bathroom and there were girls throwing up, I was horrified. I never went to another mixer again because it was so foreign to anything that I'd ever done. And then the fraternities, and I don't remember if there were sororities in those days I don't think that there were, but there was really no, there really wasn't much, I really felt kind of alone a little bit when I first came. And then you have this tiny number of students that you could even perceive possibly to even have a date with - in those days you couldn't date across races. And when you have such a small number it kind of limits your options. So there was that whole separation. And the separation lead ultimately to the understanding that there really did need to be a discussion and a philosophical shift in how people thought about themselves and instead of feeling that there was something wrong with you or that you were a minority or that you were less than, that whole Black power, Black pride that whole set of philosophies began to emerge. And began to run through music, movies and so forth. If you can imagine, Laura and Nora, if you were a little girl and the only time you saw a Black person they were a maid on TV. Or if you went home and went down South and visited your grandmother or your aunt, or in my case my aunts and uncles, and I can remember doing this actually happened to me at the age of 14. I went to my mother's hometown in Laurel Mississippi. And we were so excited we were going to the movies. Now I'm from Boston, and we were going to the movies and I was getting ready to go in to the front door and my cousin said 'oh no no no, we have to go up the stairs.' And we had to sit up in the balcony in the back. I'll never forget that, we saw the rock and roll something movie. But you were, you grew up experiencing this, what's the word, almost shunning from the majority. So the idea that you could be proud of yourself was really novel, it really was.

NK: Yeah. Maybe to go back a little bit to the military industrial complex conversations that were happening, were you involved in the anti-war movement that was happening on campus?

AK: Well, yes to a degree, but what we did was... all of the colleges up and down the east coast were involved in the anti-war discussion. And I can remember going to New York, we took the

² Aundrea White Kelley is referring to Huey P. Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense

train, I think we took the train up to New York. We were going to New York and gathering together with thousands of college students from all over the east coast. I can remember we were marching in the streets and the New York City mounted police came and just rode their horses through us. So yes, most definitely, most definitely. And again the philosophy about being at war and who is it benefiting who is it benefiting. It certainly wasn't benefiting the individuals who were coming back in body bags, which happened to the guy [with whom] I went to his senior prom. He went to the war and he came back in a body bag, age 19. His name was Bobby White. So it didn't seem to make sense. Now on the one hand my dad was a military man, so I'm proud of my dad, I'm proud of the military service and there is a role, but at this particular time everyone wondered why we were involved in this war that was costing so many lives, to what advantage to our country.

NK: Yeah and so maybe, you did do quite a bit of studying around Marcus Garvey and Garveyite

AK: Garvey and Garveyism

NK: Yeah and I don't know if you were really entrenched in it around the time of the takeover, but I'm curious about do you think that the literature you were reading and the political education that you were engaging in in that way influenced the actions that happened in 69?

AK: I think that the literature that we were reading helped us grow as individuals. And for some of us helped us grow as individuals. Part of the action remember, there was a very small group of students and just the practical, even the social aspect of being in school. We didn't have those options of even socializing for goodness sake. We spent, especially the seven sisters so to speak, we used to spend hours and hours and hours in each other's rooms studying. Studying, mainly studying but also talking, so talking about these ideas and so forth, but mainly studying... And when you just looked around and saw how few students there were, the classes that were ahead of us actually had more Black students than my class I think had 7 or 9, I can't remember which, I don't think it was much more than that, maybe it was 11³. But then the class that was going to come in later had even fewer and it seemed as if we were not going to be able to have a presence, let alone a critical mass where we could live fully and enjoy the college student life. Now we did have the option to go to other campuses, if we wanted to go to a party. Most Friday and Saturday nights we were studying because there was really nothing to do. But we would sometimes go to Lincoln or hop on the train and go to Philadelphia, we'd take the Media local into Philadelphia and go to Penn to be with other students. We just really wanted to have a place where we could feel more a part of the fabric, have a presence at the college. You didn't see any people of color in administration or in the faculty, Asmarom Legesse came, in fact he influenced, helped me decide to become a sociology major and I can remember going to seminars at his house, so he was really helpful. But there was no one you felt you could go to if you had an issue or a problem, there was no one. Well that's how I felt, I can only speak for my experiences, others may not have felt that way. So we could only go to each other. We could see it seemed that the tide was changing and that we were going to be gone from the school entirely. So that's what that was about. You wanted to hear some stories. The only Black

³ 10 Black students were enrolled in the class of 1970.

folks that you saw really on campus that I really interacted with on campus were the maids and the folks that worked in the cafeteria. They were the only ones. And they would talk with us, they'd say 'oh how are you doing' when you went through the cafeteria line. And I can remember having conversation with one person who told me the story that at Swarthmore, Booker T Washington came to speak at Swarthmore. Have you heard this before? She told me that Booker T Washington came to speak at Swarthmore, and he spoke, or was it wait a minute, wait a minute not Booker T Washington, strike that, was George Washington Carver, came to speak at Swarthmore, this is what I understand, that he came to speak at Swarthmore and they burned his sheets after he left because he slept in one of the beds⁴. This is what I was told. And I remembered the story because when my mother was in high school, George Washington Carver came to speak in the white high school in her town, Laurel, Mississippi, but no white person would go and pick him up. They sent the principal from her school, she went to the Black school, to pick him up. So the principal brought George Washington Carver back to Oak Park High School in Laurel and he spoke to the students there. And I remembered thinking how ironic that my mother had George Washington Carver come to her high school and I had him come to my college long before I was there but he was basically treated the same way, you know. And it's this whole... so that was really impactful. We had maids, there were maids who would come and straighten up our dorm rooms in those days, do they still have those today? No, yeah so I remember thinking [this] shows you how different the lives are of the other students who came from probably wealthier homes than I. And I just remember thinking how ironic it was that my roommates didn't know how to iron. You know? Here we could do it since we were five. Little things like that that were culturally different, the expectations that one had as a child were different. We had more placed on us I think. And I probably went way off from the question because you made my mind start going down other roads, what was the question?

NK: Well it was just about how what you were reading and what you were talking about influenced the planning and the action of the takeover.

AK: Yeah, focusing back on the takeover. So it was just a matter of seeing it appear that the handwriting was on the wall and that we were just not going to be around. And for those of us who would be around there wouldn't be any supports or anything like that so it was just a matter of we have to...we can't let that continue. We just were determined to be able to make it better, not only for ourselves but for the students who came afterwards. And it just didn't seem like any conversation back and forth was working. You know it's really interesting, I'm in Higher Ed now, I was in a state agency initially but now I'm on a campus, and I can see how now that I can see that the actions that the college administration was taking, these committees and so forth, [were] very typical of what a college would do in order to attack an issue. From a student perspective it's not very comforting in the sense that nothing really changes. Reports get issued but nothing really changes. It was a matter of, well, how can we focus the attention of the college in such a way that there can be an actual action that actually changes something.

⁴ The story reported to Aundrea White Kelley may be apocryphal. Extensive research by librarians and others on campus has not yet been able to document a visit to the Swarthmore campus by George Washington Carver. The story is of significance inasmuch as it reveals the sense of isolation and disregard felt by some black employees at the College in this era.

NK: Yeah. So sort of going along the same lines, so could you maybe share your memories of the experience of participating in the takeover and the days being in the admissions office?

AK: I remember we planned very very very carefully, and we got all of our books and everything, and we had our toiletries and so forth with us, in our little backpacks, and blankets and pillows. And we planned very very carefully and we just quietly went up to the office and got inside. We got inside and just basically we spent the majority of our time studying to be quite honest because it was going to be... was it before? yeah I think it was near exam time, and papers. But we spent the majority of our time just studying and talking. Jannette, our friend Jannette, may say to you that we were peaceful nerds. Because that's what we were, just peaceful nerds. And we were determined that we wouldn't harm any physical property, we wouldn't damage anything, we wouldn't be loud or rowdy, or play loud music or anything like that, we were just quiet and we just came in and we sat down and we just stayed there for the days that we stayed there. I was inside most of the time, I know that there was some discussions back and forth probably between Clinton and I don't know, maybe Clinton and Marilyn Allman and the administration, I'm not sure. Remember I was one of the younger ones at the time, so I'm not really sure. But I do remember that when Courtney Smith died we felt really bad about that. It's been written I noticed in the FBI report and I noticed in a couple of the writings about the takeover... the writings that occurred after the takeover, that the students felt responsible for Courtney Smith's death but that is totally false. I don't know any of us [who] felt responsible; we felt bad for him. So after he died we quietly left because...out of respect for him and out of respect for the college. And we were sad about his dying as well, because you're not talking about someone that we had anything against personally, it was just the situation at the college that we were trying to address.

NK: Cool. I guess I would be curious to know if you, you said you were a younger student, so were you at all involved in the planning process, and what did that look like prior to the takeover?

AK: Well I guess we decided, what was going to be our action? How could we get attention? So that was the result of those discussions, was that we would take over the space. Really it was no different than a sit in. I don't know if you recall, in the Civil Rights era that's what folks did, you sat in or you occupied a lunch counter. This was part of that whole movement, that's why when you asked earlier about the philosophical underpinnings of our thinking, well this whole non-violent approach to try to get action, this was one of the strategies that was employed. You would sit down whether it was in front of a bus if you were trying to make a point about public transportation or if this [which] was about our education environment. The environment that we would experience, that students of color would experience at Swarthmore. Since one of the key issues seemed to be a dwindling number of black students who were being admitted it made sense that an action would involve, if it were to go the takeover route or the sit-in route, would involve taking over the admissions office and so it made perfect logical sense to us to do that.

LL: So I'm Laura Laderman and I'm going to do the second half of the interview. We've read that you were hired in the fall of 1969 to work as a counselor for other black students?

AK: I was?! [laughs] Where'd you read that?

LL: There were some SASS documents that explained that you were being a counselor.

AK: Oh maybe I was!

LL: Do you remember serving as an informal role?

AK: Well I did do counseling for students from Chester. In fact one of the students, his name was John. He ended up coming to Massachusetts and ended up living with my mother as a foster student. So I wonder if that's what the reference is to.

LL: It's seemed to me that this was in the time before the black admissions officer, actually it was the black admissions officer had been hired, but the black counselor had not yet been hired. Right, those were two of the demands that were accepted. And it seemed that what happened was that a few students were helping the black admissions officer.

AK: It's possible, because also during the entire time I was in college. I was also a part of the Upward Bound program, and I was a counselor for the Upward Bound program though most of that was back in Massachusetts. So it may have been that the college administration had been aware of that. I don't recall being hired, I don't recall getting extra...was I hired for free? Unless I was a work study student.

LL: That might be it. There was a discussion of how much to pay the students. Do you recall serving as a mentor for other black students in sort of supporting other black students?

AK: Probably, I would have done that any way. Because it's in my nature, I've been mentoring all my life since I was in 6th and 7th grade. I would love to see those documents, it's been so long ago. I'm so sorry and I've served as a counselor in so many different realms. I'm sorry, I'm blanking.

LL: In February when the archive is online, we will certainly send you the copy of that.

AK: How interesting. I'll ask Bob⁵. I don't know if you remember, but he has an excellent memory. And he remembers things that I don't remember. And my responsibility is such that I'm just on what I'm on. So it may be near the back of my mind. But I don't recall. I'm sorry.

LL: No, that's fine. So you mentioned Professor Legesse. We were wondering if you could share some of your memories of him, what classes you took, or how he impacted you?

AK: So I took some during my junior or senior year, I took some sociology courses with him and he was very kind and warm and it had an impact on me that he took the time to invite the class to his house and we would have some seminar sessions there. He did have a positive impact on me.

⁵Robert Kelley, Tufts University class of 1970, who was then her beau and is currently her spouse.

And again he seemed to be a very welcoming kind of person. He was an excellent teacher as well, so I think that I thrived in his classes and again, as I mentioned earlier, he helped to influence my becoming a sociology major. I majored in sociology and anthropology. And it was only my second experience in my entire life of having a teacher who was a person of color, of an African American or African. The only other teacher I had was in the fourth grade and she gave me a C in handwriting to ruin my all A report card and I've never forgiven her for that, Miss McFarland. But he was only the second in my entire life, so I'd gone to school from kindergarten to a junior in college and I never saw anyone that even remotely was like me. And I also found it interesting when he would talk about his experiences in his country as well. He was from Eritrea, though at the time I think I thought it was Ethiopia, but I think it was actually Eritrea. If I'm remembering correctly, which I may not be.

LL: And you graduated in 1972, so did you take any classes with any of the new black faculty that were recruited after the protest?

AK: I don't think so.

LL: Kathryn Morgan or Clem Cottingham or Chuck James?

AK: I don't think so.

LL: One other question that we had was about how being a woman impacted how you participated in SASS?

AK: Yeah, it's really interesting how the guys were always the ones out front. [laughs] But the girls had a lot to do with SASS being established and getting off the ground, and the planning, and even getting together and thinking of who would be a good spokesperson. And we thought Clinton would be a really good spokesman, because he had a mild demeanor and so we thought he would be a good spokesperson to deal with the administration. Because remember in those days it was a man's world. But it certainly doesn't mean that the ladies involved were not totally and completely involved in the planning, careful planning, and implementation of SASS and our activities afterwards.

LL: Do you remember how the conversation about choosing the spokespeople went? What it sort of like Clint would be good?

AK: Sort of like that [laughs], basically that is how it went. So we had very few folks to choose from. And again in those days women didn't typically take an out-front posture. Angela Davis was one of the few exceptions, and her sister was here at Swarthmore at the time, Fania. But she was perhaps one of the few exceptions, especially an African American female taking front row in student activism. And again, many of us were raised in traditional households. Girls kind of tended to take the backseat as it were. So I was the secretary, not the one of the guys. But certainly with, what's the word I want to use, certainly with the blessing of the female members of the group, including me. And he did a terrific job.

LL: Were you involved in any of the discussions or beginnings of the founded of the BCC, since you ended up graduating in 1972?

AK: No because, not really--here's why. My original senior year the second semester I moved off campus to be a student teacher. As I shared a little bit earlier. So I was living in North Philly then in a little apartment. I didn't really have that much interaction with the campus any more after that. And when I got sick and had to go home, it was actually my mom [who] had come down to help to drive me back into Boston. But what happened was that when we packed the car the night before, and when we went out in the morning the car was gone with all of my stuff in it. That's why I don't have the notes, my notes, all of my books, my records, my little jewelry that my boyfriend had given me, my letters, gone. And looking back now that I know about the FBI file, I wonder whether someone stole my car, someone from the government stole my car. When I went out that morning, I mean, so naive. We lived in the middle of the inner city, [in Boston] and I never thought that anything could go wrong with my packing my car the night before, and locking it up, and going inside, and expected it to be there in the morning. So I went out and it wasn't there, we called the police, the police drove us all around to all the hotspots to where it would have normally have been. No sign of my car, to this day I don't know where it is. That's why I wonder, now that I know about these informants and so forth whether someone was watching me and they took my car. I don't know. And that wasn't the question that you asked me, what was the question you asked me?

LL: About the BCC.

AK: The Black Center. The bottom line is that I wasn't on campus for most of the spring semester. I got sick in April and I ended up having a very bad kidney infection. And then I basically didn't come back after that. Basically all I had to do at that point was finish my thesis, so it took me a little while to finish the thesis. That's how I ended up being marked with the class of 1972. And if I see pictures of folks, I may have more memories of interactivity. But the folks who I [was] closest to were the folks who were there between the fall of '66 and the fall of '69, because my original class was '70.

LL: Any other questions you'd like to add before we asked for concluding thoughts?

NK: Let me think, I'd be curious to know how black students supported each other. So what did support between students look like, so even if you don't remember having a formal role

AK: That's a great question, how did we support each other? And you know what I've realized now that I've been in higher ed for some time. Maybe about fifteen years ago, there was this movement called The Posse movement.⁶ Are you familiar with that? So basically thinking in the higher education sphere began to realize that maybe it would be helpful to bring students in from urban areas or black students or Latino students, as basically almost as cohorts and provide experiences with them to be together to socialize together, to study together and to move through the institution together. And they gave it the name the posse because in the urban areas, you

⁶ The Posse Foundation, established in 1989, recruits students from public high schools and in partnership with elite schools works to support their successful matriculation through college.

would hear folks talk about ‘oh that’s my posse, those are my boys, those are my girls, that’s my posse, that’s my group’ and it was a way of establishing a sense of belonging and inclusiveness. And I realize now that that’s what happened with us here at Swarthmore. We formed our own little posse, its just that it wasn’t called that, we called it the Swarthmore Afro-American Student Society. All the hours and times that we spent together studying in our bedrooms - we’d go to each other’s rooms, the girls would because in those days--do they have co-ed dorms at Swarthmore now?--it didn’t happened then. Everything was all girls and all boys, there were only certain times of the week, I think it was Saturday night that you can have a boy in your dorm room, but you had to put a towel in the door, that kind of thing. So we formed our own little posse. We would be together, we would study together, we would go off campus to events together. And once we became SASS we would invite speakers in. A couple of us, and I was one, went every weekend – Alvin Ailey in those days was just starting out and he had an African dance class. So we would go in as a group, a small group, to African dance class. I could drive, so frequently I would rent, not rent, sign up for the van. Swarthmore had a van that students could use, and we would all pile in the van and go out to Lincoln or some of the places that I mentioned, Villanova, when we heard about a party that one of the fraternities was giving. So we had an opportunity to identify, search for, other opportunities beyond the campus. As well as bring folks into the campus, as well as support each other that way. And so, and we got to know a lot about each other as well. Bridget was from Guiana, I had never met anyone from Guiana. Janette was originally from the Virgin Islands. There was a lot of diversity within black culture as well that’s often not recognized. So we got to learn a lot about each other’s backgrounds, and also the things we had in common, raised the same way, disciplined the same way, listened to the same music. So we did form our own little posse, and I didn’t even realize it until you asked that question. Terrific question. And just think that’s [now] a model that’s being used now to help students who are very low income or students of color. Now that being said, the environment for students of color now is very different today. I meant to bring it with me. I have a picture of my son and his fiancé and their best friends. And they were at a cabin with six couples, so there was my son and his fiancé, African American, and then his friend Brian, his fraternity brother Brian and his girlfriend, Korean, and his friend Alistair and his girlfriend a mixed couple, Portuguese and Caucasian, and another couple Barrett from Chicago, black mom white dad, Caucasian girlfriend, and then another Caucasian couple. So the whole world has changed. The collegiate world has changed for students of color, and I think part of that had its roots way back then. So I think that having more diversity on the campus actually allows for more flexibility in how students--We were such a small group, that we felt like we had to stick together. Now, he’s at Amherst College and it’s thirty-one percent students of color, which includes more than just African Americans, but I think students feel freer to be more outgoing in terms of... [relationships] and then the environment has changed too. So it’s okay for folks of different colors to mingle and mix together. So a lot has happened that’s been for the good.

LL: Can you talk a little bit about how you perceived the relationship between SASS and white students on campus, during the campus or not during the takeover.

AK: That’s a great question too. There were some students who were clearly supportive and those were really the ones that we heard from or heard about. Really, I didn’t really hear too much that was negative. But I’m not saying it was there. Remember I was pretty much inside the

entire time. The word that would come back was that there were white students who were actually demonstrating on our behalf, and who were being vocal on our behalf, and saying yes the college should do something to bring in more students of color. So that was actually encouraging to hear. Now, Swarthmore was an interesting place. There's a book that's just been published by a Quaker author, and it's called *Fit for Friends, but not for Friendship*⁷ and it's about the interesting relationship between the Quaker movement and blacks in this country from the time of slavery to now, and the gist of it is that it's okay to say that you can be Quaker, we'll support abolition and so forth, and we support you but in terms of real friendship and individual friendship, there's still a little bit of wariness there. Interestingly, after I came to Swarthmore, a wonderful girl named Debbie, who's a white girl, had been asked if it was okay that she had a black roommate. I wasn't asked if it was okay if I had a white roommate. So it made me think when I starting reading that book, again it's like the whole George Washington Carver thing, it makes me think about this split personality in those days at the college. And I learned a lot from Debbie to, she introduced me to some terrific classical music that I hadn't had an opportunity to experience and to this day I'm a lover of Beethoven and Brahms because of Debbie.

LL: Do you have a sense of how the college thought of African Americans in terms of diversity or in terms of why the college wanted to have more black students or that sort of perspective?

AK: I'm not so sure the college wanted to have more black students and the proof is in the pudding because the class of '69 and '68 I believe were much bigger than the class of '70. So there was, I think one of those classes had about twenty black students in it I think. And then the numbers started dwindling down, and at that time, because of the Civil Rights Movement there was a lot of angst amongst higher education communities, especially the more elite colleges that they weren't providing opportunities to students of color. I'm not really so sure the college really did want more students of color. I think that after the action, they felt pressured into admitting more students of color, and diversifying the administration and the faculty. But I'm not so sure that anything would have ever happened without that action. And the proof is in the numbers. And there was this whole dialogue and diatribe, well dialogue about letting in for want of a better word, 'at risk students'. And I said to myself, they were probably talking about someone like me, because even though I had outstanding grades and tested very well, had high SAT, and even though I'd gone to an "elite school" and this gets back to what you were saying, Nora, about education and urban schools, it's just not as good. And even though in my school I'd gotten straight A's in English, and straight A's in chemistry and so forth, I said Okay, I'll enroll in some of those courses at Swarthmore. Well I totally bombed my first semester, and it was because I wasn't prepared. I was sitting next to students who had terrific science labs and probably would have done experiments that I wouldn't have thought of, they probably had the very best faculty in their high schools, maybe faculty, and they probably spent more time, because there were a lot of private school students at Swarthmore students at that time. And I realized how woefully inadequate my preparation had been. I thought back and here I was in high school in the late 1960s, but our world history book was from 1934, our chemistry lab had a Bunsen burner and soapstone sink. And so part of it was they were probably talking about me, we can't bring students in who aren't capable of doing the work. Well I was capable of doing the work as I

⁷ *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice*, by Donna McDaniel and Vanessa D. Julye

progressed and figured things out, and did fine by the time I graduated, but it was because of a poor background. I'm not sure that I answered the question. So I think that once the pressure was on there was a desire, and then the question the college was asking itself, how do we? On the one hand they may have been weighing the interests of students as well, they probably didn't want to bring in students who were going to fail. And there was no history of any sizable groups of students of color having gone through school. There was one here and one there, so they were probably trying to be fair to students as well. But I think the action made it [happen].

LL: You mentioned the transition from high school to college. Were you involved in any discussions or planning about a summer bridge program?

AK: No. Not that I recall.

LL: Is there anything else that you would like to add? That you have thought of, any other stories

AK: Well just in terms of you asked earlier about the philosophical, and I think just as much as the philosophical trends that were occurring at that particular time, also some of us back in our home cities had been involved of similar actions. Remember, I'm from Boston and at the time there was tremendous segregation in the Boston public schools and at some point African American parents had had it. And they took us, I was one of the kids whose parent, whose mother and father took her out of the public schools and we marched in the streets and we went to what they called Freedom Schools at a community center called Freedom House. The whole idea was our parents wanted a better education for us, so not only was [this] the philosophical thought of the day, but also preceding that there was an era when as children, I, we were involved in that kind of activism. It started way back.

LL: Thank you so much!

AK: Thank you!