

Dr. Jannette Domingo 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. Jannette Domingo 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. Domingo also offered a detailed narrative of her highly successful professional career post-Swarthmore College.

Marilyn Allman Maye: And Jannette's got a story.

JD: Marilyn was recently at one of my retirement events. My father was there also. [unintelligible] I ended up at John Jay College at the City University of New York. When I ran out of Swarthmore immediately after the takeovers -- I left Swarthmore after three years, I graduated in three years. I was doing about eight courses during the takeover. So I graduated in '69 and went directly to McGill University in Montreal to study International Economics and Economic Development. Then I went back to New York, to Columbia University to do a doctorate, also in Economics. Before finishing the doctorate I began teaching at City College and then at John Jay College. I stayed at John Jay for my entire academic career. John Jay was pretty new when I started teaching there, about ten years old. Through the almost forty years there, one of the things that I and colleagues have been most interested in is changing the name of the college, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, really changing the essence of it to John Jay College of Social Justice, and the College has moved in that direction. Concepts of justice have expanded. It's moved from so-called "cop college" to a real liberal arts college with undergraduate and graduate studies. Most of the time, though, I was a faculty member in the department, the new Department of African American Studies at John Jay. I chaired that department for fifteen years. In spite of efforts to eliminate African American Studies, eliminate Puerto Rican Studies, we were able to hold onto the department, to expand it, and to really make it a well-respected part of the curriculum. While chairing the department I also brought to the College the first program that was focused on mentoring first generation college students towards going on to doctoral programs. It's a program that's named after Ronald McNair, the astronaut. For fifteen years I ran that program and it was the only such program at the College because that College is primarily students of color. Most of the faculty and administration did not think of those students as students who would go on to doctoral study. We were the pioneers in that. Now the College has caught up to that, but for fifteen years the McNair program was the

only program that mentored first generation and underrepresented students towards doctoral programs. About three quarters of our students have gone on to such programs.

Aundrea White Kelley: It's remarkable.

JD: That was my other job. As a director of that program for the 15 years that I was also chair of the department. During that time, towards the end of the '90s a lot of very visible things were happening in the New York City with respect to police use of force and police brutality. The City Council funded a program at John Jay to hopefully to intervene, to educate police officers, to give them a different vocabulary and to give them a different understanding of the city in which they were working in, and the communities they were supposed to be serving. Along with the chair of the Department of Law and Police Science and one of the faculty members from public administration, we developed a curriculum specifically for NYC police officers. A curriculum that looked at issues of diversity, a combination of sociology, economics, leadership skills, really doing what I like to do, which is challenging the paradigm within which people are working.

We trained hundreds, educated hundreds of police officers since 2001 to now, being able to continue a million dollars of funding from City Council over that period of time has been another challenge. But it's hard to quantify the difference this had made in terms of police leadership, it seems to vary, the degree in which we made an impact. But many of the officers that we trained have been promoted, they have become in some cases more like my uncle, who was a lieutenant of police, a police lieutenant who was affectionately known by his colleagues as Black Joe, the African whose motto was "Not on my watch." This is the kind of leadership we are trying to cultivate within the NYC police department. So three different but related kinds of things that have been the focus of my career at John Jay: one, maintaining and expanding the role of African American Studies; secondly mentoring students towards doctoral study and initially the focus was also hoping they will come back to academia and do the same sort of mentoring, and thirdly, trying to effect police culture and police leadership. In all of that, there has also been an emphasis on creating a different kind of environment for students. One of the reasons that I have not come back to Swarthmore is because there is no professor here that I would want to come back to. The people who took an interest in me and supported me are all these people who are in other places now. Professors can make a huge difference in the immediate experience of students and in the lives of students. So being that professor...

Marilyn Allman Maye: They all came back to sing her praises. You should have seen the retirement. It was awesome. They wrote letters, the police came; all the people that got doctorates were sending letters, if it wasn't for you... Give her a hand. Give her a hand. She did an awesome job. I'm so proud of her.

JD: The last ten years at John Jay, I was the dean of graduate studies. I had moved from the undergraduate curriculum to graduate studies. I was trying to still do the same things for the master students at John Jay. One of the most enjoyable things for me, when students came to say, “Oh, I remember what you said at orientation. I followed your advice.” I had no clue what I said at orientation because it’s just spontaneous cheerleading, in terms of admonishing them about the difference between undergraduate and graduate, how to get through and how to enjoy it. That’s one thing. People come back and say, “Thanks for the orientation.” Dismissing students and putting students on probation was not enjoyable, but when students appealed, and they would appeal to the Dean and have a session with them, and the students that I readmitted and who did well and who came back and said thank you for giving me a chance.

Marilyn Allman Maye: She rescued a lot of people.