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INTERVIEW HISTORY—Reginald L. Jones

Professor Reginald Jones was born in Florida in 1931 and joined UC Berkeley’s faculty in 1973 as professor of African American Studies, an adjunct professor in the Department of Education. His groundbreaking work pushed the field of educational psychology, challenging and debunking ideas held particularly with regard to minorities and disabled children. He was committed to cultivating an arena for black scholars and scholarship in the field of psychology. To this end, he has edited a seminal anthology, founded a publishing house, and chosen to finish his career at Hampton University, a historically black university, with the aim of developing and nurturing future scholars.

At Berkeley, Professor Jones witnessed and participated in the early development of the African American Studies Department, serving as chair of the department over two terms. He also served as one of the early faculty assistants for affirmative action, which gave him particular insight into the culture and practice of this institution with regards to race and gender discrimination. In this position, he participated in the creation and institutionalization of affirmative action mechanisms.

The interview took place at the home of Professor Jones, in Hampton, Virginia, in July, 2003, during the same week in which I interviewed his wife, former staff ombudsperson and director of Student Affairs and Services at UC Berkeley, Michele Woods Jones. There were three interviews in all recorded on minidisc and digital video recorders. The interviews were transcribed and audited and sent to Professor Jones for his review. He returned the transcripts edited.

Professor Jones was interviewed as part of the African American Faculty and Senior Staff Oral History Project series. This series of interviews explores the experiences of African American faculty and senior staff at UC Berkeley as part of the broader history of the University of California and its commitment to access and diversity.

This series is grounded in the premise that higher education is one of the primary strategies for gaining social equality—access to employment and income—for historically disadvantaged communities. Moreover, the university, comprised of its students, faculty and administration, with all of its intellectual and financial resources, operates as a critical touchstone in the process of systemic social change. Therefore the university functions not simply as an educational institution, but also as a significant site of past, present, and future potential for imagining and crafting opportunity for ethnic and racial groups formerly excluded from higher education. This project recognizes that the University of California, as California’s premier public educational institution, plays a significant role in the socio-economic mobility of all of California’s residents. The story that we hope will emerge from this project is a story of California—its people and one of its most important public institutions.

This interview was conducted under the auspices of the Regional Oral History Office. The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to augment through recorded interviews the Library’s materials on the history of California and the West. Copies of all interviews are available for research use in the Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections. The office is under the direction of Richard Cándida Smith, Director and the administrative direction of Charles B. Faulhaber, James D. Hart Director of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Nadine Wilmot, Editor/Interviewer
Regional Oral History Office
Berkeley, California
January, 2005
INTERVIEW 1: JULY 14, 2003
[Minidisc 1]

Jones: Now, the ideal situation will be that I forget that that’s there [referring to video camera] and that’s there [referring to minidisc recorder] and we’ll have a conversation. That’s what I’ll try and do.

Wilmot: It’s just a satellite remote.

Jones: Like what the volume is?

Wilmot: Yes, and if it’s recording. It’s recording now. Today is July 14, interview one. Nadine Wilmot with Professor Reginald L. Jones. We usually start with the question of when and where were you born?

Jones: I was born in Clearwater, Florida, a resort city on the west coast of Florida. I was born on January 21, 1931. My parents were E. Moses Jones, a musician, and my mother was Naomi Henry, a young lady in her twenties who was living at home with her parents. She was not employed and it seems, as I recall reflecting and hearing, a young lady who was having a good time with her life, but didn’t have any clear direction, as far as I know. She had an older sister who had attended Livingstone College in North Carolina. And after a couple years, got married and had a big family. She did not complete college. My mother had a younger brother, my uncle, who attended Florida A&M University and probably spent forty years or more in the public school system of Clearwater, Florida, teaching English and later tailoring and drycleaning.

My grandparents were a prominent African American family in Clearwater. My grandfather was a gardener—that is my maternal grandfather—to wealthy white families who owned properties in Clearwater, like the Procters of Procter & Gamble. People like that. And my maternal grandmother was a domestic worker. She was a black Cuban. My maternal grandfather was a mixture of Native American, white, and African American. He looked probably somewhat Native American.

My grandparents lived in a lovely home in Clearwater that was landscaped very well with fish ponds and so forth because my grandfather knew how to do all that well. He also owned an orange grove. So, during my youth, I had access to all kinds of fresh fruit, grapefruits, tangerines and naval oranges, etcetera. My grandfather would tend to his orange grove, and then he would sell his entire grove to the highest bidder. He didn’t do any picking or anything like that. The bidders would come in with their men and trucks and take all the fruit and pay him a price.

I never knew my paternal grandmother, but my paternal grandfather had a very unique experience. He lived in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Wilmot: You never knew your paternal grandmother or your maternal grandmother?

Jones: My paternal—I never knew my paternal grandmother, but I knew my paternal grandfather, whose name was Ed Jones. He was unique in that back in the forties he owned a hat store in downtown St. Petersburg, which would be very unusual for a black
person to have any sort of ownership of a business in the main part of downtown, in this case, in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Wilmot: I’m adjusting the volumes to catch your voice.

Jones: I need to speak a little bit louder.

Wilmot: No, you’re at the right volumes, I just wanted to adjust it to capture it because you are a little bit soft-spoken.

Jones: Oh, okay. So, that was my paternal grandfather. My father had two sisters, and they were Rose and Lillian Cobb. They lived in Detroit when I knew them. My father was also Moses Cobb, but when their mother remarried, she married a man whose surname was Jones. My father took on the name of Jones. So, he is Moses Jones.

Wilmot: Did he have an “E” as his first initial?

Jones: Yes. E. Moses Jones. It was just E. Moses Jones.

Wilmot: Okay.

Jones: So, that’s the sort of family background.

My father was a professional musician, and he had a big band. He went all over the place. My mother and father never married. And they both told me that my father wanted to marry my mother, but she didn’t want to be traveling around. Maybe it was something that she didn’t feel she wanted to do.

Wilmot: To be a professional musician’s wife?

Jones: Oh yes. Maybe it was something else, but in any case, they never married. And during, at least my adolescent years, he moved to Pennsylvania and gave up his big bands and did a variety of things. He worked as a presser in a dry cleaning plant and he worked for the American Federation of Music as a field agent and he worked in a chemical plant. Then he had his band, Moses Jones and his Sparkplugs of Rhythm! I haven’t met anybody who knew him and his band, but he played on weekends around Philadelphia, in addition to his work during the week.

Wilmot: Do you know what motivated his choice to be still as opposed to being a traveling musician?

Jones: I think probably—and I don’t know this for a fact but—probably it was a tough business. You know, they had the big groups like Duke Ellington and Count Basie and people like that. And then there were others who were sort of around and not at that level and probably had a very difficult time managing. So, I suspect that he was not at that top level and probably was not able to sustain a good living as a leader of a big band that moved around the country. That was my sense. We never talked about that. So, I think that he was not at that level that enabled him to maintain his status as a musician and earn a livelihood. So, I think that’s probably why.
Wilmot: He was the leader of the band.

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: Do you know what kind of music they played? When you say big band, that generally refers to a—

Jones: —like swing music and jazz, probably. I never heard this band, at all. As a matter of fact, I never heard my father play professionally, that I can recall. Now, when I visited him, we consorted with all kinds of musicians. Every weekend, we’d be going someplace where there were musicians, and he knew these folks. Often there would be house parties, and sometimes there would be nightclubs where there were people playing music, and I was there with him.

Wilmot: How old were you around that time?

Jones: Twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years old. I shouldn’t have been in any bars or nightclubs at two o’clock in the morning. But nobody ever questioned why I was there. I was Moses’ son, and we sort of hung out together on weekends. He introduced me to all kinds of people. He was teaching me about the world. So, he would tell me, for example, to observe the piano player. He smokes reefers. So, I would observe the piano player, and so he had these lessons that he would be teaching me. Sometimes, he’d tell me to observe someone, and sometimes, he would have a conversation—he would tell me about that person afterwards. I guess he was trying to make me familiar with different kinds of people and the world.

Wilmot: Broaden your education.

Jones: Yes. Now, he was an interesting person in and of himself. For example, he probably completed about the eighth grade. And, he taught himself electronics, and repaired radios. That’s one of the things he did. And then he was always tinkering. He was trying to develop a perpetual motion machine. You know what a perpetual motion machine is?

Wilmot: No.

Jones: It’s a machine that runs on its own power. It doesn’t require any external source of energy. So, if anyone could develop one of those, you know they’d be a billionaire! [laughs] But he never talked about it as for the purposes of earning money. It was just sort of a challenge. So, he was always trying to develop this machine that would run on its own. Then, he was building what he called an “all-purpose piece of furniture.” This big cube—it was in his living room—was supposed to have everything you needed—a bed, a little kitchen area. [laughter] And so the idea, I guess, was he would manufacture this cube. And that was all you’d need. One big cube! You would have everything you needed. He’s a sort of interesting guy with these kinds of ideas.

Wilmot: He sounds like a survivalist, in terms of having self-sufficient machines and cubes.

Jones: Yes. I hadn’t thought about it that way.
His sisters were creative people. They were entrepreneurs in Detroit. At one point, my paternal aunt had a clothing manufacturing business in Detroit. She designed—had her own clothing line. That was Lillian. And his other sister, Rose, was always trying to invent something and get it patented. Example, those telephones that you see in different colors. Well, it used to be back in—forty, fifty years ago—sort of like a rectangular telephone. Well, they were all in black. Her idea was to patent the different covers for these in different colors.

Wilmot: Where did this patenting idea come from?

Jones: I don’t know. But, they always had an interest in getting things patented. Now, her idea always was to make money. She wanted to invent something that would be patented, so she could make lots of money. She always had these ideas about developing something that would lead to patents that would lead to income. So this cover for the telephone, the idea was that whatever your décor was in your home, if you wanted to have a pink phone, you’d put the pink cover on, the green, and so forth. Eventually, I guess, the company came to manufacturing these in different colors. But this was way back, even before then. And then she had this poetry. She wrote poetry she printed on these cards. Insofar as I know, she always gave them away. So, she’d be giving you this poetry! You’d have poetry on this card, about eleven by seventeen inches.

Wilmot: What would it say? What kinds of poems was she writing?

Jones: Nothing—they rhymed. That was it. They were about life and about different experiences and so forth. I doubt if she went beyond the sixth or seventh grade. But see, we are talking about people who now would be ninety years old or older. In the South, many black folks didn’t have access to even a high school education, because often they were in the fields working, or domestic workers who started at a very early age. So for whatever reason, she never—and her sister and my father—probably went beyond the eighth grade, but they had interesting talent and ideas and they were able to teach themselves lots of things.

They did very well. They owned property in Detroit and lived in very nice neighborhoods and enjoyed their lives, really.

Wilmot: Where do you trace your father’s family to?

Jones: To Florida actually, the west coast of Florida. My mother, back to Cuba, actually. Her mother was a black Cuban. I learned a lot of this relatively recently—fifteen or twenty years ago—about my mother’s background and her mother’s background as a black Cuban. She was about five feet one or two.

Wilmot: Your mother or your grandmother?

Jones: My grandmother. She was very dark-complexioned. They moved to Tampa, Florida from Cuba. And my grandmother became a domestic worker. Somewhere along the line she met my grandfather, whose grandmother, I think, was white, and there was also Native American and some African American in his background.

Wilmot: Now, you didn’t know your maternal grandmother?
Jones: No, not at all.

Wilmot: Did your mother speak Spanish?

Jones: That’s very interesting. Many people in the black community in Florida had some understanding of Spanish because of the Cuban lottery. On Saturday, every Saturday, the Cuban lottery beamed its numbers from one to ninety-nine. And the people played these numbers, you see. Half the radios in Miami, Florida, where I grew up from high school on, had the radios on because they wanted to hear the winning lottery number would be beamed from Cuba. I don’t recall if my mother spoke any Spanish. But I know that she was familiar with the numbers from one to one ninety-nine because she listened for the lottery thing every Saturday afternoon to see what was the winning number. She, along with others, neighbors and so forth, played these numbers. They got some money if they guessed the right number. A lot of that went on. But, I don’t think she spoke any Spanish.

Wilmot: You described your mother’s family as a prominent family.

Jones: Yes, by the standards of the city, they were well off: she, as a domestic worker, and my grandfather as a gardener. He had extra income because he had a large fruit grove. At one time, he had a Model T Ford, which he didn’t drive, but it was prominently displayed in the garage with the door open all the time. My uncle, his son, drove the car. He was able to send his children to college. This was back in the thirties. My mother, as far as I know, never, for whatever reason, had any interest in going to college, but I’m sure she had the opportunity. My uncle and his sister did, even though my aunt was only there for a couple of years. She married a person in Salisbury, North Carolina, and had a bunch of children. All together about eight children: six with one marriage and then two with another. After her divorce—my aunt, my mother’s sister—moved back to Clearwater, Florida.

Wilmot: What’s your aunt’s name?

Jones: Bernice Henry was her maiden name, and then Witherspoon in her first marriage, and Davis in her second marriage. She is deceased, been dead since 1998.

Wilmot: Okay. When you describe your family background, it sounds like you spent much of your early life with your mother’s family and extended family.

Jones: Right. Up until the end of the sixth grade of elementary school, my mother lived with her mother, and I was with her. And my father would come from time to time from his travels and be there. Then, he’d go back to being a musician on the road. After a while, he settled in Pennsylvania. I would visit him in the summer.

Wilmot: As you became a young man, as you became a teenager.

Jones: Yes. I would get on the train in Clearwater, later in Miami. I’d have my little shoebox with fried chicken and bread and so forth. And I’d be on my way up to Pennsylvania to spend a couple of months up there. My father worked during the day for the most part, and I would hang out and play basketball and walk around the city. I got to know the
I was a good kid; I didn’t get into any trouble. My father and I got along very well. I cannot recall any time there was anything like discipline.

Wilmot: Didn’t come up.

Jones: No.

Wilmot: What instrument did your father play?

Jones: He played saxophone.

Wilmot: Okay.

Jones: He had his band. I’ve got a little picture I’ll show you of Moses Jones and the Sparkplugs of Rhythm. I had a big one, and I’ve got a smaller version I’ll show you here with his saxophone and all of them. He had women in his band, too, who not only sang but played saxophone and so forth. That was my experience with him during the summer.

Wilmot: Once he came away from the big band type of music, with his new band, what kind of music did he play?

Jones: Same kind.

Wilmot: Okay, but it was just a stationary band.

Jones: Yes, and it was on the weekends, basically, clubs and so forth. Of course, there were lots of clubs, probably still are, around New Jersey and the Philadelphia area. So, he would be playing with his group in those nightclubs and so forth.

Wilmot: How was he regarded in his community? What was he known for?

Jones: I don’t know. In Chester, Pennsylvania, I’m not sure he had any reputation of any kind, really.

Wilmot: I’m just kind of taking in my mind when you said people would greet you and say, “Oh, that’s Moses’ son.”

Jones: Well, that would be among his people that he would consort with at these parties and so forth because he knew all of these musicians. That was probably the base, and he knew lots of ladies, too. I guess they had been inviting him to these parties. Some of them, the ladies, would take me under their wing. So, two o’clock in the morning, they’re having a party in some place, and here I am. So, they would come over and talk to me. And I speculated once they were trying to convince my father they’d be a suitable mother.

Wilmot: That’s definitely a strategy.

Jones: Yes. [laughs] They would talk to me, and I’d have a conversation with all different kinds of people at these parties and nightclubs and different places. So every weekend,
we would be doing something, going someplace. I feel confident in stating that there was a party or some sort of activity every weekend that I was with him in the summer.

Wilmot: You said that he would always tell you lessons or show you lessons about humanity and people. I’m wondering what lessons did you come away with? If you think of the ones that stick in your mind, what are the lessons that he really took from those experiences?

Jones: There are all kinds of folks. Black people have great diversity. I speculated that probably these experiences led me to go into psychology, even though, initially, my plan was to major in chemistry, but I learned very quickly, early in my college career that I was not cut out to be a chemist. We had a professor at Morehouse, whose name was Henry Cecil McBay. He is now deceased—but he produced from little Morehouse College forty individuals who went on to get Ph.D.s in chemistry. African Americans. That was quite a feat, actually.

Wilmot: I’d like to move into your Morehouse years a little bit later because I’m still really interested in hearing more about your family.

Jones: So my father, how was he regarded? Among this set of people, probably as an interesting person who was fun loving, I guess. Just an interesting person to relate to because he was always being invited to different parties and so forth on the weekends. He seemed to know lots of people. I recall when he had died back in—let’s see, I was at UCLA, that would be around 1965—I went to his funeral, and a lot of people came up to me to say how he’d been helpful to them in their musical career. That was a side that I didn’t know. I knew he had connection with these people but—. Some of them felt he had helped them in their careers. His legacy, I guess.

Wilmot: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Jones: I have a half-brother and a half-sister.

Wilmot: On your—

Jones: —on my mother’s. My mother remarried, while I was in the sixth grade in Clearwater. Then she and her husband, Charlie Johnson, who was really a neat person and a great stepfather, was a truck driver for a flower shop in Miami Beach, Florida. So, when I graduated from elementary school, I moved to Miami with them and completed high school. Near the end of high school—my brother was born first, and then my sister.

Miami, by the way, was and is a tough place to grow up. We lived in what essentially was a ghetto. We lived in what essentially was a one-bedroom house, the four of us, initially. I slept on the couch in the living room. My mother and stepfather were in the bedroom. When my brother was born, he was in the crib in the bedroom. And there was a kitchen. The entire complex was probably no bigger than from here to the end of that media room. There was a kitchen, was big enough to have a little table.

Wilmot: So you’re saying the house was probably about twenty yards.

Jones: It was row house. Oh, not yards. It was a row house.
Wilmot: Sixty feet? No, forty feet.

Jones: I’d say probably about fifteen by—I’d say this whole complex would be probably from the top of those stairs, maybe, to this door. Something like that. From here to there.

Wilmot: Yes, I think fifteen by twenty-five feet.

Jones: Yes, something like that. It was very small. Maybe a little bit bigger, but it was small. They were row houses. And you could hear everything on both sides of you, the wall. Then, the top—there were probably about ten units connected. You had your access to the attic, but the attic wasn’t separated. So, if you were a thief of some kind—and there weren’t any there—you could just go up into your attic and come back down into anybody’s house! [laughs]

Wilmot: Or if you were a child, you could play up there.

Jones: No, it wasn’t—

Wilmot: —it wasn’t that kind of situation.

Jones: No.

Wilmot: What’s this neighborhood called?

Jones: It was called Overtown. That’s the way it was referred to. Overtown. There was a lot of violence, a lot of alcohol in that community, shootings. And weekends were terrible. People would be fighting all the time; there’d be shootings and so forth. But in all of that, we were sort of like in a little cocoon.

Wilmot: A little cocoon?

Jones: Yes. And my mother, she kept us in line and ran things. We never had any trouble with anybody, really. We didn’t get out of line, either. My mother was a disciplinarian, a verbal disciplinarian. She would discipline us by telling us how disappointed she was in our behavior. That was enough, really.

She worked as a domestic worker. The interesting thing about my mother was she was a voracious reader. She used to read these true story magazines and these novels. Romance novels about these far-off places and so forth. She told me my name was English and French. Reginald was English. Lanier was French.

Wilmot: Reginald Lanier Jones.

Jones: —Jones. So, that’s how she came up with my name.

Wilmot: So, you weren’t named for someone in your family?

Jones: No. She came up with this.

Wilmot: From reading—
Jones: —English and French. That’s what she wanted to have [laughs]. She named me Reginald Lanier. Now, my brother and sister, they had different names—Cheryl, my sister, and Kenneth. They were not connected to anybody, but my mother always wanted a girl. She has told me and my sister that the happiest day of her life was when her daughter was born.

Wilmot: Was Cheryl just after you?

Jones: No, Cheryl was the youngest. Cheryl is now forty-eight years old, I think. She was married last year for the first time, though she’d had a child while she was in high school. But she went all the way through, well, community college and the University of Miami with a degree in accounting and then law school at the University of Miami. She lived at home with my mother and stepfather, her parents, while she was going through school and eventually working. Her son was basically taken care of by our mother. My brother graduated from high school, and he wanted to be an electrical engineer. He applied to Howard and was unsuccessful in getting in. He went to Morehouse. He was there for two years. Then, he decided to join the military. So, he went in the navy and spent twenty years in the navy. He was stationed in a lot of places, but eventually landed in San Diego, which is the location of many naval people.

Wilmot: A military hub.

Jones: Yes. While he was there, he graduated from college at National University in computer information systems. I went to his graduation—I was in Berkeley at the time—and it was the most interesting service, the most interesting commencement I’ve ever seen. It was outdoors, San Diego was known then for beautiful weather.

Wilmot: A beautiful place.

Jones: Yes. The president said, “We’ll bring the diplomas from the heavens.” And the dean of students was in an airplane with a parachute, so he had all the diplomas. So, he parachuted from the plane into this little area or circle, landed there in the circle, and he had a knapsack with these diplomas. He took off his parachute, went up to the stage, and he gave the president the diplomas. Then, the other interesting thing was that it was outdoors, and when you came up to receive your diploma, you would bring anybody you wanted to come with you—your friends, your girlfriends, your wife, your children. So, there might be six, eight, ten people all going up with the recipient of the degree to get the diploma. He would shake everybody’s hand, they would hug one another, etcetera. And usually what would happen that as soon as the people got their diplomas, they would leave. So, if your name were “Wilmot,” and you went up to get your diploma, there wouldn’t be anybody in the audience, practically, except your friends and relatives, whoever you had as your support. So, that was my brother.

Wilmot: Did your brother take people up on stage with him?

Jones: I think his wife went up with him.

Wilmot: Okay.
Jones: And we were the backup taking pictures and so forth. He has had two wives, I think. Yes, I think his wife at that time. He’s worked at computers there, and now he’s out in the Seattle area, Washington. He is unemployed, literally. He went out to work with Microsoft in very interesting kind of arrangement. Apparently, it was not a permanent job. They bring them on for six months a year or something, and then they have to leave. It’s sort of like turnover; there was no permanence to it. So he assumed that he would be able to continue, and he wasn’t. So, he’s working on his master’s degree in computer information systems. I think he’s got a job at the post office for a short period of time while he’s trying to get back in the computer business. But, he had a good job in San Diego, but for some reason, he either misread, or he was misinformed about the nature of the Microsoft position. So he’s there, and my sister and I have had to help him out financially and get him on his feet, again. He has a wife and three children, and she works. And he has his navy pension which takes care of his mortgage. But they need extra money. So, that’s my brother.

My sister as I said was married this past November. Michele was the maid of honor, and I gave her away. She has worked in the District of Columbia in the legal department for about seventeen years. She enjoys what she does. Her husband is a mechanical engineer. He had been married previously. They met on a blind date some years ago and decided to get married. So, that’s my sister.

Wilmot: Very fortuitous.

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: I wanted to return to when you were talking about moving to this row house in Miami. Who were your neighbors? Not by name, but in terms of the demographic of your community.

Jones: It was all black. We’re talking about 1948.

Wilmot: Native-born or foreign-born.

Jones: Well, a lot of people in the community—Miami, Florida, Overtown in the 1940s was a rigidly segregated area. So, black folks occupied an area probably about twenty square blocks or something. There were these row houses. I don’t think I knew of one family, personally, who owned their own home. I knew of people who did, but I didn’t know their names. There were a couple of schoolteachers who may have owned their own homes and a couple of physicians in the community. They had their homes. But 99 percent of the people, insofar as far as I understood, didn’t own their homes.

And there were these row houses. I would say that, actually, the length of this house, probably, would be the length of the row that my family lived in. There were probably about ten units. The front of the house was probably not quite the size of this couch because you could only get one chair in this little area. Like this much here [gestures to demonstrate], and there’s a little railing area, and then you come up the steps here, and you come into the door. So, there was room for one chair if you wanted to sit down in the front, maybe two. One or two. As I said, all these houses, ten row houses were maybe the length of this house right here that we are in right now.
Our neighbors were all black. Some were from the Bahamas; many were from Nassau. A big group of people came from Nassau. So, I’d say that from a single place, it would be Nassau. Later, the Haitians have come in large numbers. But during that time, I don’t recall anybody except black folks who were from the U.S. and from Nassau, the Bahamas.

Wilmot: And doing what kind of work?

Jones: Oh, domestic work basically. And there were schoolteachers, and there were some schoolteachers, by the way, who came from the North. In high school, I had some very good teachers. We had one teacher who had a Ph.D., and many of them had master’s degrees from Northern universities. Some even had, I can probably think of two, who had bachelor’s degrees from Northern universities who came to Florida to teach. So, we had some good teachers.

Wilmot: You described where you spent the first twelve years of your life as a resort city with an orange grove. What was that transition like for you, moving from living with your mother and your grandmother to this new community? What was the transition like in terms of the community? How did you find your way in this new community?

Jones: Well, fortunately, when I went to school in the seventh grade, I hooked up with a couple of young people also in the seventh grade. They had been friends for years, since the elementary years.

Wilmot: Friends of yours?

Jones: No, they had been friends of each other for years, and they came to the seventh grade. And for whatever reason, I landed in the same home room that they were in, and somehow I got connected to the two of them. So, the three of us became friends, good friends. And so, I had from the very beginning a nice little base. Nobody lived that far from one another, one person was named John Devoe. His father was a junk dealer. He had a truck, and he picked up junk and sold it. My other friend was Austin Jones. He lived with his sister and his mother. His father was deceased, and his sister and mother lived together with his brother-in-law. Of course, everybody was a domestic worker. He told me about his—was it his father?—who used to do this processing of hair with lye. That was his part-time job. People used to call the processed hair conks.

So, the transition was easy and good because, I think primarily, because I met these two good friends and became a part of that little group. And these were, you know, serious students. Still fun loving, but serious students.

The brother-in-law had a shoe shine booth in downtown Miami, and it was tucked in between two buildings. It was about the size of this couch. It had a door that you could close, and it was about as deep from this end of this coffee table to here. So, he had this shoe shine booth. And on weekends, the brother-in-law would let us have access to his shoe shine booth. We would go down on Saturdays and Sundays and shine shoes, polish people’s shoes who went downtown. There were a lot of sailors. We’d do that, and we’d make a little money. And we’d go to the beach or do something fun. These were young guys who—just good people. Worked hard. Even in high school, we had jobs. For example, during the latter two years of high school, I had a job working the flower shop
with my stepfather. My stepfather worked always during the Christmas holidays. I worked in the flower shop in Miami Beach, and when I was in college, when I came home for Christmas, I’d work for two weeks in the flower shop, and I received extra money from that.

Wilmot: Did you bring flowers home?

Jones: Oh, we always had flowers at home. All the time. Fresh flowers. And dish gardens, we always had one or two dish gardens.

Wilmot: Dish gardens?

Jones: Dish gardens. There’s one up there. A small one, up in that bar area. But these would be more elaborate. So, we always had flowers. We always have flowers here, by the way. Tomorrow when you come, probably there will be flowers. We use a big vase, right there on the end of that counter, roses and so forth, for Michele. So, flowers are a part of life.

Wilmot: I had a question about this. During this time, was your mother working?

Jones: My mother was working as a domestic worker. She would clean white folks’ houses, basically. It was not a steady kind of a job, but she had one of these jobs from time to time.

Wilmot: So, she didn’t have one family that she worked with in particular?

Jones: Not for long periods of time. Now, my grandmother had that, and her sister, I think, back in Clearwater had these long-term sort of connections to families. These families, you know, would take care of their servants in a different ways. For example, my first cousin, Doris, worked with her husband for a white family, and they lived in West Palm Beach. They would go to Connecticut in the summer, and they’d be in West Palm Beach for the winter. This family sent her brother-in-law, her husband’s brother, through college and medical school. Built them a house with a separate unit that they could rent out that would take care of the mortgage payments and so forth. Bought them cars. There were a lot of situations like that in the South where these white families took care of their black servants. So, my cousin’s husband was a chauffeur, and she was a maid in the house. They would take care of the house in Palm Beach, and they would move to Connecticut, and they’d come back and so forth. Back and forth.

So, my mother never had any arrangement like that, but my grandfather did have one of these steady people like the Proctors of Procter & Gamble and the Robeson, as I remember. They’re the people who built the Brooklyn Bridge. So, they had these summer homes, and these were enormous estates. For example, the Procters’ estate was one block. One block long. So, it’s like this house here, sitting right here, and then a grass area that extends one full block. I recall when summer when I was going to help my grandfather I was visiting, I said, “I’ll help you.” And so he said, well okay, you can start mowing the yard.

Wilmot: Just start mowing those three acres there. [chuckles]
Jones: Yes. He had a hand mower. And you’d cover about this much. [shows with his hands] So, you’d walk a full block, and you’ve covered this much grass. So, you know, we started about six-thirty in the morning, and then he’d come home at five o’clock, have dinner, and then go out in his orange grove and prune and fertilize until he couldn’t see. Then, he’d sit on the porch and listen to his radio, go to bed, and get up the next morning and start all over. They had a wood stove, so in the morning he would prepare breakfast, and he would stoke up the stove and he’d make biscuits and all kinds of things. We’d have breakfast. My grandmother, she’d go off in her direction. He’d go in his. And sometimes I’d go with him. I’d go down to visit her. They both rode bicycles all over town.

For example, he lived three or four miles from where he worked! He would pull his lawn mower with one hand, behind his bicycle, and he’d have his little lunch in there and his tools, in his little basket. That was quite a little challenge!

Wilmot: He just kind of balanced all these things.

Jones: Yeah!

Wilmot: You know one thing, Professor Jones, I am not sure if you’ve said their names already, I haven’t caught them, and that’s your grandparents’ names.

Jones: Well, his name was Herman Henry. And she was Margaret Henry. My aunt was Bernice Henry, then Witherspoon, and later Davis. My uncle was Edward Henry. So, those were my grandparents. They were hardworking people. But, they had a lovely yard with all these fruit trees and shrubbery and all this stuff. Cherries and hedges and all kinds of loquats and kumquats. In the yard there was a fish pond and nice big trees with the moss on them and benches around and so forth. In Clearwater, there were probably no black people who had anything like that for several reasons. The house was a nice house, and like a lot of houses, it had a front porch. We had swings out there, and then a living room, dining room, the bedrooms over here and the living room and the kitchen on that side. And the hallway, etcetera, and a front porch and a back porch. And early on, an outhouse because it was not a part of the house—a lot of people had outhouses.

Wilmot: Can I ask you a question?

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: Was it safe to have that kind of visible prosperity as an African American man in the Clearwater community?

Jones: No problem. No problem whatsoever. It was a rather close-knit community and they had no problem with whites at all, as far as I know. Now, the interesting thing about my grandparents with respect to race is that I don’t recall any discussion of race in their home, whereas my home in Miami, Florida, every day there was some discussion about black folks or white folks. We subscribed to the Pittsburgh Courier, a national black newspaper. It was like probably Jet magazine. It came out once a week and had all the news about all the black people everywhere in the United States. There was also the Miami Times, a black newspaper. So we subscribed to those papers every week. We’d be reading these newspapers and talking about what was going on with black people
and so forth. Joe Louis, the boxer, Philippa Schuyler, the prodigy and all this. I was well informed about all kinds of black issues—people and personages—when I was growing up because I read all these papers and we’d talk about these things at the dinner table, every day practically, something about race was discussed in the home.

Wilmot: So race awareness or race consciousness really came to you in Miami when you were in your early adolescent years.

Jones: Yes. And now, the flower shop where my stepfather worked was on Miami Beach. That was like a little South Africa. You had to have a police pass if you were a person of color on Miami Beach. And after six o’clock P.M. if you were there, you were subject to being stopped and questioned and so forth. You’d have to show your little pass, your I.D. card that had your picture on it.

Wilmot: Did that ever happen to you?

Jones: I think maybe once. I had to stop. I was waiting for some transportation to go home. Most of the times, you see, my stepfather drove the flower truck home because in the mornings, sometimes we’d be delivering flowers—that’s the other thing we did. So, all over Miami Beach, often I would be with my stepfather, and we’d load up a truck with these orders. He’d drive through these places, and I’d deliver these flowers for these private homes, mostly. Sometimes, we’d be decorating nightclubs, you know, fifty tables with plants and flowers and different things. We were mostly together.

So, it was rare that I would be standing on the street corner, waiting for transportation to go home. Probably one out of a hundred times, very rare. But I’d get to go all over Miami Beach and see these beautiful homes and deliver flowers and plants and so forth.

Wilmot: Was this pleasurable work?

Jones: Well, except it was hard during the vacation times because we’d get up at four o’clock in the morning. So, like on Mother’s Day—you know that’s a very busy day—so we might get home at ten o’clock at night and get up at four o’clock in the morning and start out again. Because what I did in the flower shop was I kept the floors clean, and I cut wire. Now, you see these foam pieces that you put the flowers in; you can design with the foam. Well, we didn’t have that back then. What they had was chicken wire, where you could cut them into little pieces, and then you form it, and you put it inside the vase. Then, they would arrange [flowers] through all that wire. So, I’d have these big rolls of wire that I would spend a lot of time cutting; it wasn’t easy. Cutting this wire into little squares like this [shows with hands], and I’d have a big stack. I’d keep the floral designers supplied with these big stacks of wire, so all they had to do was take the form and put it in the vases and do whatever arrangement they needed to do.

Wilmot: I was wondering because I think there’s this romantic notion of what working with flowers could be like and then there’s the reality, so thank you for answering that.

Jones: It’s a lot easier now to do, but back then—and I kept the florists supplied with wire from their arrangements. I watered the plants. My workplace was a beautiful, beautiful flower store on Lincoln Road, which was the prime road on Miami Beach, maybe still is; nothing but upscale, very upscale shops and stores on Lincoln Road. And the Exotic
Gardens, that was the name of the place, was one of those upscale flower shops. We’d sell flowers to all kinds of people, and they would be delivered. I would do a lot of that work. But the for me there was no glamour—it was hard during, as I say, these vacation periods. During Christmas, we’d get up at five o’clock in the morning or four o’clock, work all day all night. My stepfather would—this Exotic Gardens was a very sizable operation, so in the mornings, we’d load up his truck with flowers and plants and then bring it over to Miami Beach. They had two or three shops, and they had a central place where they grew plants and flowers and orchids. We would bring the flowers and plants over to Miami Beach from the central location.

Wilmot: I have a question about geography, which is you described the work your mother did as domestic and that in your community, Overtown, people were mostly employed in a domestic capacity. What communities did they go away to work in? Where would they go to work?

Jones: Well, just in Miami and Miami Beach.

Wilmot: What neighborhoods? Miami Beach?

Jones: Yes. The white sections of Miami, and the white sections of Miami Beach. They had some people of extraordinary wealth in those areas. Beautiful—these were wealthy people who came from the North. And in many cases, they were there just during the winters, but they maintained their homes all year round. They had servants who—I’m talking about thousands of people, not just a few, thousands of people who had these homes on Miami Beach that they only lived in for a few months of the year. But, they had people taking care of them—gardeners and maids and people like that. And many of them were black people.

Wilmot: So, it sounds like in some way, you went from one kind of resort city to a much more concentrated, magnified service community.

Jones: Yes. And in Clearwater, Florida, black people there did essentially the same thing. They were domestic workers, for the most part. But it was a very nice little community, very supportive. You think about racism and segregation, but there that wasn’t an issue. It was never dealt with to any significant degree that I can recall. It was as if black people “knew their place” as a way of describing it. There were no tensions or antagonisms. You lived over here; they lived over there. And the black community had its little theater and its restaurants and shops and stores, a few—not that many. And people lived side by side without any problem.

That was the case in Miami as well, except that there was something about the dynamic that black people turned on themselves. So, there was always fighting and drinking in the black section of Miami. Now, that might have been the case in Clearwater, but it was not apparent to me because of where we lived. I lived in a developed and family-oriented neighborhood. And there were sections of town, other parts of town, where the people there maybe didn’t have as much. So, we were sort of insulated, in a sense, in our little community. I think of it fondly actually as a great supportive environment.

Wilmot: You speak of it very fondly. I have another question, which is about when you describe this community Overtown’s group of African American, and perhaps, Afro-Caribbean
people. Was there ever a sense of awareness around race that was like diasporic or pan-African?

Jones: No, no. Not really. I think that came much later. We’re talking about over fifty years ago. [laughs] Now, that’s a long period. No, not back then, not at all. I think there probably were some folks who were maybe Communists or left-oriented, certainly, who came into the community to try to get black folks involved in some things. But, I don’t recall any great success at it. But, that’s pretty much it. I don’t recall any radical people at that time in Miami, Florida.

We lived in the Overtown area, a teeming ghetto. It’s different, now than then. Now, it’s really not that good, you know, the drugs, a lot of different kinds of violence. There was domestic violence. There were people who were turning on themselves. It was largely on weekends, when they were drinking, and so forth. These were people who would take out their frustrations, probably, on themselves.

Wilmot: A lot of despair.

Jones: Yes, because of their living situation. There were some areas that were notorious for violence. About two blocks from where we lived was a section called Good Bread Alley which was an area where there was a lot of violence.

The point I was making is that there’s a different kind of violence now, in Miami, than then. Now, the violence is against others. So, you have to fear being robbed or assaulted, something like that in these communities. Whereas that was no a fear at all in Miami when I was growing up. You could be walking down the street at two o’clock in the morning, and you didn’t have to worry about anything happening to you. Whereas now that would not be the case in many sections of Miami.

Wilmot: Professor Jones, I have one last question before we take a break. What kinds of stories did your family like to tell about themselves?

Jones: You know, I don’t recall any stories in which my family talked about themselves. I’ll think about this over the break, but I can’t think of—

Wilmot: —I’m speaking more in terms of general qualities that they liked to say they were.

Jones: I don’t ever recall a discussion that touched on that. I’ll think about it. But, “we’re like this or like that,” I don’t recall. I don’t believe there were any such conversations. I don’t believe—I don’t think so.

Wilmot: Well, I’ve definitely heard from you a relationship with land and plants. Heard that just through your grandfather. And the stories you told about your father and your aunts and how they were creative and resourceful. There’s definitely different things I’ve heard. Perhaps the question has already been answered.

Jones: I’ll think about it some more.

Wilmot: Okay, let’s take a break.
Jones: Is Dan Boggan on your list?

Wilmot: No. Should I try and track him down?

Jones: Definitely.

Wilmot: Where was he?

Jones: Dan Boggan was the vice chancellor for Business and Administrative Services. I thought about him because when I was in Ann Arbor last week, a person I know there told me that Dan was retiring and returning to California. He’s at Indianapolis now at the NCAA headquarters. Now, Dan—do you want to hear this now?

Wilmot: Well, at this time it’s recording, do you know that?

Jones: Well, I’ll tell you about Dan. First, he came as city manager for Berkeley! Then after a while, he became vice chancellor for Business and Administrative Services. And he was there for a number of years and then he went to the NCAA as some sort of vice president in Indianapolis. And I just learned last week that he’s retiring from that position and coming back to California! So I think he would be—he was [Chancellor Ira Michael] Heyman’s vice chancellor for Business and Administrative Services. So he would be the number-three person on the campus! And as I said, he’s coming back to California, they say.

Wilmot: You’re right, he would be very important to talk to. Let me write down his name.

Interview one, minidisc two, Professor Reginald Jones. Okay. I wanted to start with this question, which in some ways, you’ve kind of addressed. How would you say your parents’ philosophy of parenting were different?

Jones: I think my mother did a job of parenting that I really am impressed with. There was no physical punishment for any misdeeds and there was, as I indicated, an expression of disappointment when I behaved in a way that she felt was not appropriate. That probably was consistent with the way I learned to think about things. My father, I don’t recall any sort of a disciplinary action on his part. Now, we interacted mainly when I was a preteen up to my teen years, but I guess I never posed any problems, so discipline was not really an issue with me. And one of the very interesting things that has hit me as I reflected on it concerned receiving advice from my mother. When I was growing up, I had advice from her in different areas. When I came home at the end of my freshman year from Morehouse College, from that day until the day she died, my mother never gave me advice on anything related to my behavior. I’ve reflected on that, and I felt that her view was that she had done her job and that I was off on my own and that she didn’t need to give me any advice about anything. [laughter] What I was doing, not doing. She never, not one time, ever said anything. She came closest to it when I had a girlfriend at Spelman [College] and this lady came to Miami during the Christmas holidays. She met my mother and so forth and my mother liked her. Somehow, we never went further, after a year or so. But my mother always asked me about this young lady. That's the closest she has ever come to saying anything to me about what I was doing. But other
than that, there was no discipline, no chastising, nothing. Now, I think it would be unwise to suggest that I was such a good kid that I didn’t need any advice on anything. I probably did. But, she never suggested or made any comments about what I was doing or not doing.

Wilmot: This is another follow-up question. The land that you described in Clearwater, is that still in your family?

Jones: No. That is an area where businesses have now developed. My uncle brokered the sale. Now, it’s a developed area with big buildings and highways running through the area. That was quite a lot of land, too.

Wilmot: And the area that was called Overtown—

Jones: —that’s Miami.

Wilmot: That’s Miami. What’s happened to that and those little row houses?

Jones: That’s where the freeways now exist.

Wilmot: That’s what I thought.

Jones: I think that when we were there, we paid, I think, six dollars or ten dollars a week for that little house.

Wilmot: When you and your family lived there?

Jones: Yes. And then they moved to another part of town, Liberty City. When my brother and sister were growing up, they went to another high school over there. So, my parents bought a house. It was located on a sizable piece of property, and they built a duplex on that and eventually moved into one side. They also rented out the other side. They rented out the house, so they had a little income from their property. My father died—actually, I was at UCLA—in about 1965. My stepfather died when I was in Ethiopia in 1974. I came back to Miami for that funeral.

Wilmot: What were you like as a child?

Jones: I was a good child. I was doted on by my grandmother, especially.

Wilmot: This is Margaret?

Jones: Margaret, uh-huh. I think she just saw me as her son. And throughout my life, wherever I was working, my grandmother came to visit with my mother and stepfather and sometimes sister and brother, depending on where we lived. So, they came to California several times to visit. When I was in Nashville, my grandmother came to visit, and I was only there for one year. When I was at Miami University in Ohio, my grandmother came to visit. And when I took my Ph.D., my grandmother was there. So, she was always there, my greatest supporter. In the view of some people, they might say that I was a spoiled child. That I was doted on, et cetera, but probably that wasn’t the case. I was just a good kid, really. I didn’t get into any trouble, of any significance. I can recall
that when I was in elementary school, a girl dared me to pour some juice on her, and I did that. Got in trouble [chuckles]. Nothing serious, really.

Wilmot: Were you a great reader?

Jones: I read a lot, yes. I read a lot. And because my mother was a reader, everybody in our family spent lots of time reading the newspaper, talking about what was going on. My mother would read these true story magazines, romance novels, about dreamy faraway places, I guess. [airplane noise overhead] I read in high school.

A very interesting thing about the high school—I was an athlete, actually. I played basketball, I ran track, and I played tennis, and I was probably one of the best ping pong players in the city of Miami in the black section. The young people from the white community would come over to the black recreation center to play some of the better players. So, in high school, most people, even now more than fifty years ago, someone asked me if I am still playing basketball. So, that was my reputation.

But, these two friends, Austin Jones and John DeVoe, and two other persons we picked up by the names of Wilfred Gibson and Daniel MacKintosh, we did well in school for a very interesting reason. Many of the students wouldn’t do homework at all. And we would do homework, and we might do it in school. Of course, I did a lot of my work, I got all the papers we were supposed to write and so forth, but many other people didn’t. So, we did better, in part because we did the assignments [chuckles] that a lot of other people didn’t do. We had some smart people at that school, really talented students. Not all of them were as serious as they needed to be, but there’s not the same level of foolishness that you see now. You were disciplined. The principal was a disciplinarian, so people didn’t get out of line. They may not have done all of the work in the way they should have done it, but they didn’t cause trouble for the most part. This had been a school that had a pretty poor reputation before this principal came in. So, yeah, I did reading of novels and so forth, even when I was in high school. And I did my required reading. I did my homework. But sometimes my friends and I would do the homework in school.

Wilmot: Just to make time for other things.

Jones: So, we played basketball every day before school. We’d come to school at seven o’clock in the morning, about seven-thirty, and we’d play basketball until the bell rang. At seven-thirty in the morning, it could be eighty-five degrees [laughs] in Miami. So, we’re sweaty, and we’d enter the classroom practically wet. Then, we’d do our homework. I’ll tell you, those fellows—John DeVoe—he left school before we graduated and went into the military. While he was in the military, he finished high school, got his GED, and when he was discharged, he went to Illinois Institute of Technology and got a degree in mechanical engineering. This is back in the forties. Then, my friend Austin Jones graduated, and he went to Xavier University of New Orleans and got a degree in pharmacy. I went to Morehouse and eventually got a Ph.D. And then Wilfred Gibson, who sort of joined us, he went into the army, graduated from Florida A&M and came back and got a degree in pharmacy as well and married one of my classmates who was a pharmacist. So, they had a drugstore. My friend in Chicago, Austin Jones, had a drugstore, maybe one or two, in Chicago at one point in time. And
John DeVoe worked for the City of Chicago in the engineering department all of his career. He’s retired now. So that’s how our little group turned out.

Wilmot: Did other people in your high school follow the same trajectory?

Jones: Many want to college. Our valedictorian was Betty Sands who went to Howard University and finished her degree at Howard in three years. She came back to Miami and taught school. She died prematurely. We had lots of others who were schoolteachers. There weren’t many options. One was a lawyer. We had one physician—went to medical school. One was a professor of dramatic arts at Paine College. Several were accomplished professional musicians. Many, many public school teachers, elementary school teachers. Not a bad yield, I think, from that school because they received a pretty good education.

Wilmot: You were educated entirely in public schools prior to college?

Jones: Black public schools.

Wilmot: So, they were segregated intentionally?

Jones: Yes, segregated public schools. We had some of the very best teacher talent because of the limited opportunities for black college graduates.

Wilmot: For teachers?

Jones: For black people, in general! So, you had teaching, the ministry, and law and medicine if you could afford it. That was it. Not even the post office was available. So, the best talent went into education. We had some good people teaching, and as I said, many of them took their undergraduate degrees from black schools. But then, most of them went on and got master’s from other institutions. Like the woman who taught Latin had a master’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania. A lot of people went to Indiana University because that was the closest state to the South that would admit black people. So, they had summer programs, and many of them went to Columbia University and New York University. A lot of students went there for the summer because New York was open, as was Indiana. So, we had some good teachers, many who held master’s degrees. Most were very talented and dedicated. I think we received a pretty good education.

Wilmot: Your mother’s side of the family was a college-going family, and your father’s side of the family was not. Was there a tension there?

Jones: No, because they never interacted with one another. My aunts never lived, never had access to my father’s sisters. There was no connection because they were in Detroit; and my mother’s sisters in Florida. So, there was never any connection, at all.

Wilmot: Was there the expectation that you would go to college from your mother and stepfather?

Jones: I think it was almost understood. I was never in a discussion about not going to college. I think there was probably an understanding that I would go. I think it was just sort of
I can’t recall anything stated directly that I would not be or that I would be, but somehow it was just understood that that’s what I was going to do. Anyway, I had a little bit of history in that my uncle and his wife were public school teachers. Like my ninety-year-old aunt, whose birthday we just celebrated, was a public school teacher of some reputation in that she was serious about education. The woman was brilliant actually. But she had limited opportunities and may never have even thought about some profession other than education. But back then, sixty years ago, seventy years ago, there weren’t many options.

So, it was just sort of understood. And I had some scholarships. I had one to Talladega College and one to Morehouse. Probably could have had one to Florida A&M if I had expressed interest in attending that institution.

Wilmot: How did you come to apply to primarily, if not all, historically black colleges or universities?

Jones: I think about 100 percent of all the black people in Miami and probably most other places in the South went to black institutions back in 1948.

Wilmot: That was the horizon.

Jones: Yes. So, this was the issue of what kind of resources you had. The people that had the most resources went to Howard University because that required more resources. The vast majority of the others went to Florida A&M University because that probably required the fewest resources.

I had a very interesting situation. After my freshman semester, certainly freshman year, I decided to major in psychology. Psychology was not offered at Florida A&M University. So, the state of Florida had a program which subsidized my education because I was majoring in psychology. It was not available at Florida A&M, and they would not permit me to enroll in the University of Florida or other public schools in Florida. So, they paid for a portion of my tuition and my transportation from Tallahassee to Atlanta, Georgia where Morehouse was located, and from Tallahassee to Detroit where Wayne State was located, and from Tallahassee to Columbus, Ohio, where Ohio State was located. So, I got transportation, and I got some subsidy from the state of Florida throughout my college career.

Wilmot: College and graduate school?

Jones: Yes. Other Southern states had the same kind of program. So, many of my friends who went to medical school, for example, who were from places like Virginia during that period, or South Carolina, North Carolina. Georgia, Alabama, and so forth. They had the same kind of arrangement. That is, the states subsidized their education because they didn’t permit them to attend the white schools. That was part of an era. I knew only one person who went to a white institution. But it was after he had spent some time, in the army. He went to Wayne State University, because I was working on my master’s degree at Wayne when he was working on his bachelors degree. I didn’t know anybody—it wasn’t in people’s consciousness even. I don’t know anybody who went to a white school back then. We’re talking about over fifty years ago.
Wilmot: How would you describe your Morehouse experience?

Jones: It was a good experience. It is what I probably needed. It helped to nurture me in a way that I probably needed to be nurtured, academically. Now, I was talking to the students about this Thursday evening.

Wilmot: At Howard?

Jones: At Howard. I was telling them about my Howard connection. Morehouse had a one-person psychology department, and this person taught all the classes in psychology for the psychology major. She had a bachelor’s and a master’s degree from Howard University. When she came there, she was probably about twenty-three years old or something like that. I was there, I think, the first year she came. I’ve had many teachers since then, and she was very good.

Wilmot: What’s her name?

Jones: Her name was Evelyn Barnett. And then she married a man who was a graduate student there in the Atlanta University Center, by the name of Williams. So, she became Evelyn Barnett Williams. Excellent teacher! We get spoiled in places like Berkeley and so forth, you know, teaching one class, two classes and so forth. This lady taught four and five classes every semester. And they were very good classes. I felt I got a pretty good education at Morehouse even though I was in a program where they had only had fifteen or twenty people majoring in psychology. So, she was very good. I think the school was a place that nurtured you and developed—you know, people were there to teach. They had some of the best black male students because they gave scholarships. Probably half the students were valedictorians from their Southern high schools. The top student in our class at Morehouse was from a small town in Georgia that had a graduating class of six students. Pepsi-Cola used to give out these scholarships and he had won a Pepsi-Cola scholarship. And I remember him telling me of how he was being prepared for the scholarship. He memorized a dictionary [laughs]. And he went on to get a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Chicago. And he worked at Howard University. I guess he retired; I meant to ask about him while I was there this past summer. So, in my little class of psychology majors, we had about twelve students in it. Because the whole school had five hundred students back when I graduated, maybe six hundred at the most. Four of us went on to get Ph.D.s in psychology from this teacher who only had a master’s degree from Howard University.

Many, many of my classmates went on to be physicians and dentists and lawyers and also to get Ph.D.s in other fields. So, they really produced some pretty good people. We’re talking about in the fifties, 1950s. The other classmates went to Harvard and got Ph.D.s, the University of Chicago, Ohio State, and Columbia University, the University of Southern California. Really! And some people in chemistry, Caltech. Some have remained in those institutions. One of my classmates was a professor at the University of Southern California when I arrived at UCLA in 1964. During that time, that was as unheard of, practically, as my being an assistant professor at UCLA in 1964. There was only, I think, maybe David Blackwell at Berkeley. I think there was one person at Riverside, and there were about four of us, I think, at UCLA. And in the entire UC system, I don’t believe there were ten black faculty members in 1964. So, you know, to be in some of these institutions—.
Wilmot: —Who was at UCLA?

Jones: Well, there was a guy in engineering; I can’t think of his name. But he had been in industry. He was in, I think, metallurgical engineering.

Wilmot: He was Joseph Geier? [phone rings]

Jones: I don’t think—that didn’t sound like his name. But I got to know him, and he was a full professor back then. I went to his house, he had me over for dinner for some occasions, and he collected Western art and so forth. Then there was a guy in the African languages who was an assistant professor, I think, he went on to Howard University. He was there for years. Then, there was Wendell Jones in education. There was Cannon in psychiatry, and that was it. There was nobody, as far as I know, at places like Santa Barbara. I’m not sure about San Diego. I don’t think there was anybody there.

Wilmot: In Irvine, do you remember who that person was?

Jones: Well, I know some people at Irvine, but that was later. I didn’t know of anybody at Irvine back in 1960. Was Irvine in existence in 1964?

Wilmot: Good question.

Jones: If so, I believe it was relatively new.

Wilmot: I think I misunderstood you. Okay, I’m jumping into a later part of your life, but I wanted to go there for a minute. If you’re going to make a social map of the difference groups at Morehouse, as in any college, what was it like socially? What were the different groups there, and where would you locate yourself?

Jones: I think the mass majority of people at Morehouse were academically oriented. There was just a very small portion, I’d say maybe 5 percent of the students, who didn’t have a clear academic focus and orientation. Most of the students that came during my time were high school valedictorians or salutatorians. So, they had an academic focus and orientation from the very beginning. I was only third in my class, but in the first days of freshman orientation, the dean said, “Everybody who was a valedictorian, hold up your hand.” Half the people held up their hands, and the salutatorians—almost half the people. Almost everybody graduated with top honors.

Wilmot: It was really the crème de la crème.

Jones: Yes, because for black males, that was the school. The black schools of the era were Howard, Fisk, Morehouse, and Spelman. Those were the institutions.

Wilmot: You’ve described this really important function of HBCU’s [historically black colleges and universities] and of Morehouse in particular, just in terms of all the Ph.D.s that came out.

Jones: And M.Ds. And J.Ds.

Wilmot: And M.D.s and J.D.s who were fostered within the HBCUs.
Jones: Yes, many of them went on to do quite well. So, we had professors at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and most of the major universities, MIT and so forth. So, they had done very well. It was a great climate really; people were serious! And they were nurtured and developed. I’m amazed at the teaching that went on, for example, people teaching four or five classes, which we do here at Hampton [Institute], too. You get spoiled at these big institutions with these classes.

It’s a different thing. Their mission was to develop and nurture. And that’s what they did, and they did it very well. And they didn’t have all the resources and facilities. The Morehouse president, Benjamin E. Mays, was an outstanding man. He received his degrees from Bates College and the University of Chicago. He was in the ministry, and he was outstanding. We would have chapel at Morehouse five days a week. We’d have speakers to come in. All kinds noted African American people would come in to talk to us every week. When they didn’t come in, Benjamin Mays would speak. He was an extraordinary orator. He communicated expectations. “You’re from Morehouse. You’re expected to achieve. And no matter what you did or did not receive from us, you are expected to achieve.” That was real. Professors and administrators were always recounting graduates who had achieved at high levels who had received Ph.D.s from one institution or another. One of things at the time was that they had more presidents of colleges who had graduated from Morehouse than any other institution. So, that was always brought to our attention. Any sort of accomplishment of Morehouse people was brought to our attention. President Mays and others always communicated expectation that you are to do well when you graduate from Morehouse. It didn’t make any difference what you didn’t get. If you need it, you get it. Morehouse did the best it could. And you were expected to achieve. That was drummed in! Every week. There would be speakers, whoever the renowned black people of the day were, they’d come to Morehouse.

Wilmot: Is there anyone you remember in particular?

Jones: Lots of presidents of colleges would come. There were lots of ministers, for example, who were of note, and various scholars. That’s taking me back a long way. But whoever they were, of some reputation, they were there. And you can imagine over a period of four years, how many people came through there, with chapel five days a week. I’m just imagining the logistics of people, arranging all these speakers coming in! Every week! It was a daunting task, but they did it.

Wilmot: You mentioned chapel. I neglected to ask you about faith and religion in your early life.

Jones: My mother was a Methodist, CME, which is Colored Methodist Episcopal. It’s one of the intermediate religious groups in terms of numbers. There’s the AME and the CME. And I’ll tell you what a CME church is. Right there on the—Downs Memorial Church there in Oakland is, I believe, a CME church. So I went to Sunday school during my years in elementary and high school. When I left to go to college, I slacked off and probably have slacked off since.

Wilmot: Okay.

Jones: Morehouse was basically a Baptist school. It was founded by the Baptist church. Benjamin E. Mays, the president, had a degree in divinity from the University of
Chicago. He had been dean of the divinity school at Howard. This was a dynamic man, an orator of great skill—a very smart man who took Morehouse to great heights. There were things that Morehouse had, little teas that they had for the students to help you with your social graces and things like that.

Wilmot: Did you make any lifetime friends there?

Jones: I did. My best friend died about three years ago. His name was James Boglin. He was in the psychology major. He got a master’s degree in counseling. Actually, at one point, he was here at Hampton in the dean of men’s office. I have a friend that I am in touch with on a regular basis who also got a Ph.D. in psychology. Samuel Tucker, who’s still in Atlanta, he’s retired now, he had a private practice in psychology. I keep in touch in him on a fairly regular basis, and I see him whenever I get to Atlanta. He’s from Birmingham, Alabama. My other friend was from Bessemer, Alabama, which is a steel town. Those are the people that I kept in touch with on a regular basis.

But then, you know, many places in the South, there are Morehouse graduates. For example, we have a club here, a Morehouse club, and a couple of my classmates are in the area, and I see them on occasion. And then there are some younger guys who are here as well who I met through the club. Most of them, I’d say probably half of them, are physicians or dentists. Some have Ph.D.s.

Wilmot: How did you come to pledge Omega Psi Phi?

Jones: I pledged Omega Psi Phi because, at the time, at Morehouse, and by reputation, during that period, it was the fraternity of the scholars and the academically oriented people. They don’t have that reputation now.

Wilmot: I always thought that the Alpha men were scholars.

Jones: Not back then, and not at Morehouse. But at Morehouse, the Alphas were the suave, sort of cool guys, whereas the Omegas there were the scholars. I identified with the scholarly types.

Wilmot: At that time, how were the Kappas?

Jones: They were party, sort of, and those Phi Betas, the Sigmas were the sort of differently oriented in terms of—I don’t know—they were people who weren’t suave, and they weren’t academic, though some were. They were probably not as socially sophisticated, probably, as the other groups. That was the pecking order.

Wilmot: Did you have a sister sorority that you socialized with?

Jones: Not there, because Spelman did not have any sororities then. And of course, there was Clark [Atlanta university] had sororities and Morris Brown [College]. They were all there, but I don’t recall any connection with any of them. Most of us who were in Morehouse had girlfriends at Spelman, but they weren’t connected to any sorority because there were no sororities.
Wilmot: Has this affiliation of fraternity played a role in your professional or social life since your undergraduate years?

Jones: Probably social to some extent, but not professional. I have not been active. I’ve been thinking about getting active again. When I first came here, I probably was active for about six months. Then, I just maybe got too busy or something. Or maybe I was active for a year or two. Not sure. They have a very good group here, and unlike many of the chapters, the older people are content to let the younger ones be in charge. And in a lot of these instances, the older fraternity members people get these positions, and they like to have them for life. The Omegas here don’t have that kind of orientation. I’m very impressed with them.

Wilmot: You mentioned that you were a member of the Boule? Did you want to talk about that?

Jones: Sigma Pi Phi fraternity. That is a group that historically has been quiet. It’s supposed to be the most elite of the black fraternities. As a matter of fact, there probably is still some question about how much and to what extent they even want to be identified as members of the organization. There are probably only about four thousand members throughout the United States. And they are people generally of significant accomplishment in their communities. It is by invitation only. In Hampton, for example, the judges, Congress people, physicians, attorneys, and a few educators would be members of the organization. And for the most part, most people don’t know anything about this organization, who is in it, or what they do. Many people want to keep it that way. It’s a group of highly accomplished individuals who want to communicate, basically, with one another, though, there is some effort to move beyond that.

Wilmot: What issues does the organization mobilize around?

Jones: There are no consistent issues. Although there is—all of the chapters have a social action committee, and I’m the chairperson of the social action committee. But the general guidelines are we don’t talk about what we do, how we do it [laughs], who’s in it. [laughs] Though we have parties. We have a Christmas party. The members are called Archons. The members’ wives are called Archousai. And we generally always have, all of its chapters have generally, a Christmas party. And as Christmas is for the Archusi, we put this party on for our Archousai to whom we give gifts. Then, in the summer, many have picnics. We’re having, for example, our picnic this coming Saturday at one of the member’s homes, an attorney who has a house on the water with tennis courts, boat dock, swimming pool, expansive grounds and so forth. I’ve never been to this house, but it’s been described. So, many of the members are very accomplished, and many have resources of significance.

Scott, the Congress person, the mayor of the Chesapeake, the mayor of Portsmouth are members of the organization. Harvey, the president of Hampton University; the late Ron Brown; people like Chenault who is the president of the American Express company. That sort of people. But, that’s not something we talk about or even put on tape. [laughs] Really, but it’s okay.

Wilmot: You just did, but you can take it off if you want to.
Jones: Olly [Wilson] is a member and Rodney Reed, I don’t know if he’s on your list. Is Rodney Reed on the list?

Wilmot: No.

Jones: Rodney Reed was a Berkeley faculty member in the School of Education. He left Berkeley to be dean of the School of Education at Penn State. And about two, three years ago, he retired and came back to Berkeley. So, he’s a member of the Berkeley/Alameda County group of people. So, he was a member and Olly, and Bill Lester and—I don’t think Blackwell was a member, maybe he was? Not sure. Here in this area, Harvey, who is the president of Hampton University and the president of Norfolk State, the former president, was a member. And the man who was the dean of the sciences was a member here. So, those were the academic people.

Wilmot: Can I ask you a question? I’m wondering how did your experience at Morehouse contribute to your decision? You said you made a choice to come back to a black college, to finish your teaching career at a black college. How did your experience at Morehouse contribute to this decision? What was important for you about black colleges?

Jones: Nurturing, developing. With all the due respect, I think that in African American studies [at Berkeley], we made a difference in the lives of students. But my sense was that because of the caliber of the students who come to Berkeley, while they may need nurturing and support, they are much more able to function within an environment, which in general, is not widely supportive. Size is one factor, the other is departments are large, and it’s very difficult to get the individual attention that you need. So, when I was at Berkeley, I did a lot of advising of black students who were psychology majors because they weren’t getting any sort of counseling and advising and encouragement from the faculty and the counselors over there. Students with 3.5, 3.6 averages weren’t being advised or counseled to go to graduate school. So, we were able to work with many students from many departments and give them that extra push and boost, support, and counseling that they didn’t get in their own departments.

At Hampton, many if not most HBCUs, you get that—we know the students, the faculty members do advising and counseling and nurturing. And I wanted to do that for the students, to sort of to give back what I had received at Morehouse. I taught at Fisk one year, and I was able to do that and see—you could feel that you made a difference at Hampton and at Fisk.

After we were here for about three years, Michele and I were invited to a conference by a CPEC. Do you know CPEC? The California Post-Secondary Education Commission. It has some oversight over the whole system of the colleges, universities, and community colleges in California. They have something to do with the Master Plan for Higher Education in the state of California. And, they put on a conference that was held at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. That conference was about why the UC system was not able to attract students to the UC system. And why many students were opting to come to the HBCUs. So, they wanted to know what the HBCUs were doing that needs to occur in the UC system? And I had the unique perspective of having been in both places as a teacher. I was able to talk about the nurturing, the individual attention that we give to students and just the feeling of belonging that students have
when they are in the HBCUs that makes them feel at home and want to be at these institutions. That’s not something that is widely available in the UC system campuses. There was some nurturing, for example, in departments, but it’s not widespread. They don’t have black faculty in large numbers; and often black faculty get worn down because they’re on so many committees. They’re representing the interests of black people; they’re trying to do all these things.

Wilmot: The black faculty.

Jones: Yes. And they still have the requirement to be productive, and produce research while the institution is often very grateful to the faculty for taking the heat off of administration sometimes, but they often forget the sacrifices black faculty have made when it comes time for promotion and tenure.

Wilmot: Can you speak also to the value of being in an all-black environment?

Jones: Well, one of the things I feel that I have done best in the environment is to nurture students and to give them excellent guidance and counseling. Because I understand the graduate world and what is expected at that level. And I understand where they are now, and what they need to do. I’m able to communicate to them. But my part here, I’ve been able to garner some pretty significant resources to prepare students for graduate school. So I’ve had a five-year grant of about a million dollars to prepare psychology students for graduate programs.

Wilmot: From who?

Jones: From the National Institute of Mental Health to prepare students for careers in mental health research. We put together a two-year program of apprenticeship and research. We send them off in the summer to other institutions to get research experience. We have a series of courses that prepare them for graduate school. Selected participants receive sixteen-thousand dollars a year, which is really good money.

Wilmot: Yes, it is.

Jones: It’s enough to pay for all their of expenses at Hampton University. So, I had that grant. And then, as I left, I wrote it up again. So they now have money for the next five years to support students in this activity.

Now, admission to graduate programs in psychology, and especially since most of the students want to be in clinical psychology, is extremely competitive. You can get into medical school probably easier than you could get into a Ph.D. program in clinical psychology. It’s that competitive. So, what students need is—they need research experience at the undergraduate level, which is amazing. You must have research experience just to get into a graduate program in clinical psychology. The competition is so keen because psychology is either the first or second largest major on most college campuses. There are tens of thousands of students who are majoring in psychology, and most of them want to go to graduate school in clinical psychology. And because of the intense nature of the training, these schools take maybe five, six students a year, new students each year. When I was a professor at Ohio State we’d have seven or eight hundred students applying for admission to the graduate program in psychology.
Each faculty member would decide how many students they wanted to take. But no faculty member would take more than two or three students. So, you have all this competition. So at Hampton our program was to develop the pool of African American students who would be competitive for admission to these programs.

Wilmot: When did you start this program?

Jones: Let’s see, about seven years ago. And so we’ve had students at—two, now—at Berkeley. That’s no mean feat! We have two at the University of Pennsylvania; we’ve had several at Purdue and at Berkeley. This year, we have a person going to Purdue, one going to Berkeley, one going to Michigan. These are all top programs. But these students come out with research articles they’ve done, presentations at conferences they’ve made. That’s what this is about—development. They’ve had apprenticeships with top scholars, and they’ve been well trained. So, they’re very competitive. That’s an accomplishment of which you can feel proud. You’ve really made a difference.

Wilmot: It’s an accomplishment of which you feel proud. That’s great.

Jones: We all do respect Berkeley, if somebody gets admitted to the University of Michigan from Berkeley. Well, there’s Berkeley and there’s Michigan. It’s almost expected if you have a significant GPA and you work with all these top people, you have a better than average chance of getting admitted to any major university. That’s just the way it is.

Wilmot: Is Michigan’s program better than Berkeley’s?

Jones: One of the best.

Wilmot: Right, okay.

Jones: I don’t know whether it’s better, but it is one of the best. One of the very best.

Wilmot: It sounds like you are essentially kind of seeding a field. You’re seeding a field and a community.

Jones: And it’s not just Hampton that has this program. Howard has it, Morgan State, University of Puerto Rico, Hunter College. But you have to have a significant minority enrollment in order to be eligible for this competition.

Wilmot: Are you in communication with the other principal investigators?

Jones: Yes. We have annual meetings in which the students present their research and they meet all over the country. For example, one year we’ve had it at Boston—they meet every year. So, they had access to Harvard medical people, they talked with people at Harvard. Last year, I think, they met in Minneapolis. People at the University of Minnesota were actively involved because these students are the cream, in terms of potential minority students. There are people who come to the conference from all these big institutions [plane passes by overhead] and try to recruit these students because they know that they’re well prepared, trained to do research, had experience, know what research is all about. They want these students. So, every one of our students, the five students—one’s going to St. John’s, one to Michigan, one to Purdue, one to Berkeley,
and one to Michigan. So, that is something that I really feel is a great accomplishment and something that I could do here that wouldn’t happen at, say, a mainstream institution.

We will have trained about one hundred students by the time the program that I’ve been responsible for is over. Hopefully, my colleagues will write a grant that will lead to its continuation, because our success is contingent upon us getting students into graduate programs, these students completing their programs will hopefully go into research careers. They get the kind of nurturing here that is difficult and would be difficult at large institutions.

Wilmot: Large predominantly white—

Jones: —white institutions. Where the focus is upon graduate education. We want people like this to come into our graduate program, say at Berkeley, because Berkeley is a research institution. So, we want good people who are prepared to do research so we can move them on to another level. We can do that. We want those good students at places like Berkeley. They want to have some diversity, and they want the students to be competitive. So what happens is we develop these students.

Wilmot: You’re developing a pool of competitive students.

Jones: Yes. Then, people seek them. So, at the conference that they have every year, people from all over are trying to recruit these students because they know they’re really good, and they’re going to do well, and make the institution look good, too.

Wilmot: Let’s close for a minute. Let’s just take a break. I’m gonna stop this.

[Begin minidisc 3]

Wilmot: I wanted to start by asking you a question. When did you really decide to pursue the path of professor, Ph.D. in psychology?

Jones: I decided that I wanted to go for Ph.D. in my freshman year at Morehouse College. I don’t know how I came up with this thought because, except for one person in my high school, I didn’t know anybody who had a Ph.D. And this person in my high school who had a Ph.D. never taught me any classes [laughs]! So, I couldn’t say that I had any kind of model, role model. Many of the professors at Morehouse, not all of them even had Ph.D.s at the time. Like my psychology professor, she never had a Ph.D. She got one subsequently.

But somehow, I’d say certainly by my sophomore year, I knew that I wanted to get a Ph.D., and unequivocally, in my junior year. I learned that you need to have foreign languages in a Ph.D. program, so I consciously took German and French in my undergraduate years in preparation for going to graduate school to get a Ph.D. I don’t know how I came up with this idea, but certainly by my sophomore year, I knew I wanted to get a Ph.D. in psychology. Initially, when I went into psychology, I thought I’d be a high school counselor. Then, as I learned about psychology, I learned about the different sub-areas of clinical psychology. I never heard of clinical psychology. I thought, “That’s what I’d like to be, a clinical psychologist. I need to get a Ph.D.”
Well, back in the 1950s and in the late 1940s, they didn’t have that many people—black folks—who had Ph.D.s in psychology at all. When I went to my old school and told them what I was doing, majoring in psychology, I can recall one of my teachers saying, “Psychology, boy! We don’t have no colored psychologists.” But I’d say, “Well, that’s what I’d like to do.” And so, that sort of was my path. After I got out of Morehouse, I had limited resources and there were not that many fellowships open, or at least, I wasn’t informed of them.

So, I went to the institution where I had access to some resources, and my aunt lived in Detroit. So, I asked if I could live with them while I did my master’s degree. Well, my aunt really was not that keen a reader. She thought that I was asking her to pick me up at the train station and take me to Ann Arbor because I was going to the University of Michigan. And then she learned I was planning to stay with them. But they didn’t have any space, really. They had a three-bedroom house. They had an elderly aunt who lived with them, and a son who had one room, and they had a bedroom. So, they made space for me up in the attic of their home. It was probably the best place, in some ways, because as part of the program at Wayne, we had a course in neuroanatomy and neurophysiology, and each student had a human brain that we kept in formaldehyde. And if you’ve had any experience with formaldehyde, you know that stuff will stink up a house. So, it stunk up the attic; it would have been a real problem otherwise. So, I went and lived with them and helped them out with their son, a little business, and so forth. I had access to their nice new Oldsmobile for my dates and so forth. That’s how I got to Wayne. It was simply the place where I could get training and be able to live inexpensively.

Wilmot: How did your understanding of your discipline deepen? What were the critical experiences that deepened your understanding and direction that you took in your discipline at Wayne?

Jones: Well, one of the things about Wayne is that it trained you to be a practicing psychologist. In places like Berkeley, for example, they train you and provide expertise in theory, probably more than practice. One of the things I feel grateful for is that as a result of my training at Wayne, I was able to be effective as a psychological practitioner because I knew how to give tests and interpret them and so forth, which was good for a person with master’s-level training. So, when I went into the military, I was able to be a clinical psychologist and get the experience. When I got out of the military, before I went on to get my Ph.D., I was able to get a job as a psychologist.

Wilmot: Was there a specific institution that you had an internship or practicum at?

Jones: Well, I actually had practice in a state institution, Logansport State Hospital. One of the requirements, I think it was a requirement, is you had to have an internship. So, the state hospital in Indiana maybe wrote to Wayne and said we have openings for interns. That’s how I got to the Logansport State Hospital in Logansport State, Indiana. They have people there who were from Purdue and other institutions, who were doing internships as well.

Wilmot: What was your patient population like there?
Jones: I don’t remember the numbers, but it was a pretty big hospital. We had a variety of experiences—testing and conducting group therapy, participating in staff conferences and seminars. Many of these patients were chronically ill. There was no hope really that anything was going to happen, that they would be getting out of the institution. It was like a big warehouse, really. But, it was a good experience with the population of people that had mental illness—the experience was administering tests and so forth, being a part of case conferences. It was a great experience to have had as background for teaching. I could talk about patients and testing and those sorts of things because I’d have experiences with actual patients.

Wilmot: Sounds like very intense work because you were working with the study on the effects of lobotomy on mental functioning. It sounds like just very intense work.

Jones: Yes, they don’t do that anymore. But it was widespread during that time. A doctor would come in and do these lobotomies. There was a little study to see what impact that lobotomy had on their mental functioning. That was a research study. So, we were administering these tests to the patients who had lobotomies. It was a terrible thing really.

Wilmot: You’ve said here—

Jones: —did I have that in this paper?

Wilmot: Yes.

Jones: Oh my goodness! It’s been a while since I wrote that. I had forgotten about that part.

Wilmot: You’ve said that in some ways, you’ve located your desire to work in the area of mental illness and preventing mental illness—that is working with children, with this practical experience.

Jones: What happened was that I went there to do an internship. And, of course, I’d had no contact with seriously mentally ill people. And these were some chronically ill people who had been there for years. When I came back to work one summer, while I was at graduate school, these same people were there. And I thought if we’re gonna do anything with these kinds of people, we need to start at childhood, and I need to develop my area of expertise in an area of psychology that deals with children. And I thought, well, school psychology. I’d have access to large numbers of children, and I could be involved in preventive work and activities. I applied to several programs. One was Purdue; they didn’t accept me. The University of Minnesota clinical child psychology, which was a very fine program really and would have worked well, and then Ohio State. I chose Ohio State because a buddy of mine, who had been in the army with me, had gone to Ohio State the year before. He liked it, and we had been communicating. He said it was a great school, and I like it. So, I decided to go on to Ohio State. He, by the way, ended up at Berkeley, too. He’s probably retired now; his name was John Hurst. He was in the School of Education; we both were in the School of Education together. His wife died. We were good friends. So, he went and took his Ph.D. a year before I did. And then he had some very fine jobs. He went to Minnesota for a year, and then he came out to Berkeley. He was big in the peace psychology program at Berkeley.
Wilmot: Interesting.

Jones: So, that’s how I got to Ohio State, and that’s why I decided to work with children. Then, once I got into that, I thought I would really like to do research. So, I started to look for a research position when I finished my Ph.D. I was able to get one at Miami University.

Wilmot: I wanted to back up for one quick minute to ask you about Wayne State University. I have three questions, first. You were coming from Morehouse and then you went to Wayne State, which was not an HBCU, which was predominantly white. What was that experience like?

Jones: That was a challenge. I had never attended school with a white person, and I had grossly overestimated their abilities in relationship to mine. During the first semester, I never uttered a single word in any class.

Wilmot: How had you arrived at that gross overestimate, and then second, how did you get rid of it?

Jones: Well, you don’t know what a terrible thing discrimination is and what it does to you and your self-concept. A lot of this is ingrained, and you don’t realize it. You believe that other folks have talents that you don’t have because you have no basis of comparison. I had never attended school with any white students, and these were students from places like the University of Michigan. We had one student from Berkeley. And it didn’t help my self-confidence when they were throwing out concepts and terms that were foreign to me. They were commenting on the lectures and readings in ways that seemed foreign to me. I thought that I had read this material, but the way they were talking and the language they were using made me think that I’m not sure I’m up to this because what they’re saying doesn’t mesh with my understanding.

We had a particularly challenging class taught by a man, Professor Gerald Rosenbaum, who had a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Iowa. He was a Jewish man, and he taught some very challenging courses, one of which was called experimental psychodynamics. Well, I never said a word in his class and I probably seemed like a country bumpkin because I wore a wool dress hat spring, fall and winter [laughs].

Wilmot: What do you mean by a wool dress hat?

Jones: A men’s dress hat.

Wilmot: Like a top hat?

Jones: Not that, but a regular hat that people would wear with their suits and so forth.

Wilmot: With the brim all the way around?

Jones: Yes. So, I wore this hat all year round.

Wilmot: And it was white?

Jones: No, I forget. I might have had a couple of them.
Wilmot: That’s very stylish.

Jones: Yes, but maybe not what students wore. [laughs]

Wilmot: Okay [laughs]. That was your own gesture about your education.

Jones: So, after the first exam, Professor Rosenbaum called me up to his desk. And I was frightened, I said, “My God!” And he wanted to know where I had gone to school. I told him Morehouse College. I think he’d never heard of it.

Wilmot: Your assumption was that the two worlds just wouldn’t meet.

Jones: Yes, and I had performed so poorly that he wanted to know where in the world did you come from? Why are you here? That was my fantasy about why he wanted to he call me up. And apparently, I had surprised him with my performance. He was asking because I had done so well. “Where did you go to school?” He never said this, but I can imagine him saying, “You never spoke in class.” Everybody else was talking. Class wasn’t that big, you know. Maybe ten students or twelve students, so you know, if some nine people are talking and one person never said a word, you wonder then this person maybe doesn’t belong. That sort of gave me some insight into the fact that maybe I was doing all right. And a lot of these guys who were spouting stuff were doing just that. They were not mastering the subject material. So, that gave me some self-confidence. That was something I learned at Wayne that was good. A good experience for me to get some confidence that I could do well. So, that was a great benefit, and I saw that further when I went to Ohio State that I could really do very well, and I did.

Wilmot: Did you have study partners? When you were in the master’s program, were you working with other students?

Jones: I developed many acquaintances and several pretty good friends, some of whom I kept up with for a very long period of time. These were some of my white colleagues. As a matter of fact, one of them I invited to my first wedding. He came with his wife from Michigan. Larry Westerby. I kept up with some of the others as well. It’s been a while now, and I’ve been meaning to try to check to see—these people are now in their seventies. People die off in their seventies and even sixties, sometimes. I don’t know whether he’s still around, but we’ve sort of kept in touch.

Wilmot: Were there any other African American students in the master’s program at Wayne State?

Jones: One person came up the next year, Robert Williams.

Wilmot: Came up from?

Jones: From Arkansas. Bob came up to get a master’s in social work. Somehow, we met in the student union or someplace and had a conversation and started talking about what I was doing and so forth. He thought, “Well, maybe I ought to major in psychology.” And because among other things, he had a wife and maybe a couple of children at the time. The clinical psychology program was a year and a half. The social work program was two. So, he had a job and all, working in the automobile factory or something. He
decided, that sounds pretty good. So, he decided to major in psychology. And he’s written in some materials that I have that indicated that I was the first graduate student that he met in psychology, and that I had been responsible for him deciding to major in psychology. He’s gone on to be a rather well-known psychologist. After he took his master’s degree, he went on to Washington University and got a Ph.D. and worked in the VA [Veteran’s Administration] system for a while, and then came back to Washington University as a professor of psychology. And then head of the Black Studies Program. He got lots of money to train black students in psychology. And about five years ago, so he retired. Then, last year, he took a job at the University of Missouri as a visiting professor, and acting head of black studies. So, he told me that he was going to do it for another year. We have been in contact over fifty years ago. We have maintained a close relationship.

Wilmot: You published together as well?

Jones: Well, I’m going to put this biography in his book. Now, have you heard of ebonics?

Wilmot: Yes.

Jones: Well, he is the person who’s responsible for the word “ebonics,” and did a lot of the original work and had the first conferences and himself, personally, developed that word “ebonics.” Ebony and phonics, which are black sounds. That’s his contribution, and of course, have you heard of the BITCH [Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity] test?

Wilmot: No.

Jones: The BITCH test is another test that he developed for the purposes of communicating that if you develop a test that draws upon the experience of another group, of any group, the group on whom the test is developed will do better. And so he developed what he called the Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity, which included vocabulary from the black experience. And when he administered that test to whites, whites did not perform as well as did blacks.

Wilmot: I see.

Jones: His point was, “What do you expect?” That’s what happens with tests that are administered and developed from a middle-class white perspective that are applied to blacks. They don’t do as well. So, I could demonstrate if you reverse it, whites won’t do as well. It’s called the BITCH test, so he’s done that. He’s been a president of the Association of Black Psychologists as well.

Wilmot: When you were at Wayne State, were there any faculty members or instructors who were important for you as mentors or teachers?

Jones: Rosenbaum was a person that probably—but he was not a mentor. There were no mentors. And to tell you the truth, with all respect to the institution, some of the teachers weren’t that good. The master’s program was essentially an evening program. Some of my teachers had private clinical practices. They weren’t that good as scholars, really. I can know that now in retrospect. They didn’t mentor anybody; I didn’t get good
guidance in my thesis that I probably should have had. If I had been over with
Rosenbaum in that department, I probably would have done a lot better. But I was not in
his department. I liked his training, though; it was good. A lot of the training that I
received in the clinical psychology department wasn’t really that good, now that I look
back on it.

Wilmot: When I think of your thesis, which was on ethnocentrism in institutionalized and non-
institutionalized white persons, first I have to ask you what does that mean? In
layperson’s terms.

Jones: Ethnocentrism is just a belief in the superiority of one’s own group as opposed to others.
It is essentially racism, which was quite a little notion back then.

Wilmot: You were comparing—

Jones: —white people in institutions versus those who weren’t in institutions.

Wilmot: Mental institutions?

Jones: Mental institutions.

Wilmot: As patients or as administrators?

Jones: Patients of mental institutions versus folks who weren’t patients of mental institutions.

Wilmot: What were your findings?

Jones: I think probably—I don’t remember. I can’t find my thesis. I don’t think I found
anything significant.

Wilmot: What was your hypothesis, I wonder?

Jones: Probably that the people in the mental institutions had higher levels of ethnocentrism,
probably because their defenses were down.

Wilmot: They feel more vulnerable, and therefore they would be more hateful?

Jones: No, that they could say what they want to say.

Wilmot: Okay, I see.

Jones: Probably. I want to find it. It was not done that well, and I didn’t get any guidance. The
only guidance I got was from the person who was in statistics. But I would like to find
the thesis and see what I did say. I think the point I wanted to make in that is that way
back fifty years ago I had an interest in these matters of race and attitudes and that sort
of thing.

Wilmot: That’s so interesting to me because this predates any kind of black power [movement.]
It’s at the very, very beginning of any kind of civil rights movement, and I’m wondering
how in that institution and within that context you had made a place where it was
legitimate to talk about race and racism because that in itself strikes me as a departure from mainstream training.

Jones: You know one of the interesting things about being in a school like Wayne State University as opposed to Ohio State, University of Michigan, or Berkeley? You can do anything you want to. People in many of the mainstream institutions are concerned about the nature of the research and how it fits in to the zeitgeist of coming areas because everybody is an expert in something at Berkeley or Michigan, Ohio State, places like that. So, generally, students worked in the area of their faculty member. It’s not often the case that you could just do what you want to do, because you do something because you’re working with somebody who has expertise in some area, and you want to take advantage of that expertise.

But in a place like Wayne during that era, the faculty had no real research interests that were apparent to many of us. So, almost anything that you proposed that was reasonable, you could do, you see. So, now, that made it possible to do things. Now, at Ohio State, if you proposed something like that, probably, they had more questions, more issues, etcetera.

Wilmot: What were you reading at that time? What was influencing you? What was bringing these issues to you academically?

Jones: I was reading broadly, and I was learning a lot of stuff that wasn’t necessarily in the courses that I was taking, but I had access to in the library. I loved the library, so I’d just go to the library and browse. I’d read the psychology magazines, and I’d learn a lot. Maybe, somewhere in the course, I had come across that; I’m not sure. But I don’t believe it came out of any course that I had. Actually, this is a scale that came out of Berkeley. The California E scale or F scale, something like that.

Wilmot: F scale?

Jones: These were these scales that had to do with—a lot of them were developed because there was interest in anti-Semitism and what were the roots of anti-Semitism. And so these tests were developed in the course of studying anti-Semitic people. There’s a book called The Authoritarian Personality and the question of how do these people develop? What’s the nature of their experiences? And so that book had all of that in it, these scales and so forth.

Wilmot: This idea that oppressors come out of being oppressed. It’s also so interesting because it seems to relate racism to impulse control, your study.

Jones: I don’t—my speculation when you ask me, why would I expect the people at mental hospitals to be higher on the scale? My experience is that people in the institutions don’t have a lot of [phone ringing] suppression of feelings. So they just, you know, “Ya nigger!” you know, and so forth. They have no hesitation saying those things, whereas for others, they do.

[break while Jones answers phone]

Wilmot: I’m sorry, you said you think many—
Jones: Small institutions that had graduate programs, often they enable you to be more flexible in what you do, whereas in the large institutions, you’d do your work in conjunction with a faculty member who has a program of research. So in general, you don’t just go to Berkeley as a graduate student and decide what you want to do. Often, your work is related somehow in some way to the professor who is supervising your work. Of course, there’s a good reason for that. Because as you seek employment, you want to have recommendations from people who are specialized in some area. But in places like Wayne, at least in that era, you could do whatever you wanted to do because the faculty members weren’t even doing research.

Wilmot: Yes. Did you go into the military before your Ph.D. program?

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: Okay, then let’s go straight to Ohio State.

Jones: So, as I indicated that the military experience and meeting John Hurst sort of got me to Ohio State because he had been there earlier, and he liked it and we had been good friends. So, I decided to go there as opposed to [University of] Minnesota, which was the other place that I would have attended. And I don’t regret that decision, actually.

Wilmot: What was the psychology department? Who were the big names in that department at the time?

Jones: The psychology department had a lot of very outstanding people. Julian Rotter, who was a clinical psychologist and George Kelly, who was also a clinical psychologist, and Paul Fitts, who was in the methodology. And my advisor who was fairly well known, John Horrocks. He was in developmental psychology. Those are some of the—. And Delos Wickens; he was in the field of learning. These were all superstar type people, and they had a large number of them at Ohio State.

Wilmot: With whom did you work most closely besides—


Wilmot: Besides John Horrocks.

Jones: Well, probably the people in statistics—Robert Wherry. I probably took about four courses from him, which is very unusual. We had to have an interest in the quantitative side of psychology, because most people liked to just take one course in statistics and pray that they can get out of it. I had about four or five, maybe six, which prepared me well for research. That was a good experience.

Wilmot: How did you find your way to Horrocks?

Jones: Well, he was the advisor I was assigned based on the area that I was interested in. Because it was school psychology, and school psychology was in the educational psychology program, and John Horrocks, that was part of his bailiwick. Now, in 99 percent of the schools—maybe 95—educational psychology is in the schools of education. But at Ohio State, it was in the psychology department, which was a very
great experience for me, because what you do is you have to be exposed to all areas of psychology. My contribution, if any, has been to draw from these areas of psychology and apply them to African American issues. And by having a broad experience across all these different areas, it’s enabled me to see the connections between these different fields and African American psychology. So, many of the books that I have done have drawn upon, like this book that you have with you, third edition, *Black Psychology*. The text has dealt with many areas of psychology, like industrial organizational psychology, experimental psychology, and social psychology and counseling and psychotherapy, as they relate to African Americans.

Wilmot: Would you give one example?

Jones: Well, the whole area of racism, for example, is social psychology. Many social psychologists use concepts and ideas from that discipline to deal with an understanding of race and racism, et cetera. And take organizational behavior, the interest in things like hiring and promotions and how race enters into that and what that literature is in respect to discrimination. The research that is done to document that sort of thing is an application of industrial organizational psychology to an issue that is of concern to black people. Or counseling, the unique strategies that from one must take into account or should take into account if one is counseling with African Americans, people with color, et cetera. So there are people who are developing theoretical notions and ideas that are unique to counseling and treating African Americans. What I’ve had people do is to show how these particular disciplines can relate to counseling, psychotherapy, education, conducting research, what are some differences, what are some considerations that one needs to take into account as one wants to do research or to practice with African Americans.

Wilmot: Can you describe for me your dissertation topic?

Jones: My doctoral dissertation topic was in the area of small-group learning. Graduate students at Ohio State taught educational psychology. We had students in small groups around a table who discussed case studies that revolved around developing strategies for intervening with different kinds of problems that teachers and students faced. The strategy was that they would take these case studies, and they would discuss them, and they would come to conclusions about strategies for addressing certain problems represented by the case. That was the basic model for preparing students in educational psychology to deal with some of the issues they would face in the schools. It was a problem-oriented sort of training. The question was, well, what goes on in these groups? What are the dynamics that lead to students being able to take this knowledge and apply it to other situations? So, what I did was to analyze the group interaction to determine what variables led to increasing students’ ability to transfer this information to new situations. I tape-recorded all of the discussions and analyzed them according to a certain scheme that had been developed by Roger Heyns at the University of Michigan. Interestingly, Heyns later became a chancellor at Berkeley.

I forget what I found, but some interesting variables that led to facilitating the ability to transfer knowledge from one domain to another. That was what the dissertation was about. But it meant recording lots of stuff and analyzing, getting somebody else to do a repetition to ascertain whether the coding was reliable, and then to take all of this information and put into some sophisticated statistical programs that enabled me to
come up with statements about what made a difference and what didn’t. I was invited to submit it for publication, but I never did because I felt that it probably wasn’t as strong as it needed to be.

Wilmot: Did it lead to other things for you, or did you kind of let it lie after you were done?

Jones: I didn’t deal with that anymore.

Wilmot: Were there any other African American students or non-white students in your Ph.D. program?

Jones: Nope.

Wilmot: Did you work while you were in school?

Jones: Not at Ohio State.

Wilmot: Where was your funding coming from?

Jones: When I was at Wayne, I had some brief jobs. I worked in an automobile factory because classes didn’t start until four o’clock in the afternoon, and some days seven o’clock because they were all for people who were working. So, I had a lot of time, and what I did was to study during the day, and then I got a job at an automobile factory. After I worked there for about a week, they went on strike, so, I never went back to that company. During the Christmas holidays, I worked delivering mail. But that was only for a couple of weeks. Then on another occasion, I got a job on the campus delivering mail to different offices. But, that didn’t take that much time; I didn’t make that much money. So, I didn’t do a lot of work, actually, while I was at Wayne.

At Ohio State, the first year I was there, I had a research assistantship on a grant that a faculty member had. Then, the second and third years, I had a teaching assistantship. So, I taught these classes in educational psychology. It is amazing how much work I did. We had full responsibility for two classes, so I had two five-unit classes, and they met every day of the week, Monday through Friday.

And I was taking classes as a graduate student, and also preparing for the foreign language examinations. That’s independent of the classes. And then, you prepare for the qualifying examinations, which is independent of the classes, because the focus was upon understanding psychology in its entirety; and whether or not you had a course in the area didn’t make any difference. You didn’t have to take any classes—I think they came to a point where they said you gotta take some classes—but if you can pass those examinations, and of course many of us passed examinations in areas that we didn’t take any classes in but just studied on our own.

But it was a very grueling program. It’s not anything like what exists today, which is a much lighter kind of a program for Ph.D.s, where you don’t have to master the entire domain of psychology. You sort of identify your little areas and so forth, and you write papers and so forth. We had written examinations, three and four hours at a time on just one little area of psychology. And you had a whole week of those exams. So, you mastered the breadth of the field. Now, there was much less knowledge. You couldn’t
do that today—that would be impossible. You could not master psychology as a
discipline, today. You cannot even master one little area of psychology. Now, that is not
to say we could master it then, but there was much less material to be mastered. In some
areas, there were just one or two books. If you could master the material in those couple
of books or so, and some journal materials and get up to date, you’d be in pretty good
shape. You can’t do that now. There’s just too much material. But then, that was
something we had to do. And they were very serious. As many as two-thirds of the
people would fail these exams and they had to be taken over again. So, it was grueling.
But in my case, and I think many others, we got a really good mastery, and that has been
very beneficial to me because I have applied material from many fields to the problems
that I happen to be interested in.

Wilmot: As a student, did you receive the same treat ment as your white counterparts at the hands
of your instructors and professors?

Jones: At Ohio State I would say, unequivocally, yes. I had no problems whatsoever. I did well,
and I guess the fact that I was invited to be a faculty member says that I was perceived
in a more than positive way. Because that was back in 1966 when I was invited to come
back. That was before a lot of the push to get black faculty members in institutions. So,
I did well. And then, also, I was named, asked, and accepted the position of vice
chairman of the psychology department for academic personnel. It was my job to
initiate all the evaluation of faculty for promotion, tenure, and termination.

Wilmot: Woah. That’s invaluable experience.

Jones: That was in 1967.

Wilmot: That is invaluable experience as a burgeoning faculty person.

Jones: I was probably only one of two black faculty members at Ohio State. There were two
thousand faculty members in 1966. So, all of that to say, it was my opinion that, as a
student, I didn’t encounter any difficulty and that in their perception of me as a student,
I was perceived in a more than positive light because I was invited to come back. And I
was promoted to full professor and named the vice chairman of the psychology
department, and was responsible for evaluation of all faculty.

Wilmot: Which is really incredible.

Jones: And we had about sixty members in the psychology department, forty of whom were
full-time.

Wilmot: That’s a lot of trust, also, basically, for you and your integrity. In my generation, there is
this idea, and it’s been my experience that there is a support group for African American
students. We would have a group that we could go to. I’m aware that people in your
generation, you might have had a support group or informal group, but more often than
not, that wasn’t really the reality.

Jones: Well, there weren’t that many of us. For example, when I went to Ohio State, they
probably had about five black students, and outside of myself—I was over in the
educational psychology school, psychology program—the others were in clinical
psychology. That was the elite group. Clinical psychology was the elite group. They had these really neat professors, outstanding professors. But these students came from HBCUs. They were really, unfortunately, not well prepared. What they perceived of themselves as extraordinary, and they were probably seen that way by the committee that appointed them because they probably had 4.0 cumulative grade point average or something like that, I would imagine, just to be admitted to the program. But they didn’t do very well. They had their little group of colleagues, study groups, and so forth. And that probably was fostered by the clinical program in itself. Maybe these folks, they were all in these classes together, and they bound themselves as people in this program, so they studied. I’d developed a friendship with one person. We had a lot of the same classes together. We would talk and so forth, and we would study together. We would talk about things and so forth. He would even share some things that he had picked up from his contacts. His name was Pete Gross, and we became good friends, and we communicated for years afterwards. But, I didn’t have this network of people.

The people who taught in educational psychology, we had our own little group because Professor Horrocks would have monthly meetings, at which we would meet and talk about, at least, teaching. So, I developed a lot of close contacts with a lot of people that I kept up with over the years. Some of them, actually, recommended me for jobs, like Hurst. When he went out to Berkeley, he tried to get me a job at in Berkeley.

Wilmot: When was that?

Jones: That was in early sixties. Another friend went to one of the universities in Alabama, and I don’t know what they were talking about, because there was no likelihood that I would be hired at one of the Alabama white universities in the 1960s. But, I think they were sincere [chuckles] in the recommendation. I guess I felt that I had some respect from my colleagues because they recommended me for these different jobs.

Wilmot: Clearly.

Jones: I became the vice chairman for reasons, I think, of omission rather than commission. The department of psychology at Ohio State had waned in its standing. It had been ranked among the very best universities, and their reputation had been dwindling. So, they decided that they needed to pay attention to academic personnel. There was a young Turks rebellion, and these young guys went to the administration saying that we’ve got to get better faculty members here because the reputation of this department is declining.

So, the administration gave them a vice chairman for personnel development, and that person would oversee all department recruitment, retention, and terminations. James Naylor had the job first. He set up procedures, and then he got a job offer at Purdue as chairman of the department of psychology after I had been there for a year. For example, he made sure he had a curriculum vitae, which was very detailed on every faculty member. What did he publish, where did he publish, what are his grants? And apparently, the department had been much more lax in their hiring. So, when they hired me, I had a little vita, and I gave it to him. They knew they wanted me, and they hired me. So when Naylor became the vice chair, he had this extensive list of requirements that he wanted documentation on. Did you deliver papers at conventions? Did you do technical reports? Did you get grants? Did you have articles? Did you have all these
things? Well, I had a lot of these things, but I had never put them down because I didn’t think they were important. And when I put them down, I had an enormous list of things. When they got this information, they decided, unbeknownst to me, that they were going to put me up for full professorship. [laughs]

Wilmot: At Ohio State.

Jones: Yes. Because I came in as an associate professor. So, they voted, and unknown to me, one of my colleagues at the department called me about ten days before Christmas when the committee met and said, "You know, we’ve just approved you for promotion to full professor.” I was floored! Because nobody had asked me for any material except that I had filled out this elaborate thing. So, what I’m saying is that because they had done this voting—and only the full professors vote—they knew a lot about me. And, I hadn’t been in the department long enough to alienate anybody, so I had no sense of a commission. So, when the next year, Naylor, left to be chairman of the department of psychology at Purdue University, they then invited me to be vice chairman. The reason that happened, I think, was because, first, I hadn’t alienated anybody. And secondly, they were familiar with what I had done because they had just voted on me the year before. So, after some consultation, I decided to do that, which was a great opportunity.

Wilmot: This was in 1967?


Wilmot: There’s two questions I wanted to go back to. The first one is, I’m just going to close out your Ohio State, Ph.D. experience. What did the job search for you look like after that? What did your horizon look like?

Jones: The job search for me was, virtually, no white institution would offer me—.

Wilmot: This is in 1959?

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: Did you apply to white institutions?

Jones: Yes, a few. Of course, your advisor often takes care of you. In the major institutions, the focus is upon specialization. So, when a person is looking for an individual in a certain specialty area, they write to those people who are recognized in their area and ask if they have students they want to recommend. Of course, there are jobs that are advertised, et cetera. Well, I had one job offer from a school, a teacher’s college in upper-state New York. All my other jobs were from HBCUs. But the interesting thing about those HBCU jobs is that they were all at the level of full professor because they didn’t have any Ph.D.s in a lot of these institutions and in a lot of these fields, and especially psychology. So, I got job offers of full professor from Florida A&M and North Carolina Central College and maybe one or two other places. Then, I got a job offer from Miami University in Oxford Ohio, in research. The person who hired me was Lawrence Siegal, who was a Jewish guy, who wrote to my advisor at Ohio State. He told Siegal that he had two people, and that of the two, he recommended me. I don’t think he said anything about race, I don’t believe. So, he was—Horrocks, in my
opinion, was a man without prejudice as far as I could see. He looked out for me. But this was in 1959. He might have put my name in some other places, but there were not—[doorbell rings] I wonder who that could be—there were not that many opportunities for black people in white institutions. [goes to answer the door]

Wilmot: In 1959.

Jones: In 1959.

[interruption]

Wilmot: Okay, you’re on.

Jones: Larry Siegal, a Jewish guy who hired me at Miami University. Like 99 percent of the white institutions—

Wilmot: Was this in Florida?

Jones: No, this is one in Oxford, Ohio. There were no faculty of color in any major institutions probably in the United States. I doubt if there were more than ten in 1959. Even when I went back to Ohio State in 1960, there were only two of us. But he asked Horrocks for recommendations, and Horrocks gave him two names, and he recommended me. The other guy was a fellow by the name of Nathan Gottfried, who eventually came to Miami in the psychology department. I was in the instructional research service, and we actually published a lot of studies together.

Wilmot: Nathan Gottfried?

Jones: Yes. Nathan W. Gottfried. We published a lot of studies together, but I got the job at the research center, which is what I wanted. It was a great opportunity; professionally, it was the best thing that happened to me. But, race is still an issue, and Siegal told me that he consulted with the provost, and told him that, “This was a Negro. Would there be any problems?” The provost said no. So, they hired me. I was the Negro on the faculty there. The plus in that was that I got a lot of opportunities to do research in my own interest, so it opened up many opportunities for me.

Wilmot: How old were you at the time? This was 1959.

Jones: Well, when I finished my Ph.D.

Wilmot: Twenty-eight?

Jones: Twenty-eight, yes.

Wilmot: Okay, were you married?

Jones: I was married, I met at Ohio State. She was an undergraduate.
Wilmot: Her name was?

Jones: Johnette Turner. She finished her bachelor’s at Miami and her master’s in fine arts also at Miami University. She was in painting. She’s still in Oakland, by the way; she is the director of Studio One, which is on 45th Street and in the Arts Center for the City of Oakland. She runs that now. But for most of the time we were married, she didn’t work except doing her own painting and photography. We had a lab in the house and a studio and that sort of thing in our house up in the Oakland hills. She just took care of the kids and did what she wanted to do. Well, where were we?

Wilmot: Were you also at that time, this is in 1959, 1960, had you started your family already? Did you have children?

Jones: No, what happened was that my wife had this schedule. She was going to finish her thesis, and then she wanted to teach. And so the idea was that when I moved, we would go to a place where we could both work. So, I went to a conference at Fisk University, and they offered me a job in the psychology department. Well, then she was able to get a job at Tennessee State in the art department. But then, her thesis involved painting. She was pregnant. And the fumes interfered, so she wasn’t able to finish her thesis at that time. She was not able to take the job in the art department because she didn’t have her thesis finished. Then, I had made a commitment to go to Fisk, but then during the summer, I had a call from the dean at UCLA.

Wilmot: You were very popular. You were very much in demand.

Jones: That was a long time ago. So, I told the dean, I thanked him, but I had already accepted a position at Fisk University. So, on Friday afternoons, this was in the summer, maybe like June or something, school was out. The young guys in psychology, professor types, would go out and have a beer, just talk and so forth. Everybody was into developing careers. So, I said, “Say, I got a call from this dean at UCLA, asking me about a job.” “UCLA! What’d you say?” I said, “Well I told them that I already had a job at Fisk.” “Are you crazy? That’s UCLA! You don’t tell them ‘no.’” So, I said, “I already made a commitment to Fisk.” They said, “Well, you’ve gotta go to UCLA.” So, I said I’d talk to the people I knew.

I knew all the deans at Miami University, so I talked to several deans, and I said received an offer from UCLA, and I wanted to know what to do. As you know, I’ve already decided to go to Fisk. They said, “Well, what we’d do is if somebody gets a job offer someplace else, we wish them well because we don’t want to have anybody working who’s not happy and would rather be someplace else. And if it’s an institution like UCLA, we figure we’ve got a friend now at UCLA who can help us recruit.” So, I said, okay. I wrote a letter to the president of Fisk and said I had this opportunity. Then, I called the dean at UCLA, and I said I’d like to reconsider. He said, “Well, what are you gonna do about Fisk? And so I said I’d write and ask if he could release me from my contract. So, he said, “Okay, let us know what you want to do, what you learn.” I wrote to the president of Fisk and told him I had this opportunity at UCLA, and I thought I’d like to do that. Then, just to make sure everything was above board, I sent a copy of that, CC, to the dean at UCLA and with the dean of UCLA’s name because I wanted everything to be above board. I got a letter back from the Fisk president that said sure I’ll release you, but it was unethical of the dean at UCLA to even recruit you,
knowing that you had a commitment to Fisk University. He sent a copy of that letter to the dean of UCLA.

Wilmot: Okay, let’s stop there.

[End of Session]
INTERVIEW 2: July 15, 2003
[Begin minidisc 4]

Wilmot: Reginald Jones, interview two. July 15, 2003. Yesterday, we left off, and you were telling the story of the Fisk-UCLA face-off that occurred in your life when you had an offer from UCLA, and you had already committed to Fisk. You had left off saying that the Fisk president wrote a letter to the UCLA dean—

Jones: —saying that that was unethical, even to approach me for the position. I could probably wrap it up very quickly. The dean at UCLA said he could not accept taking me from Fisk, and therefore, the deal was off, and he was going to continue to recruit because they needed somebody. So, that was the end of it. So, I went to Fisk, and they had a very nice house close to campus that they had refurbished. So, we had a very good time at Fisk.

One of the unique experiences was I had three graduate students, and these were students who probably could not get into mainstream institutions. And we developed them to the point where all three went on to get Ph.D.s. That was a very rewarding experience.

Wilmot: This was in that master’s program.

Jones: In that master’s program, during that one year at Fisk. They went to Kansas, Connecticut, and Vanderbilt where they got their Ph.D.s.

One final thing is that in the end of January, or something like that, the dean at UCLA came to Nashville and asked if I was still interested in coming to UCLA. I told him I was. So, eventually, everything came true, and I was appointed to the UCLA faculty in July of 1964.

Wilmot: So, when doors are closed, they’re not closed for good.

Jones: I thought I had lost out on it, but sure enough, it worked out well.

Wilmot: When I look at your time between 1959 and 1974 when you come to Berkeley, you’re spending times of about two to three years, with the longest time at Miami U, I think, at different institutions. What was happening in your career at that time? What were you doing there?

Jones: There was a different dynamic in each move. The Miami appointment was a research appointment. We were happy there, and they treated me well. When I said I was going to Fisk, they immediately moved to give me a promotion, and told me things were going to be all right. But the reason for the move was my wife, who also wanted to have an appointment. She did some part-time teaching at Miami University, actually. But it was not a full-time job. We had young children, so it was not something we wanted to do anyway. The Fisk appointment was before we had any children. So, the idea was that we would go to a place where we could both work. But when UCLA came, that was the ideal kind of position. Since we already had the one child, she would not be working.
So, that made it doubly attractive. And then California was—just the prospect of southern California was thrilling!

Wilmot: Why?

Jones: You know, the California mystique. It’s a wonderful place to be. And of course, UCLA was a major institution. I wanted to be in a research-oriented institution. The research that I had done at Miami, which was incidental to my job, attracted lots of inquiries about my availability because that was a time when special education was developing. The major schools of education, most of the people who went into special education had degrees in psychology. So that made me attractive to a lot of places. So, it was easy to go to UCLA. But then that was the School of Education, and after a couple of years, when I was invited to return to Ohio State, that was just something I wanted to do. The fact that your old institution, where you took your degree, wants to hire you because they believe you can contribute and also that you’ve done something significant already is sort of flattering. And it was psychology, so I was really pleased at that opportunity.

Then, after a couple of winters, I remembered what California was about. I missed it a lot. I had a student at UCLA who took his Ed.D—he would have been my full student, except I left before he did his dissertation—he had gone to the University of California, Riverside, and he had told them they should try to recruit me. They attempted to recruit me to be the dean of the School of Education.

Wilmot: What was his name?

Jones: His name was Donald MacMillan. He’s probably just about to retire now. We talk probably say every six months or so. I indicated that I was not interested in being a dean and that I was so busy with research and my graduate students that I probably couldn’t even consider any sort of appointment to leave. It turns out that when I had indicated this, the provost at Riverside said that he was going to be in the area, and he would be interested in talking to me, getting my ideas about things. Well, it turns out that the chancellor at Riverside, Ivan Hinderocker, had sent him to Columbus to try to convince me that I should be the dean there. The man wasn’t going anywhere, he wasn’t in the area. He was just there to try to convince me that I should be the dean there. The man wasn’t going anywhere, he wasn’t in the area. He was just there to try to convince me that I should come to Riverside. So, I told him no, I didn’t want to be a dean. But, I might come to be a visiting professor sometime, but I couldn’t say when that might be.

This was a time when I had a little Alfa Romeo, you know, Italian sports car, red, top down, it was October. It was wonderful weather and so forth. I had all these graduate students and doing research, it was wonderful. We lived in this house—it was about maybe four or five miles from campus—that was designed by a student of Frank Lloyd Wright. Wonderful windows, two stories, a creek ran through hundreds of trees. I had everything I felt I needed. He called, and I said yes I’d talk to him, and they said, ”Anytime you want to come out, that would be fine.” I said that I really don’t know when I could do it. So, that was that.

Then, have you heard of proverbial hawk? The hawk came to Columbus, which is the cold weather. Around Christmas, they have all these football bowl games in California with people in their short-sleeves, watching. I was depressed over that Christmas holiday. I said to my wife, “Do you think they’ve still got that job over in Riverside?”
She said, “Well, why don’t you check?” So, on December 26th I called the provost and asked him if he still had a position. He said, “Yes, we’re interested. Whatever you want to do. But what about your students?” [laughs] All the stuff I had run down to him, he ran back to me. “Well, I think I could get them taken care of.” “Well, what about your research?” Well, I’ll bring that with me.” So, he said, “Well you know, we’ll see what we can do. When can you come for a visit?” I said January 2. [laughs] So, January 2, I was on my way out to Riverside. This was around 1965. I went out and we talked, and they made me an offer.

But the people at Ohio State said—well, first, they had a new dean. This new dean was talking about all the things he was going to do for psychology. So, these young guys, when they learned I was planning to leave, inquired as to what I needed to stay. I said I wasn’t going to have any colleagues who did what I did, and I didn’t want to have a lot of teaching and so forth. And also, there was something that they could not change, was the weather. They went to the dean and said, “Jones is leaving, he’s our vice chairman, we want to keep him.” And so, this was a test for the dean. They were going to see whether he was going to do anything because he made all these plans about what he’s going to do for psychology. So, he called me in and asked me, said people were telling him I was leaving; he wanted to know what he could do. We had a lot of interaction because I was the vice chairman for personnel. All personnel actions had to go through the dean eventually. The department of psychology had an excellent reputation, and whoever we recommended for promotion or termination was either promoted or terminated. A lot of departments would have all these committees and so forth going by the dean to review the recommendations of these departments, but the reputation of psychology was so strong, and we’d never put up anybody who was questionable, so that we didn’t have to go through the same procedures that the other departments went through. So, I had been primed by my colleagues to say, “Well, I need to have some colleagues to work with. I’m the vice chairman now, and I don’t have that heavy a teaching load and I’d like to probably keep that teaching load.”

So, he told me these things, and then one day about two or three weeks later, the department chair came and said they talked to the dean and this is the proposal they made: the next two hires in the department would be mine—I could decide who they would be, somebody who would work with me; a big raise, and a reduced teaching load. So, for two quarters, I would only teach one class, which was a two-hour seminar. And then once a quarter, I would teach a regular three-hour course, and a two-hour seminar. That would be my teaching load.

Wilmot: And this contrasted with your teaching load before, which was—

Jones: It would have ordinarily been two, two-hour courses each semester. But as the vice chairman, I wouldn’t have that load. I would keep what I had, which is one two-hour seminar on two occasions and then one two-hour seminar and a regular class. Which was really a good deal because they were all in my area of specialization.

I told the dean at Riverside that the people at Ohio State were willing to do—well, they wanted to keep me. Whatever the people said, they would respond. I told him that, and I told the people at Ohio State. They got into this bidding war. They just kept going. But, I told the dean flat out that you could make the response and I would appreciate it, but I
missed California. I didn’t want to say that if they did certain things I would remain because that probably was not the case. I was up front, you know, “I’m probably going to go to California, but I will listen to what you have to say. I appreciate your offer, responding,” and so forth. But they kept going back and forth. At the time, I was making $14,500 as a full professor at Ohio State. It ended up as something like $19,000. If you look at percentages, that’s an enormous raise—30 or 40 percent. That’s a lot of money. [laughs] But, I didn’t accept that kind of offer, and I went to Riverside.

Riverside wanted me there—I said I didn’t want to be a dean, but I might consider being a professor. So, when I got out there, their proposition was they wanted to start a special education program. And so they gave me all these positions that I could use to hire people, and I brought one graduate student who had finished a Ph.D. at Ohio State, there. Then, we recruited other people. So, that’s how I got to Riverside. And I was content there. We had a lovely house; it was a good place to raise kids, and so forth. I had some great colleagues.

And then the opportunity to go to Africa came up, and as I indicated in my little write-up, I thought they would just pick me, but they were just calling people. So, I had that opportunity, went there for two years. Just as I was getting ready to go to Ethiopia—it was during the spring—I got a call from Berkeley, asking whether or not I’d be interested in coming to Berkeley, from Bil Banks. I said yes, but I was going to Ethiopia, and that the earliest availability wouldn’t be for two years. Then, I got this offer, this inquiry from Harvard. They had narrowed their list down to three or four people. So, I spent a number of days in the spring in Cambridge, interviewing the people at Harvard. I told them the same thing. Because, I guess, I knew that I was going to Africa because it was something that I wanted to do desperately, and I had the contract with me when I was there, but I hadn’t signed it. I was very relaxed. I think in many circumstances, people who have the opportunity to get to Harvard would jump through hoops to get there just because of the institution, the reputation. I knew that I was not going to be taking a job, so I was much more relaxed than I probably would have been. I was very relaxed. Sometimes, when I’m challenged, at least back then, I had total recall of everything I’d ever learned. [chuckles] I was probably very impressive in my interview.

What the Harvard faculty was interested in is whether you can contribute to what they were doing. What they want to know is what you’re about, and they’re trying to figure out how you can relate to what they’re doing. So, they’re asking detailed questions about your research and about things they believe you know something about because they know that you can educate them as well. In the interview, they’d ask me, “Well, if we could make this available in the fall, would you come?” So, I knew right then that I had probably done a really good job. I said, “No, I won’t because I’m going to Ethiopia. I’ll be available in two years.” That probably shocked them because I was not willing to come immediately.

Wilmot: You seem to have a really—you really knew how to negotiate and advocate for yourself in these processes. Where did you learn how to do that? I don’t think that’s something that people just know how to do.
Jones: Well, one of the things about the UC system was when I left Fisk and went to UCLA, I mastered the personnel process in the University of California system. I learned that they had taken advantage of me at UCLA.

Wilmot: In 1964?

Jones: Yes. I had a very good record of accomplishment, and they brought me in at literally the lowest level of the assistant professorship. As I talked to people who just got out of graduate school, I had been out for five years, and I had tons of publications, these other guys—and women, there were a couple of them—didn’t have anything. So I said, no, I’m not going to abide by this. So, I went to the dean and said that I thought that I needed to have a merit increase the first year. Sure enough, I got the merit increase. The more I learned—some of the people who were full professors hadn’t done as much as I had done. I said no, I’m not going to abide by this. I’m going to tell the dean I need to be promoted to tenure in my second year there. Well, it’s not the second year beyond my Ph.D., it was my second year at UCLA. So, they said okay, we’ll consider it. And in the meantime, I got the offer from Ohio State. I knew I was going to Ohio State, so I just said thank you, but don’t go through all this process because I’m going to go to Ohio State. But they insisted they wanted to go through it anyway. Then, the provost sent back the word that I would be promoted to tenure at UCLA, and that I had a great future at UCLA and they hoped I would stay, and all that, but I left. My motives were not about money in any of these situations; I went to places where I felt I could do what I wanted to do professionally. I felt I could do that better at Ohio State, and I’d be more comfortable in the psychology department than I was in education. That’s sort of the basis for that move from UCLA after two years, to Ohio State. Then, the move back to California was because I wanted to be in California. You reach a point in your career where the institution makes you, and then you get to a point where the institution is what it is because you are there. Somehow I made that transition because I’d done enough research, and then I had a research program. So, it was not contingent upon being here or there. As long as it’s a major university, they have a good library, they have good students, I can do what I want to do anywhere.

But in the earlier days, that was not the case. I wanted to be in a major institution. So, I could easily take all the things I was doing and go to Riverside. They treated me very well there, and I got promoted, etcetera. When I went to Ethiopia, it was on a leave of absence from Riverside. I was intending to come back. Then, Berkeley called, Bil Banks, and I told them I would be available in two years. They brought me down anyway. So, I met the chancellor, who was at the time a statistician—

Wilmot: —Al Bowker.

Jones: Yes, Al Bowker. I met with Al Bowker, and I told Bowker I was very interested in coming to Berkeley. I’ve also been contacted by Harvard and Stanford. “Well, that’s great, you know, we don’t mind. Harvard, we’ll deal with Harvard.” And so forth. So that was it. Then, before the first year, I was over in Ethiopia, I had the formal offer from Berkeley to come to Berkeley. Then, somewhere along the line, while I was in Ethiopia, I got this letter from Harvard with their offer. [phone rings] While I was in Ethiopia, I got this call from Cambridge. They had a new dean. Again, it was people always testing these administrators who are talking about what they are going to do. The people at Harvard were wanting to communicate to the dean that they are in charge.
“You’re not in charge; we’re in charge, and we tell you who we want you to hire. And you hire them. That’s your job, to get the people.” [chuckles] Part of their power play was we’ve had this search on, we’ve interviewed a lot of people, and we’ve identified the person that we want and literally, your job now is to get him to come. He made a lot of calls—we’d speak for hours on the phone like you talk across the street.

Wilmot: While you were in Addis Ababa?

Jones: Yes. Eventually, he arranged for a visit to come to Cambridge. I came in, and he said that I had been recommended, and we were there to negotiate. He was interested in what the faculty was thinking, as I was, because he was brand-new. [chuckles] So, I came in on a Monday morning, and he said look around, talk with people. Come back on Friday, and we’ll talk. So I was there a whole week, I had nothing to do except talk with faculty. Anybody I wanted to talk to. So I did that. Then, I came back on Friday, and we talked. Then, he wrote a letter with an offer based on what I would be making at Berkeley and the UC system. He had a lot of things in there, like they would pick up all my sabbatical leave that I’d accumulated at Berkeley and give it to me at one time. A lot of other little perks. They had so much money. [laughs] Then, I told the people at Berkeley—I didn’t say I was not coming—I only said I got this letter with an offer from Harvard, and within two weeks, I’m going to make up my mind as to what I’m going to do. Now, one of the things about the system at Berkeley—it drags out because they’ve got so many committees, and they’ve got to go through this and that. I knew that I didn’t want to be—May, I’m still trying to find out what they’re going to do. So, I just said two weeks. I promised I planned to come to Berkeley anyway because my family’s there. That’s what they wanted to do, they didn’t want to be in Cambridge. My wife at the time said, “Why would you even consider that? You know, you hate cold weather.”

But in any case, they made this offer, and then I sent the copy to Bil Banks. We’d been in communication, and he was expecting me to be there. So, I said I got this offer, and within two weeks, I’m going to make up my mind as to what I’m going to do, knowing full well that I was probably going to come to Berkeley. Immediately, I got a call saying that the Harvard offer was more money than they had because it was above the scale of the UC system, and it had to go through this elaborate process to appoint me above scale. They felt they needed to move immediately. So, what they would do to make it comparable was that instead of having a nine-months salary, they would give me an eleven months salary. That would be more than what Harvard was paying. The only duties I had in the summer months were to do my research. That looked like a very good deal, and so I said okay, I’ll take it. I told Harvard, thank you. I don’t want to say the arrogance of Harvard, but the feeling and belief that probably is the case, that everybody they offered jobs to were practically accepted. So, they just couldn’t believe that I—because what they had done is that they had made me the offer, and they had told people I was coming, but they had never heard from me. So, people would call and write and say, “Hey, you’re going to Harvard!” “Well, where’d you learn that?” “Somebody at Harvard said you’re coming.” So, I said, “No, I’m going to go to Berkeley.”

I came to Berkeley, but under this assumption that I had eleven months salary. So, when I got to Berkeley, in the first year, first summer, I got just eleven months salary. Then, the next summer, the provost wrote to Bil saying, “That was just a recommendation from the committee, but it has not been approved. So, the deal is off.”
Wilmot: Who?

Jones: The provost, Rod Park. Maybe, the dean. So, I said, “Oh no, you made a commitment, so I have to take some legal action because I came under a set of salary conditions, and now you’ve changed the rules of the game.” So, the provost and the chancellor said don’t go to court, we have our own internal procedures—Privilege and Tenure. I said okay, I wrote up the information, Privilege and Tenure evaluated it. It took a while. Then, they said to the provost—well, it went to the budget committee, you know, the budget committee is a committee that makes all the recommendations. They didn’t even send this to the budget committee, what they had done, until after I was there. The budget committee said, “Look, you already told the man what you’re gonna do. You’re the chancellor, you can do anything you want. So, don’t come to us, you’ve already made the decision. We don’t have anything to say about it.” Then, when I went to Privilege and Tenure, they said at the end, “Look, you told this man you’d give him an eleven month appointment. He used that as a basis in deciding whether or not to come to Berkeley or to go to Harvard. Now, you can’t change the rules. And you are the chancellor. If you say that’s what you’re gonna do, you can do it.”

Wilmot: This was in 1975, so that was with Chancellor Al Bowker, Vice Chancellor Rod Park?

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: Okay. Just kind of refreshing myself.

Jones: After they got this word from Privilege and Tenure, they said okay, we’ll do it. What the committee recommended was that until the salary through the regular means comes up to what the Harvard salary would be, that would be what I would be paid. If the salary got up so that my salary was captured by whatever the system was, then I would be back in the regular system. But, it was very ugly for a while. They just sort of wanted to renege on everything because the way things work is that the chancellor likes to get all of his appointments approved from the budget committee. He used that as a basis in deciding whether or not to come outside the committee because one of the things about the campus is that it’s run basically by faculty recommendations about appointments and that sort of thing. So, if the chancellor overturns too many of their decisions, then the faculty will say we have no confidence in the chancellor, he’s being arbitrary and so forth. We have no confidence; they’d probably fire him.

Wilmot: There are so many questions I have to go back to, but I wanted to stay with Berkeley right now. Did you have the sense that they would have done this to another faculty person who is not in the new Department of African American Studies? Was this something that was somehow related to that?

Jones: I don’t believe so, mainly because as I learned from reading so many hundreds of personnel files, it happens.

Wilmot: There’s a lot of—

Jones: —yes. And I think they were anxious at the time to build African American studies. They were pleased that somebody like me who had a reputation as a scholar would be there. It was what’s called an inter-campus transfer, and I had been told that when the
chancellor at Berkeley went to Riverside and asked if they could recruit me, the chancellor said that he was catching a lot of hell because Jensen was on the faculty. Arthur Jensen, who was perceived to be a racist person because he was suggesting that Blacks were genetically inferior, etcetera. Here’s this guy at Berkeley, and the students were protesting, wanted to get him fired, and so he said, “I need to have a Black scholar who can maybe counter it. We’d be able to say, well we’ve got a scholar, a psychologist” who does this kind of work, to sort of balance things. That’s what I was told that was the case that the chancellor at Berkeley made to the chancellor of Riverside as to why I should come to Berkeley, and why they wanted to have me here—“here,” I’m feeling like I’m home now—because of Jensen, and this was sort of a counter move. So, they gave me this money for a long time, and then I eventually got promoted to the level where the salary was more than I would have made at Harvard.

But then, it’s sort of like this is business in a sense, my dealings with Berkeley. It was not personal. And so they asked me once to be the chairman of African American studies. I did that. I actually worked in with Park in the chancellor’s office, and he was my boss in academic affirmative action. There was no animosity. If we had a problem, we got it resolved, and that was it. We worked together well.

Wilmot: What had you heard about Berkeley before you came? When you were at UC Riverside in 1969, had you heard about the Third World Strike? What were you hearing?

Jones: Oh yes! That was all over the place.

Wilmot: What were your thoughts about this?

Jones: I didn’t have any problems with that because I was sort of a radical-thinking person, anyway. We had taken on the American Psychological Association when I was a president of the Association of Black Psychologists—this very aggressive behavior of a lot of people. We wanted the American Psychological Association to be responsive to the needs of people of color. So, I was the president. We went into the council meetings; we had big guys standing up, wouldn’t let anybody go out, wouldn’t let anybody come in until we said what we had to say. I was in that mode, so I wasn’t intimidated by Berkeley, because we were doing that. Then, I had a friend, John Hurst, my colleague and my good friend that I met in the army who had come to Berkeley. We talked often. This was all in the papers down at Riverside and on the campus, so we had all this information about what was going on at Berkeley.

Wilmot: And when you arrived in 1974, I believe African American studies, or at that time it may have been called Afro-American studies, had just become its own department in the College of Letters and Science and split from ethnic studies.

Jones: There was some tension around that. Especially in ethnic studies, people didn’t appreciate the fact that that had taken place. But, Bil Banks was a very astute guy and he was not one to be swayed by public opinion, in a sense. [laughs] He had his ideas about what would work best. As you may know, and you will learn later, he went against the grain of the thinking of the people in African American studies. He wanted to bring it more in line with Berkeley, in terms of scholarship and so forth. So, he wanted to bring in scholars. A lot of the courses had strange names. They were sort of like, the department was treated like a pork barrel where friends, people were brought in,
literally off the street, teaching courses that didn’t have any substance. So, I think he knew that if the department was going to thrive, it needed to be a part of the institutional structure, to be a department, you see. That’s what he pushed for. Of course, they tried to get rid of him, Bil Banks. They wanted to fire him.

Wilmot: Who tried to get rid of him?

Jones: The people. There’s a guy by the name of Ron—he would send me clippings. Bil, by the way, had, maybe still does, a very rich file of newspaper articles and clippings about the Third World Strike and about African American studies and what was going on and all of the letters and communications about him as a sellout. “Banks is a sellout!”

Wilmot: What was this person’s name who had these files?

Jones: Well, he has them, so he has these newspaper clippings of all he did because he used to share them with me. When I was in Ethiopia, I would get a packet from Bil, even though I hadn’t arrived, bringing me up to date on all the things that were going on. They were vilifying him as a sellout because he wanted to have departmental status, get rid of people who were not really qualified to be faculty members, probably. And, then Bowker hired him to be the chair—made him the chair, rather—he was in the department; got rid of all these other people who didn’t have tenure. In the communication to him, Bowker wrote, that given all the things that needed to happen, he probably would not be able to do all the things he needed to do, in terms of research to gain tenure, but that he would take care of that for him. And then one of the secretaries of the old regime got access to this letter, opened it, and circulated it around. That was to say, “This Banks was a sellout, he’s doing this because he’s going to get tenure—the chancellor has already—look at this letter!” But, Bil Banks is a really strong—this guy has a strong constitution.

Wilmot: Yes, that’s a lot to go through.

Jones: Yes. So, he did what he had to.

Wilmot: You did tell me where you met Bil Banks. Can you tell me again?

Jones: I’m not so sure that when I went to Berkeley, I had ever met Bil Banks. I had done this book, the first edition of Black Psychology, which was at the time, a very important book because it reflected the orientation of a lot of fields to a revised—a revisionist kind of a book that looked at psychology, in this case, in a different way, from the perspective of African Americans. Bil Banks had a couple of chapters in that book. I had somehow identified Bil Banks, I don’t know how; I think through a former student of mine, one of these people, William Hays who had taken his master’s at Fisk and had gone on to get a Ph.D. Well, he was in the Black psychologist movement, and so I asked him to write a chapter. Then, he and Bil Banks attended the same undergraduate school, which was Dillard University. So, he knew Bil Banks. And Bil had gotten his degree in counseling psychology. So, somehow, between the two of them, I learned about Bil Banks, and I asked him to write a chapter for this book. So, I don’t know that I had ever met Bil Banks until I got to Berkeley. But, we’d had communication through the book, mainly. That’s how I got to know Bil Banks, mainly through this communication about the book.
Wilmot: When Afro-American studies at Berkeley was created, my understanding is that there was a lot of discussion about which directions the discipline, as such, should go. Kind of not sure if should be more community based. Do you remember those conversations? Can you kind of describe for me what the parameters of that discussion looked like?

Jones: See, I was not part of that conversation. When I got Berkeley, the direction was clear. The department and was going be more academically oriented. That was a conversation that took place before I arrived. But, my understanding is that the old regime—I call it the “old regime”—that was headed by Ron Lewis, was one that wanted to have that community orientation. So, they had a lot of courses that had strange sounding names that didn’t reflect anything that anybody would associate with a university program. So, that was that orientation. Bil’s view—and I want to say it was Bil’s view because when he was in this other department, he was the only person that had this view—was that if it was going to be successful, it had to be more mainstream. It had to have departmental status. So, when I was there, it was more academically focused. I can’t think of any courses we had that would be community-based courses at all.

Wilmot: Do you recall being at Riverside and hearing about the course that Eldridge Cleaver was the primary—? This is something that Troy Duster sponsored with two other faculty members.

Jones: Actually, I didn’t know about that at all. I didn’t know about that at all. But, we were having our own challenges at Riverside because the community wanted to have control of the developing black studies program. I was in the middle of that when I got there, meeting with community people to talk about the direction of the black studies program—

Wilmot: —at Riverside.

Jones: Yes, at Riverside.

Wilmot: Who were the prospective faculty there for that department?

Jones: Well, when I arrived, there was, I think, another person who was brought about the same time. He had a Ph.D. in political science from Michigan State University, and he was brought there to develop the black studies program. I was on some of the advisory committees, et cetera. But also, the community felt that it had its stake in this, and they wanted to approve a lot of the activities of the department. There was a guy there in the town whose name I can’t remember, but he was a really flaming radical. I recall, I’d only been there for a couple of weeks, maybe in early September, and it was ninety degrees, one hundred degrees in Riverside. The chancellor and the vice chancellor wanted me to come to a meeting with some community people to deal with some of the demands of the community.

Wilmot: After you had only been there two weeks.

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: And somehow that was part of your job description?
Jones: Well, it wasn’t part of the job description, but I think—this was strange. People in the academy weren’t accustomed to dealing with folks coming from the community telling them how to run the university [laughs]. They didn’t’ know how to deal with black people. So, you’ve got a black psychologist. You believe he can be helpful, and you want to communicate to the community that “I have some people here we brought in to try to be responsive to the needs of the black community.” I was not in any way a part of the black studies program; I was over there in education. So, I was there, and they felt that I could be helpful to them. The chancellor was there and the vice chancellor and maybe one or two other people and myself. So, here it is a hundred degrees, I come into the room, and here is a guy sitting there with black leather pants, leather jacket, leather hat, and leather gloves. In a hundred degree weather in this room. That was a statement; the dress was a statement. So, the chancellor was talking about, “Well, we wanted to develop black studies, and we brought these people in—we’re gonna bring in people,” and so forth. All of a sudden, they’re around this table, and this fist came down “Bam!” This guy, “Goddamnit, Ivan! This is a bunch of bullshit!” He went on, an eloquent speaker: “This is what you need to be doing! We’re not gonna take this! You better get this thing together!” This guy was a radical community leader, and so, that was a part of the climate. This guy, I don’t remember his name, but he was accused of killing, ambushing a police officer. This is an anti-establishment guy, and he frightened a lot of people. That was part of it.

And then we had, maybe a year or so later, a community meeting because the community was not satisfied with the direction of the black studies program. The person who headed it was a sociologist Maurice Jackson, who is now deceased. Well, Maurice and I became friends. Maurice was not attuned to dealing with this level of activity, that is, with people from the community making these demands. They had called this big meeting of the community to talk about the direction of— people coming down from Los Angeles to talk about black studies and what they needed to do in hiring the people and all that. That afternoon, I got a call from Maurice, saying, “You know, I’m not gonna be able to come to the meeting. I’m just not feeling well. Would you please go, and will you tell them that I’m not feeling well but I look forward to hearing the results.” These were people that had guns, you know! [laughter] at this meeting. I got up and said, “I got a message from Maurice. He said that he’s not feeling well. [laughs] But he’s wishes you well.” “Goddamnit! You get on the phone, and you tell Maurice he better get his ass over here right now!”

So, I went on, got on the phone and called Maurice: “Maurice, they want to have you over here.” Maurice came over, they sat him up on the podium there, and said, “This is what we want you to communicate to the officials at Riverside. This is what we want,” et cetera. Maurice said, “Well, I’m not so sure I can do all this. We have to write this up and review it, and we’ll submit it.” “Don’t worry, we’ve already written it up. All you’ve gotta do is sign it!” [laughs] So, they had all these demands already laid out. We want this, and we need this. So, he reluctantly signed it. Then, they turned it in. The next thing that happened was that Maurice disappeared completely from the campus, from everything. This was in the middle of the term, Maurice Jackson, gone! No Maurice Jackson. Then, it gets to be really interesting. Maurice Jackson is black, he’s married to a white woman, and he had a white babysitter. Maurice Jackson disappeared and with the white babysitter who was like eighteen years old, and Maurice was like forty-something years old—disappeared! Come to find out he was with the babysitter. Now, that just added another level to all the stuff that was going on. Down the road, Maurice
eventually divorced his wife and married the babysitter. That was just a little sideshow that was going on with all of this business. Now, somehow, Maurice was in touch with the chancellor, and the chancellor knew that he had signed this letter under duress.

Wilmot: The demands—

Jones: —yes.

Wilmot: What were the demands for the black studies department?

Jones: —more faculty and probably more tenured people. Things like that. More listening to the community demands in terms of what they wanted, how they felt the department should be run, what kind of courses should be in it, and all that.

Wilmot: How did these young programs—and I speak in the plural because I think this happened in other places, too—how did they become kind of game pieces in a larger kind of community struggle around issues of black power and black identity? How did that happen?

Jones: Well, I don’t think—things sort of settled at Riverside. They brought in a few people who could have conversations with the community. That probably helped to some extent. I think that’s how—and part of the advantage that Riverside had was that there was not a large, vocal black community.

Wilmot: In the area?

Jones: Yes. And some of the people who were agitating for change came from Los Angeles. So, there was not a continual presence of a group of people who were agitating all the time. There were just maybe one or two people, and they would bring in a few others to agitate. So, once these programs were not there, not agitating, then there was not a continual presence. So, I think Riverside was advantaged by not having a continual presence of people who were agitating for change. They didn’t have to broker, in a way, that certainly a place like Berkeley had to because they had a big contingent of people who were wanting change: the people in Oakland, a big black community, Berkeley. And the people who come to the area because they were attracted by the activity in the area, people who think and behave differently, and that’s why they want to be there, to bring about change, so there are large numbers of people there. Whereas Riverside, that’s about fifty-five miles southeast of Los Angeles. There were not that many people.

Wilmot: It’s just really intriguing to me that these programs actually became these touch points in a larger struggle when, historically, the university has been someplace that is somewhat distinct from the communities that it’s embedded in.

Jones: Yes, insulated. And that’s what these folks were trying to say, “You’ve been insulated too long, and now you need to deal with some real problems.” And of course, the academy is not accustomed to dealing with real problems. They want objectivity and distance. The belief is that by having objectivity and distance, you can be of greater benefit to the community. So, this was new for everybody. And, of course, at Berkeley, as I understood it, and you probably, reading material, if you get some of the old materials—I know that Bil Banks probably has them—with the courses being proposed,
it would be amazing what they were like, in terms of, they were designed to actually make a difference in the community and have students involved in these different courses. I don’t remember any of the names, but they were very interesting. Then, you see, a place like Berkeley, which is buttoned down, academically, all these courses had to be approved with all these committees [chuckles] with all these strange sounding names, something they’ve never heard of and no references attached to the course outlines. [laughs] “This is what we want; we don’t need to be going through a lot of committees. We told you. This is the course, this is what we’re going to do.” [laughter]

Wilmot: You laugh now, but at the time, it must have been kind of anxiety-producing.

Jones: Oh, yeah! So, here are these administrators who are confronted with this, and they’re trying to keep their university intact. They’re also trying to be responsive to these demands, which is not only to respond, but to bring in Black students, to bring in Black faculty. They’ve got all these sort of demands. The faculty at many of these places, if not most, they’re not into any of that. Their view is “This doesn’t belong in the university; this is not scholarly; this is not academic. We don’t need to have this.” But, the administrators had a broader view, which is, “We have to deal with this.” The faculty would think, “We don’t need to deal with this!” But, the people like Bowker and these other chancellors, they know. They’ve got to deal with this because they are interested in maintaining their institution and this can tear apart their institution. So, Berkeley I know was extremely fortunate that somebody like Bil Banks came along and said—

Wilmot: —would you stop for one second? Extremely fortunate that someone like Bil Banks came along—I’m trying to remember exactly because we’re going to pick that up.

[Begin minidisc 5]

Wilmot: Okay, I’m sorry. Just to pick up, you were talking about how the administration had to kind of field these, whereas maybe other faculty members didn’t think they really needed to address these issues and these demands. The administration simply felt that they had to, and someone like Bil Banks—

Jones: —came along, and who, in the case of Berkeley, saying, “I don’t agree with this focus of the Afro-American studies group. My vision is one that probably is more akin to the way the university operates.”

Wilmot: Was that a question of the long-term survival of the program?

Jones: Yes, I think so. I think it was Bil’s view, and he will speak for himself later on, but, I think it was his view that if this was going to be successful, it had to be integrated into the structure of the university. It could not be this free-standing group of people [chuckles] who had a lot of different rules that were not in any way related to universities, as they’re known to operate. So, I think that made him a welcome person. Since nobody had tenure anyway, it was probably easy to get rid of the other folks and to name Bil Banks to be the head. But then, he was perceived as a traitor to, well, a traitor.
Wilmot: Maybe, I would love to hear the end of that sentence. Traitor to whom?

Jones: The people. He was not supporting black people. He was just a lackey, bought by the powers. I hope he has kept his file of newspaper clippings and letters he’s received about that because, back then—that was a long time ago, 1973, thirty years ago, so, it was a long time. [laughs] He had all this material.

Wilmot: It's recent history.

Jones: Yes. He was under tremendous pressure, but he stuck in there. The guy brought it all.

Wilmot: I have a question for you, which is that during that time—this momentous time, civil rights and the 1960s and then Black Power and Third World Marxism—where was your head at during this time? Were these movements kind of influencing you?

Jones: From a professional side, I was doing race and psychology. The Black Psychology book was published in 1972.

Wilmot: The first edition.

Jones: Yes. So, I was probably in the forefront of thinking about what psychology needed to do. Then, earlier, as I said, we confronted the American Psychological Association. Made demands that—in one of those documents, I had my little speech prepared, delivered. I was part of a radical front of psychologists who were attacking the institutional structures of psychology. That’s where I was. There were lots of people who wanted to hear what black people had to say. It was a very busy time. Now, the advantage that I had, in a sense, was that I did not have to develop my career in this climate because my career was in pretty good shape before. So, I had more time to devote to these matters. I didn’t have to prove that, I was quote, “worthy” to be in the academy because I was a full professor, at the time that a lot of this was developing, and I actually contributed to its development. That probably was shocking to a number of people, because I was the president of the black psychologists, and I was a fellow of the American Psychological Association. Well, probably, at that time, I doubt if there were more than three African Americans who were fellows of the American Psychological Association.

Wilmot: Do you know who the other two were?

Jones: Well, I know one. I just speculate there must have been another one, but I don’t think there was. That was Kenneth Clark.

Wilmot: Right.

Jones: Kenneth Clark and myself, we were the only fellows of the American Psychological Association. In a sense, I had more credibility and it probably helped to legitimize in a way that had been more difficult—that is, from a scholarly side, because I was doing these, writing the Black Psychology book and talking about issues of discriminatory assessment and a lot of the disproportional representation of black children in special education classes. I was doing all of this during that period. The impact of labeling children deprived or disadvantaged. We were doing research like that, which helped to
legitimize, I think, at least psychology in these programs and education. I think I had that advantage and was able to do more because I didn’t have to prove that I am a scholar, and I can deal with these issues in a way that people could appreciate and understand.

Wilmot: There was another dynamic, which is the opposite side of that pole, the whole idea that there were people who were supposed to prove that they were—there was a book, I think, that came out. It was a dissertation by George Napper, *Blacker Than Thou*. The opposite end of that pole of proving yourself as a scholar was then proving—

Jones: —that you’re black enough!

Wilmot: Yes.

Jones: I never had that issue to deal with because something like black psychology, that was a radical idea. So, as a proponent of that, that was almost like automatic legitimacy [laughs]. To talk about black psychology, black anything, really. That was not my personal situation, but that was the situation of lots of people. Anytime you did not support the radical view, you weren’t black enough. Certainly, Bil Banks was reviled because he was not perceived to be black enough because of what he was doing. I think mainly because there was not a continuing presence for agitation in Riverside, people didn’t have that label attached to them in the way that, probably, they did in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and other places where you almost had to prove your Blackness. And usually, it had to do with agreeing to a very radical point of view.

Wilmot: During the civil rights movement, for some of that time, you were posted in the South, some of the time you were posted at UCLA. Posted is a military term, and the word that I actually mean is—

Jones: —I understand.

Wilmot: I’m just wondering, what was your engagement? Did you have any engagement with the civil rights movement at a local level?

Jones: When I was at Fisk, it was then 1963-64. The students at Fisk were actively involved in boycotting downtown Nashville and in marches, et cetera. Often, they would be gone when classes were in session. My response was to behave as if they were there and not be involved in any kind of action that would deter them from other things they were doing. I was not personally involved.

Wilmot: You were no longer a student at that time.

Jones: Yes, I was a faculty member. But, I wouldn’t schedule any exams or penalize anybody because they weren’t in class. I didn’t do any of that, in support of the students. I was not there that long; I was only there for nine months. But, I indirectly supported the students. Some people were probably more rigid. “Miss my class, we meet at nine o’clock Monday, Wednesday, Friday. If you’re not here, and I’m giving an exam—you don’t take it, you get an “F.” I wouldn’t do that.

Wilmot: Let’s take a quick break if that’s okay.
Jones: I’ll take this opportunity to get some water. Okay.

Wilmot: I wanted to turn quickly to the research that you were pursuing in the 1960s because you’ve kind of identified it as something that really gave you leverage that other people didn’t have. Please help me use the correct language here. When I look over the papers in the 1960s, it looks to me like you’re focusing on the psychology of teachers and student performance and special education and the attitudes of teachers, the perception of—in the language of that era—mental retardates, which is this really interesting take. I’m wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about this and how you got into this area and if I’m correct in drawing the lines of the area that way?

Jones: Well, when I was a graduate student, I was interested in school psychology, which is working with children in schools. When I learned about all the parameters of school psychology, I was told that I needed to know something about special education, exceptional children. Those being not only the mentally retarded, but the gifted and the speech impaired and the hearing impaired and the orthopedically disabled—all these different groups are encompassed under special education. I petitioned the graduate school to make special education a part of my graduate program.

Wilmot: This is at Ohio State?

Jones: At Ohio State, my Ph.D. program. So, I learned about mental retardation and all these other fields of special education. Now, it turns out that mental retardation is a real big problem for African Americans because they are disproportionately represented in special education classes for the mentally retarded. And so, a lot of my work had to do with issues like assessment, how do they get in the special education programs in the first place—IQ tests are one of the big reasons for that. Then, the other has to do with the stigma of being placed in a class for the mentally retarded, and you consider the fact that the vast majority are black children. So, I was into the research on what are the attitudes towards the mentally retarded, and what are the perceptions of the students themselves, in terms of being in classes for the mentally retarded, et cetera. So, I was doing all of that research in that area, which turned out to be of value and importance. I think I gave you some documents where there was some sort of summary evaluation of that work, in terms of how it was seen in the field. A lot of the different awards and recognition have come as a result of doing that work, people in special education and so forth, mental retardation, the Council for Exceptional Children. All of these awards have come as a result of that research that I was doing during that period.

Wilmot: What did your research look like, in terms of how did you go about conducting your research at that time? Was it still heavily statistics-based?

Jones: Yes, it was all statistical, empirical research. It was easier back then to research because there were fewer constraints. Now, it is very difficult to get permission. Unfortunately, back some years ago, there was no due process, there was no informed consent on the part of people who were participating. They were like the Tuskegee experiment, with the syphilis and withholding the penicillin and so forth. Well, you could do almost anything that the people in the schools, for example, would let you do. You didn’t have to get permission from parents; you didn’t have to get permission from anybody. So,
you could do a lot of studies if the people in the schools would agree to let you do them. Whereas now, you have to have informed consent. So, if you’re going to do anything with the public schools, you need to get consent from the parents, and you also have to communicate to the subjects what it is you’re studying. In the university, you have to go through these committees that will approve every research project that involves a human being. We didn’t have all that. So I could literally study anything that I could get some school people to agree to. I had access to a lot of schools and populations, et cetera. Now, it’s much more difficult to do that. I was able even to study some important problems that would not be able to be studied now because of the sensitivity of the schools—interviewing the kids and learning about how they stigmatize their friends as a result of being in these classes and programs. That frightens the school people.

One of the interesting things is that many of the important problems that we want to study, we can’t now, because we can’t get permission. For example, my colleague here at Hampton in sociology is interested in violence and youth. She cannot get permission from any school district to administer questions like, “Do you know anybody who’s brought a gun to school?” Now, you would think the schools would like to know that, but she cannot get permission from any school district in this area to address that issue. None, not one. They’re frightened to death of those kinds of questions. But back then, I could ask a lot of questions that were very important to be asked and answered about stigma and attitudes and things like that. A permission from a teacher—would not take months just to learn whether or not they would give me permission to study something like that. That was an advantage I had back then. I could study lots of things that are now very difficult, if not impossible, to deal with.

Wilmot: Did most of your research take the form of surveys you administered or interviews?

Jones: All of them—surveys, direct interviews with the students. For example, we were able to, like back in Oxford, Ohio, which was where Miami University is, to get the entire school, the whole school, the high school, to complete questionnaires for one research study. The instructions were presented over the PA system, and everybody in the school at that time took it. There is no way under the sun that you’d ever be able to get that done now. It would probably take a year for them to decide that they’re not going to do it. But you see the issues you’d have would be like, people are saying, “You’re taking time out of a school day to do this. We want our kids to have thirty minutes to be devoted to instruction and so forth. We don’t want—what is this about?” Those are some questions that are raised now. You’d have to write every parent in the school to ask for permission, and then half of the kids don’t take the thing home. Half of those who get to them won’t agree to it. Not that they know, it’s just, “I don’t want to be involved.” Then, you would have a sample, you don’t know what it represents at all because maybe of the potential candidates, probably 20 percent eventually respond. And what does that mean in terms of generalizing to a population? So, you’ve got twenty people out of hundred. Well, what are the other eighty like? And why didn’t they want to participate? If you’re going to generalize, what are you going to be able to say? Who are you generalizing to? Those are some real issues that are posed by research now because of the requirement that you have some informed consent. That’s a real challenge for research these days. There are a lot of things that are most important, you can’t even study.
Wilmot: How did you used to go about measuring instructors’ attitudes about the work they were doing?

Jones: There are people who have developed these scales. We applied and administered them, and in some cases, we developed our own questions. Many psychologists know how to develop questionnaire scales, interview schedules—they know how to do all that. One of the interesting things about the work that I did is that I have fairly good grounding in many, many different kinds of research methods. Some would be questionnaires, and some would be experiments. Some would be interviews. All of those. I used a lot of different kinds of research methods because I’ve been fairly well trained in research methods in graduate school. So, I had an advantage. Because the training was very broad, I knew a lot of different kinds of procedures and methods that I applied to these problems of labeling children, stigmatizing them, et cetera. That was sort of the research that I was doing back then. And I had a lot of energy and a lot of time.

Wilmot: Back to the 1960s, were there specific models or influences in the way that you went about your work?

Jones: No.

Wilmot: Either in terms of intellectual framework or in terms of methodology?

Jones: Well, probably the overriding methodology and analysis was empirical research. I used a variety of methods, depending on the question I was asking. Sometimes it was good enough just to ask teachers what they thought. In other cases, it was to ask students with standardized questionnaires and so forth. I didn’t have any particular methods; it was depended on the question I was asking. But, the advantage I had was I knew a lot of different methods, and I could, therefore, use them with whatever question I was asking.

Wilmot: I wanted to turn briefly to your time in the military, which looks like it happened in the two years prior to Ohio State—

Jones: —and after I finished my master’s degree.

Wilmot: How did you end up going into the military?

Jones: I was drafted.

Wilmot: You were drafted. This was for the Korean?

Jones: What was that, 1960, no, it was 1950.

Wilmot: It was 1950-something.

Jones: ’54.

Wilmot: So, this was for the Korean War?

Jones: I’m not sure what war; it was a long time ago. I don’t think it was associated with any war, necessarily. They were just drafting people, and your draft board kept in touch with
you after you were eighteen. I got my bachelor’s degree, and then you were always reporting to the draft board. So, I was getting my master’s, and then there’s a question that comes, what do you want to do now—your plans and so forth? I said I want to go on to get a Ph.D. The next two weeks from there, I got a letter saying report to the draft board in Miami, Florida, on this date, I think probably in March, because we’re going to be drafting you into the army.

Wilmot: Were you ever posted overseas?

Jones: Yes, I was drafted into the army, and I had my basic training, which six weeks in South Carolina—Fort Jackson, South Carolina. After that, then they sent me to a special school for personnel management. These are the people who do all the personnel things in the military. That’s in Indianapolis. I was there for six weeks. Then, I was sent, after that training, to a base in Kentucky—Fort Campbell, Kentucky, which is where the airborne is located. I was to be in the personnel office there in Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The first few days I was there, before I reported to my duty station, I went over to the base psychiatry department, and I told them that I was a clinical psychologist, and I’d like to work for them. They said, “Yes, that’d be great.” But, I said, “I’m assigned to this other unit.” So, they said, “Let us deal with that.” So, on Monday morning, when I was supposed to report to duty over there in the personnel office, they had already received a call from the psychology/psychiatry people saying they’d like to have me in the psychology/psychiatry department. The commanding person said, “Okay, you’ll do it.” And so they let me go to the psychology department. All the time I was in the army, I was in the psychiatric unit, working as a clinical psychologist.

One of the things they did at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, was to train paratroopers. Many strange things that would happen among the troops. Some of them were crazy, really. That’s in non-professional terms. Many had psychiatric problems, let’s put it that way. We evaluated them. There’d be things like, here are these paratroopers in training and they’re getting ready to jump out of airplanes with these parachutes, and there’s some guy sitting there as part of the training group, he’s there in line. And he says, “Oh, wouldn’t it be wonderful if somebody’s parachute didn’t open? It’d be just a big splatter! Blood all over the place! Oh, that would be interesting to see.” Now, you can imagine, you’re up in this place, this is the first time you’re about to jump out, and somebody’s talking about wouldn’t it be a great experience if your parachute didn’t open. [laughs] So, somebody would say we better send that person over to get a psychological evaluation because they don’t appear to be too healthy. So, we’d do things like that. A lot of people just have problems.

So, I was there at that base working as a psychologist and then, a little bit after six months or so, I was posted to Germany in the Fifth General Hospital, which is a big military hospital in Stuttgart, Germany, right outside of Stuttgart. They had a big psychiatric clinic there. We had about four psychologists in that clinic. And so I had a chance to travel all over Europe while I was in the military and get this experience. The military, of course, has families, so I had the experience of working not only with soldiers, but their children and their wives. I got a really broad experience working in psychology, and I had chance to travel all over Europe, too. I got to Italy, Switzerland, England, France, Holland. Just a lot of places, it was a wonderful experience, just to be able to travel.
Wilmot: Can I ask was race and racism a different experience in Europe then from the United States?

Jones: I didn’t experience it. I think, in a place like France, the experience was, I think there was probably an anti-American sentiment, not race, because of the arrogance of the Americans: you know, they don’t need to speak or understand the language, they throw around money, et cetera. So, my sense was that there was not appreciation of Americans, and there was a book actually published by a professor at Berkeley called *The Ugly American*. I don’t know if you’ve ever encountered that book, but it was a book about the way Americans behaved in other countries. They don’t put forth a very positive image. That was the experience that I had. It was more anti-American than anti-black. The one advantage I had was familiarity with both French and German.

Wilmot: I remember you had taken German in undergraduate—

Jones: Yes, I had two years of German and one year of French.

Wilmot: Not to mention you had a French and English name, Reginald Lanier.

Jones: [laughs] Yes. So, that enabled me to negotiate those countries much easier than many.

Wilmot: I can imagine you just saying, “Je m’appelle Lanier.”

Jones: Yes, and I can do that. Probably not much more now. [chuckles] That enabled me to relate to the people in a much different way than others who didn’t have familiarity with the language. And because I had so little money, it also made it possible for me to make it go further because I didn’t have to be in the main areas where they spoke English in order to get a hotel room. I could go to other places where they didn’t speak any English and communicate what I needed. Now, if you’re in Paris, everybody speaks English. But, if you go up to the outskirts, you encounter people in hotels and so forth where they don’t speak English. They don’t have any English people, English-speaking people who even come to their hotels, and they are like a fraction of what the cost would be, but you have to be able to speak the language. So, having some familiarity was a good advantage. And I got to relate and know people in a way that my fellow soldiers weren’t able to because they couldn’t communicate at that level. I played ping-pong and was very good, so I was able go to the community centers in these towns and just play ping-pong. We could communicate and so forth.

Wilmot: You became a ping-pong ambassador.

Jones: Yes. [laughs] Yes. The other thing that really was wonderful is that in Germany, they had a wonderful library with all kinds of materials. I took that opportunity to just broaden my reading. For example, I read all the Steinbeck that was available. And a lot of other people that I wanted to read about, so that was another wonderful fringe benefit. And I had the time to do that. That was a good part of the military experience. Then, after my two years, they let me go. But, an advantage was I had the G.I. Bill. It subsidized my education at Ohio State to a significant degree, and I had a teaching assistantship, which paid even more. Then, I had my little money from the state of Florida because I was working in a field where they didn’t have doctoral programs in any of the schools that were available to black people. I probably had more resources
then than I’ve had since, from these various places. The military was a good experience for me for travel, for the experience I got, working as a psychologist. There were opportunities to read and travel.

Wilmot: I would just ask one question pursuant to this which is if you were to think of your favorite all-time, hands-down your favorite books. What are they?

Jones: Oh boy. Hmm.

Wilmot: Maybe think of four or five, just to limit it. It’s not a totally fair question.

Jones: I have to think about that. At one point, I tried to read very broadly, novels and other books, a lot of psychology stuff. I don’t know that I could identify favorites, really. There are lots of books that I’ve enjoyed at different times. The one that I’ve enjoyed recently is Our Kind of People, do you know that? It’s a book about the Black upper-class.

Wilmot: By Henry Louis?

Jones: No, you’re thinking about Gates, no. I enjoyed his book Colored People. This is a book about the black upper class, and it’s written by a guy by the name of Lawrence Otis Graham. He’s an attorney, but he writes about racial matters. Now, you recall this individual who went underground in these resort places in upper-state New York. He acted, he was a waiter, and he sort of recorded the experiences he had and how these people dealt with race and so forth. He wrote about the conversations he’d overhear as he was waiting tables and that sort of thing. Well, you may know his wife. Is her name Patricia Graham? I’m not sure. She writes these mysteries that are really very interesting. I think she’s also head of the cable news business program. He’s an attorney, but also—so, this book is Our Kind of People. It just talks about black upperclass. For example, I was thinking about it in relation to our conversation yesterday in which, we were talking about the Boulé. For example, the Boulé is described in this book. [phone rings] All the Black upper-class organizations are described in this book. The black upperclass lifestyle— the Inkwell, Martha’s Vineyard and all the places—some beaches down in Maryland and Sag Harbor up there in New York. This guy has written about that. And one of his books was Member of the Club, in which he talked about, again, his experiences as a waiter. This is a guy who has a bachelor’s degree from Princeton and a law degree from Harvard. He writes these interesting books about race-related matters. So I’ve enjoyed his work, for example. Those would be two that I find interesting.

Wilmot: Those are two you have enjoyed recently?

Jones: Yes, recently.

Wilmot: I was just doing the thing you’re not supposed to do as an interviewer, which is finish people’s sentences.

Jones: Well, I thank you.

Wilmot: Yes. I want to turn now to your time in Addis Ababa. Am I saying that correctly?
Jones: I think it’s pronounced “Addis Ababa.”

Wilmot: You were at Haile Selasse University in Ethiopia, and you were—

Jones: I was director of the University Testing Center. The major assignment I had there was to develop a test for admission to the university. Now, Ethiopia’s a country of tribal groups. Many have their own languages and customs and educational system, though there’s supposed to be a common educational system. Well, there were some provinces—it would be like states—that had never had a student qualify for admission to the university. Now, you qualify for admission to the university through what is called the ESLCE—the Ethiopian School Leaving Examination, which is a sort of achievement test that covers the curriculum. So, there are subjects like English, French, German, and mathematics and history and physics and chemistry and so forth. You have to pass so many of those courses in order to have successfully completed the school leaving examination. Now, if you have done that successfully with a “C” grade or better in, I think, five subjects, you automatically qualify for admission to the university, at no cost to you. None.

So, you can imagine, that if you’re in a province, and nobody from your province has ever been admitted to the university, then there can be problems. If that has happened, then it is easy to believe that there is some discrimination going on. Why is it nobody from Hampton has ever been admitted to the University of Virginia? It’d be that kind of question. So, it comes down to the fact that nobody could ever pass the school leaving examination. Part of that was related to the fact that the instruction in many of these provincial areas was so poor that they could never get students to the level of achievement that would enable them to qualify for admission to the university. So, somebody in the university thought that perhaps if we developed an aptitude test, that would supplement the achievement test, and then performance on the aptitude test would be the basis for admission to the university. That was a major assignment that I had.

Of course I reflected, “Now, where have I heard this problem before?” In the USA we’ve got some people who don’t qualify for admission to the university, why? Same kind of problem. But then, the University Testing Center had other activities. We were sort of like the testing agency for the entire country. Let’s say, I’ll give you an example. The government wants to hire some postal clerks and they wanted to have a battery test that would enable them to identify the best candidates for that job in the post office. So, they would come to the testing center and say we want to hire somebody to do something, and we want you to develop some tests to help identify these candidates.

Wilmot: Did this actually happen or is this hypothetical?

Jones: Yes. The tourism department wants to hire somebody to do something, and they would like some help in identification. So, what would happen would be, they would come in, and I would determine what would they have to do in order to be a successful clerk. What do they need to know? Do they need to know some rudimentary mathematics or arithmetic? Do they need to know how to count? They may need to know how to read. They may need to know some geography. Things like that. So, we would pool together tests that would measure all these different things. Then, we would weight them. How
much value—what is the most important? They said the most important is they know how to count accurately. Well, what next? They need to know how to read. So, we might come up with, “50 percent of the tests results are based on arithmetic knowledge, 25 percent on reading and 25 percent on geography.” So, we developed these tests.

One of the things about Ethiopia and even probably this country today is when job openings become available, hundreds of people apply. So, they might have seven hundred people applying for this postal job, and they may have a need for, let’s say, ten people. We would also ask them, “Well else do you do in the process?” “Well, we interview them.” So, what do you want to know from the interview, and how important do you think that is? It may be that 60 percent of the determination would be from the test and 40 percent from the interview or 75 percent test and 25 percent from the interview. Then, we give these tests and weight them based on what we learn. Then, we give them this ranked list from the top person all the way down to the bottom in terms of scores—seven hundred people. Then, they’d use that information with their interview material to come up with the ten people they want to select. That would be one kind of job.

Standard Oil Company, they want to hire some executives, and so we find out what you need to have them do, what’s important. Then we’d develop these tests and weight them and then give them a rank order. Of course, they would pay us for that service. The naval department had a problem because they’d bring in these new recruits. It was very hot and humid down on the water where the naval base is located. So, they’d bring these people in, and they’d spend a couple weeks, and then they’d disappear. The question is why are they leaving? [chuckles]

[doorbell rings]

Wilmot: Perhaps it’s time for us to take a break.

Jones: Yes, okay.

[interview interruption, interview resumes outside by the pond, with loud cicada noises]

Wilmot: So, while you were in Ethiopia, was your family there with you?

Jones: I had my wife and three young daughters. One was about a year old. One was in the third grade, and one was in the first grade. So, when we returned, I think one was in the fourth grade. Two of them attended the American Community School, a school that was run by the Kansas City, Missouri, school district. Of course, it had students from all over, from France and from the U.S. and from England and places—people who wanted their children to have an American education. During that time I was a member of the school board for that particular school, so we met on a regular basis. It was a good school.

Wilmot: Where did you live?

Jones: We lived in the old airport area of the city of Addis Ababa. There were many very nice homes in Addis and many of them were built and rented out for people like us. Within a period of two or three years, the house would be paid for because we paid pretty
substantial rent by their standards, not ours, we thought rentals were a steal. They thought it was a substantial rent. We had servants. Actually, one person who’s called a zabana who opens your gate because you live on a compound. This house we lived in was surrounded by a brick wall with glass on the top. There was a big double-iron gate. And if somebody came to visit you, they would honk their horns. And the zabana would come out and open the gate. Our zabana washed the car every day and made a fire in the fireplace and planted and tended the garden, so that was what he did. He worked from seven in the morning until about six in the evening and then another person came on and worked from six until the next morning. And because we were Americans, we felt that everybody had to have a day off, so we had weekend people who relieved our zabana. The Ethiopians were horrified. They said we were spoiling the situation by having all these servants, paying them all this money and giving them the weekend off.

Wilmot: You paid them above scale?

Jones: Most Ethiopians would give their servants room and board and that would be it. They wouldn’t give them any extra money. Maybe, they’d give them five dollars a month or something, and they had this service available twenty-four hours a day. They cooked and cleaned and took care of the kids and did all that, but we only wanted outside help. We had a woman, initially, who helped with the kids, but my wife didn’t feel she needed that, and she wanted to cook her own meals, but many of my colleagues had cooks and chauffeurs and gardeners and mamitas who took care of the children—they could have all those people, five or six servants, for about 150 dollars a month,

Wilmot: Why did you decide to go there? What was your intention?

Jones: That was a time when many African Americans wanted to go to Africa. This opportunity came out of the blue. I was simply sitting in my office, as I said, and I got this call from this recruiting agency saying somebody had recommended me for a position as head of the Testing Center at Haile Selassie University. The recruiters were just calling people all over the place. They had thirty applicants, I think, and they made a selection. I was fortunate to be able to be selected. I wanted to go, but I had not taken any special effort. I hadn’t looked at any recruiting ads or anything. It was great, a great experience.

Wilmot: And Ethiopia was where you wanted to go when you imagined yourself in Africa with your family?

Jones: No, I probably would have preferred West Africa. That was what came down the pike, so I was happy to be there.

Wilmot: When you went to Ethiopia, were your notions of Africa met? Was it what you wanted it to be? Was it different than what you imagined it to be?

Jones: Well, one of the things that was really a problem for me was that I thought that I would be embraced as an African American. No. I was an American. And what that meant in some cases to some people was that I had a lot of money, and therefore, they could get some of it. It had nothing to do with embracing me as an African person, a person of African descent. That was a disappointment. I was expecting I was coming home! I would be embraced. That wasn’t the case at all. I was an American, with money, and
they wanted some of it. West Africa might have been different, but that was not the case
in Ethiopia at all.

Wilmot: I wanted to turn now just to ask you briefly about your time when you came to
Riverside, and you were kind of entrusted with building the special education. [Gasp!]

Jones: That could have been the frog.

Wilmot: It was a fish jumping out of water.

Jones: I was brought there to develop the special education program. I had several faculty
positions I was given to do that. I brought one student with me from Ohio State, a
woman who had finished her Ph.D. She had the appropriate background. Then, I had
my former UCLA student who recruited me there. We also hired additional people.

Wilmot: What was the woman’s name?

Jones: Marilyn Lucas was her name.

Wilmot: Okay, so you started a department with three people: yourself and your two students
who were coming on as professors as well.

Jones: Well, one was already there, and the other came on with me from Ohio State.

Wilmot: What was important to you in developing this program?

Jones: Getting the best people we could get.

Wilmot: As far as faculty.

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: And as far as curriculum?

Jones: We developed a good curriculum, which was basically a research-oriented curriculum.
Then, they wanted to have a teaching credential, so we brought somebody in who knew
about that, who had been a teacher. Of course, my student had been a teacher, but a high
school teacher in Cleveland, Ohio. He’d been a high school teacher in California, and he
decided to work on his master’s, eventually, and his Ph.D. He came to UCLA because
that was close to where he was working. That’s how we sort of got connected. I’m not
sure how he got into special education, but he got into special education.

Wilmot: Were there challenges or impediments in building the special education department?

Jones: No, it was a growth period. We had resources, we had money. Riverside was a growing
campus, basically; it had been there, but it was expanding. For example, they were
starting a school of education, and of course, I suppose they put aside money for this.
So, they had money for lots of different things. We were able to hire the people we
needed to hire, and of course, the university had money for travel and things like that. It
was small; it was nice. People knew one another and were active in both a personal,
professional, and social level. It was a good experience. I was the only black person in
the department, and then one of the persons we hired to run a teacher education program
in special education was a black woman from the University of Southern California. We
developed a very good program, and now, we have some of the best scholars in the
country in special education, who had been recruited there, some since I left. They do a
lot, and they turned out graduate students who have done very well and got good
positions and so forth.

Wilmot: I think that’s it.

Jones: Okay.

[Begin minidisc 6]

Wilmot: Okay, we’re back after a short break. So, when you came to Berkeley in 1974 from
Ethiopia, who else was on campus, in terms of other African American faculty that you
recall?

Jones: Well, there was Troy Duster, Russ Ellis, and Bil Banks, Barbara Christian, Margaret
Wilkerson, the late Ray Collins, the late William Shack, Olly Wilson, let’s see, who
else—Staten Webster in the School of Education, Rodney Reed in the School of
Education, Mary Lovelace O’Neil in art, I think she was there, I’m not sure—

Wilmot: I think she came in the late seventies—

Jones: —I knew her later, then. Those are the people I remember right off the bat. Roy Thomas
was there. And then we had some other faculty members who left, like Clyde Taylor,
who eventually ended up at NYU. We had some part-time faculty who were in the
department of African American Studies. Albert Johnson was there, and we had a law
professor.

Wilmot: Was Robert Allen there at the time?

Jones: No. I said Bil Banks, right? And David Blackwell, of course, was there. [phone rings]

Wilmot: Okay. Did the African American faculty somehow work together as a group? Did
people meet? Was there kind of a consortium?

Jones: Well, when I first arrived, there was no organized group of black faculty who were
working to support the concerns of people of color. But, there were people who were
supportive and sympathetic to what was going on. Some of them, probably, were very
valuable in that they had committee assignments that enabled them to communicate
some of the desires and interests of people of color. At that point, when I first went
there, I don’t think there was any organized group. Later on, when I saw an informally
organized black faculty—

[phone rings; interview interruption]

Wilmot: We were talking about informal organization of African American faculty.
Jones: I don’t recall there was any organized gathering of the faculty when I first went there, the black faculty. Now, they may have before I arrived, it’s possible, there were groupings and gatherings, but, my understanding is that the people who were there, like Troy Duster and Olly Wilson, Shack and so forth, and later Ray Collins, were very supportive of all things. I know that Bil Banks consulted with them on an individual basis. I feel confident they were helpful in making certain that the department moved ahead. But, I wasn’t aware of any organized grouping.

Wilmot: Olly Wilson mentioned a Black Caucus, a Black Faculty Caucus.

Jones: That might have been later on. That’s the group that I sort of pulled together and kept moving. I was able to do that in part because I was in the chancellor’s office. We did need a little money to pay for the rental of the Faculty Club for the room we used, and so I was able to do that. There was also the Black Faculty and Staff Organization, which was different from our little informal black faculty grouping. This group consisted mainly of black staff with at most three black faculty members. There were some people, faculty, who didn’t affiliate themselves with the black faculty and staff organization. But they did come to the meetings of the black faculty. Some putative black faculty attended the meetings of neither group.

Wilmot: Can you give me kind of the time frames of when these things were happening?

Jones: Oh boy.

Wilmot: The way to do it may also be to think about what issues people were organizing around.

Jones: Well, the black faculty really wasn’t organized around any issues when we were meeting. [chuckles] We were having meetings and talking about issues and developments, but we weren’t organized to do anything. The black faculty is a very diverse group of people, and not all of them had any clear identity with respect to black issues. They would come, and not all of them would come to the meetings that were held in the Faculty Club. Some never came. For example, John Ogbu never came to a meeting.

Wilmot: Who didn’t?

Jones: John Ogbu. He’s an anthropologist—

Wilmot: Yes, I’ve heard of him. I’ve seen his work.

Jones: Some other folks never attended, but we probably had fifteen or twenty people, generally, black faculty. And we probably had something like twenty-five or thirty, maybe, at the time.

Wilmot: Just on the side on John Ogbu, there was recently a big article that he published about—

Jones: —Cleveland, Ohio.

Wilmot: Yes, and about, basically, middle-class African American youth who under-performed academically. Did you have any thoughts on that?
Jones: Well, I’ve purchased his book, but I have not read it. And, I know there’s a tremendous controversy around the book and around his methods and around his conclusions. I’ve skimmed the book, and a former Berkeley colleague sent me an article that was in the Berkeley—I don’t know, Berkeley Barb or something—one of the tabloid type newspapers. They had a big article about blacks—black middle class and flunking or something like that.

Wilmot: It was East Bay Express.

Jones: Yes, okay. So, I read that article, and I read some of the criticisms of the work. I probably would be supportive of the criticisms, as I remember them at the time. So I’d say I’m familiar.

Also, some people who were not necessarily supportive of the black organization or wanted to affiliate themselves with the group. Some would just come to lunch; we’d talk about issues. So, they were informed about some developments on campus that related to faculty and students of color, but they weren’t involved in a significant way. But, at least they identified enough to come to the meetings, to participate in discussions. There were some others that wouldn’t show up for various reasons. Could be that we met at a time when they had classes or something. For example, Harry Edwards never came to a black faculty meeting. Ogbu never came. There’s a guy in geography, whose name I don’t remember at the moment, who never came to any of these meetings. I’d say, with respect to the black faculty and staff organizations, that probably only two or three of us who also participated in the Black Faculty and Staff Organization. I was a member of the Board of Directors of the Black Faculty and Staff Organization. I was connected to both organizations. The Black Faculty and Staff Organization was more formally organized, really.

Wilmot: Now, who were the other faculty members who participated in both groups?

Jones: I’d say the only people—Ken Simmons and myself. We were the only consistent participants in the Black Faculty and Staff Organization.

Wilmot: Did it have to do with campus hierarchies?

Jones: Yes. [phone rings] There was some elitism. I think that there was some elitism in the black faculty. Maybe they didn’t feel they had the time or interest or information to be a part of this, but I think a big part of it was elitism. They, somehow, didn’t associate themselves with the masses of black people who worked on the Berkeley campus. That was, for me, sad that there was this elitism. Ken Simmons and I were the only two consistent members of the black faculty—we’d go to meetings and participate and so forth.

Wilmot: How were the issues different that were raised in the two groups?

Jones: Well, there were issues of promotion among the staff people, how they were treated, and so forth because some of the black administrators on the non-academic side had tremendous challenges in dealing with the institution. Some of them gathered—Michele was a part of a group like that at one time called the Breakfast Club where certain black administrators met to talk about issues they were facing. She, of course, will have a
better sense of what those issues were. There was some diversity among the faculty, and most, I think, didn’t for whatever reason—time, inclination—didn’t align themselves with the larger concerns of the community of African Americans on the Berkeley campus. There’s some irony in some of this because some didn’t have any reluctance to use their status as African Americans to promote themselves, in terms of getting promoted and so forth. Some, I’m not saying a large number, but some. A few were willing to come over to see me when they were being considered for promotion because they wanted to use affirmative action as a basis for the promotion they sought.

Wilmot: Is this when you were a faculty assistant for affirmative action?

Jones: Yes. Some of the same people who would never show up or indicate any interest in issues of the black community weren’t reluctant to come over when their own situation was present to invoke affirmative action as an element in their own advancement. So, that was an irony of sorts, I think.

And it’s very interesting that both Ken Simmons and I married individuals who were Berkeley staff members.

Wilmot: Did that cause any ripples in the academic community?

Jones: Absolutely not. No. None. I think there was a surprise on the part of some people when Michele and I got married, on the part of some of the administrators. When Michele and I were out at places, some didn’t know what our connection was. Our marriage was sort of like a campus happening [chuckles] because we were both fairly well recognized on the Berkeley campus for what we did, so, it was a pleasant surprise and activity for many when we got married.

Wilmot: I want to turn now to talk about when you became faculty assistant for affirmative action. You took two solid turns and were kind of involved in that position, I think, for almost a decade: 1982-1985 and then the summers of 1985, ’86 and then 1987-1990 or 1989. How did that position come to you?

Jones: Somebody recommended me, I don’t know who they are. This was a position that, at the time, was held by basically African Americans, in its early days. African Americans, at least certain people, sort of got together and decided who they wanted to recommend for the next round of appointments. So, one person left and they said who can we get now to do this? They would come up with a recommendation that would be passed on to the administrators as “the person we think would be good for this,” and they generally were accepted. So, that’s how it was done, basically, during that time. It was passed from one person to the other. There’s some people, sadly, who just don’t get along well with people, so they are rarely selected for anything, really. That’s a characteristic, I guess, of lots of institutions like Berkeley. For example, there are some departments, or were back then, who could not even find a chair among their members because they had so much disagreement among themselves that none of them was acceptable to the others. [chuckles] So, they had to go outside of the department to find a chair. They had that kind of thing going on. Among African Americans there is still great diversity, and some people probably would not want to be in that role and who would—see it as a stereotyped role. They wouldn’t want to be a part of that. There were people like that. And then, there’s some who probably were perceived as not to be a
good fit for the job. So, when you whittled it down, there probably were not that many people. And then, some who would be good, wouldn’t want to do it. So, it boils down to a few people who would be willing to do it, and who were sort of thought by an informal group of people—mainly the people who had been in the job before—who would be good at it. That’s how it sort of came.

Wilmot: Who was the faculty assistant for affirmative action before you?

Jones: I’m not sure. Let’s see, I don’t know whether it was Shack. I think it might have been Bill Shack, I’m not sure, the first time; I don’t remember.

Wilmot: Do you know who came in between your two terms?

Jones: Let’s see. Rodney Reed was there, Pete Bragg, Shack, you said Olly Wilson, right?

Wilmot: Yes. Olly Wilson was in 1973 or ’74, and then Pete Bragg, I believe, was actually in the eighties.

Jones: He came after me. Shack, I think I followed Bill Shack.

Wilmot: Okay. Can you tell me what was your mandate? What was your job?

Jones: I didn’t have—the mandate was to monitor the promotion, recruitment, and retention of women and people of color. We had a woman who took care of the women, in a sense, but I was sort of like the senior person, initially, and then we would review women cases together. Later on, some of the women were more independent but we communicated about issues, and so forth. So, that was one mandate. The other was to help departments in recruiting women and people of color to have resources that would assist departments and individuals in doing what they needed to do in order to get promoted and to advance their careers. Then, to manage—and actually, Bill Shack had developed the program for post doctoral fellows who would be brought in with the idea that in a period of two years could strengthen their resumes so they would be bona fide legitimate candidates for regular faculty positions.

Wilmot: This was the—

Jones: Chancellor’s. It was a post doctoral fellowship program. So, Bill Shack developed it, but I polished it and formalized it and really got it working in a systematic way.

Wilmot: Target, opportunity?

Jones: No, target of opportunities was a little bit different. I think that was to identify people who had a great likelihood of being appointed. But, this post doctoral fellowship program was to nurture and to develop young people who had recently received their Ph.D.

Wilmot: To deepen or grow the pool from eligible candidates?

Jones: Yes. But, the idea was not for anybody else, but for Berkeley. We systematized it, and so initially, the program was one in which Shack just identified some people and put
them into departments. The formalization of the program was one in which I actively involve the faculty in the departments. So, we did a national screening and put notices all over the place, and then when the candidates came in, we sent them to the departments. Now, we said to departments, “You look at these, tell us which ones you think you would want to support.” So, we’d have letters of recommendations. We’d have writing samples. We’d have dissertations, books, articles, whatever the applicants had done. They’d put all this together. So we made it a formal process that involved the departments in the selection rather than doing any selection from the Chancellor’s office. Because those were going to be the people who would hire them and work with them, so, they needed to be involved in that earlier decision. Because that’s what they did when they hired their own people.

Nobody in the chancellor’s office hired anybody to work in the department; the departments did that. So, what we did was to try to mirror that and make certain that the departments were involved from the very beginning in the selection process. That’s what we did, and so we had money, which was very good money then, I think, even now. I met a person in Michigan my last week who had a fellowship of $35,000 back then. Money for travel; they had no responsibilities; no teaching. All they had to do was to develop their research, write the books or articles or whatever they wanted to do, and they had two years.

That program has been a model for other institutions. I know somebody from North Carolina who came to Berkeley, using our strategies and procedures. Some other institutions also replicated the Berkeley program—so, it became sort of a model for this kind of program. Now, there was still a great challenge though in getting our candidates to be faculty members because there are many interesting dynamics in departments, some racism and some sexism that I would see in reviewing applicants for positions. Martin Jankowski was one of the people who came through our program and was in, the sociology department and who is now a full professor. That’s the one I can think of, off hand, who came through the program. I know one person who we developed and nurtured went who to UC Santa Cruz, and I can’t think of his name; he’s in French history. Some others went on to other good jobs in other institutions, but they weren’t in the UC system. Our intention, however, was to groom people for Berkeley.

Wilmot: From Berkeley and the UC system?

Jones: No, Berkeley. Some went to UC campuses—that’s fine, but, we wanted to increase the pool of faculty of color at Berkeley.

Wilmot: Are you saying that was kind of because the postdoc candidate’s own volition or was it because the dynamics in the department didn’t take and embrace the people?

Jones: Yes. I think it was that, the latter. In many cases, there were no offers to the candidates who were there.

Wilmot: What did you feel the most proud of in your work as faculty assistant to the chancellor?

Jones: That I helped the people, mainly who were there, to negotiate the system. That I was able to, because of a good understanding of how things work, to be able to give assistance and advice to administrators, many who were sympathetic to hiring people of
color. To provide support for, as I said, those were there to move their careers along and to give them advice on how to proceed in their dealings with the system. I think those were what I see as my legacy with respect to my role there.

Wilmot: As someone who was privy to all the personnel files for academic staff, what did you see in the way of informal racism in hiring and promotion processes? Tell me if that’s too vague a question.

Jones: Well, one of the things I felt was that even though the process was ostensibly open, it wasn’t. Certain people and institutions were favored, in terms of the appointment process. Many of the appointment decisions, if not most, are tied to your mentor and professor. And of course, people at Berkeley are well connected. So, they know everybody in their field and their sub-field, at least, at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, MIT, Stanford. They—we all knew one another. And so it was my sense that there was like an old boys club network that took place even though it was ostensibly open. You could get 300 applications, 200, 500, depending on the field. It really was not a level playing field, and certain institutions were favored. Sometimes, it’s difficult to know—it’s impossible to know the inner workings of physics for a person like myself. The person is hired in physics, and then they have 200 other applications. So, the faculty had to fill out forms. Why was this candidate rejected? It would be difficult for anybody outside of a very narrow area, say, of physics to be able to challenge the evaluation of the people in the field. Somebody says research not up to par. I literally have to accept that. I have no ability to independently judge whether a job candidate in physics’ research was not up to par, so, that was a challenge of the position. But then intuitively, sometimes when it got down to the top candidates, and sometimes women, from my perspective, I couldn’t see any differences between the women, for example, who were candidates and some of the men who were recommended.

Wilmot: In terms of their work?

Jones: In terms of reading the letters of evaluation that were written. Now, the faculty of the departments may invoke some explanation like, well, research not up to par. But, the letters of evaluation seemed like the ones that were written for the people they accepted. But I had no way of challenging that, you see. So, there were those kinds of things. We had many policies in place but it was very difficult to challenge any department when they wanted to hire somebody because they were presumably experts. So it seemed to me that we tried to develop programs to support faculty and departments that wanted to hire people, and once they hired them, to give those faculty support to do their work.

Of course, people of color and women who were of interest to Berkeley were also of interest to other institutions. Not a lot of institutions but comparable ones, like the University of Chicago, Stanford, Harvard, MIT and Princeton and so forth. If there were a person of color, they most likely would be known to several of these institutions, and they’d all be competing for that person. What we want to do in the office was to try to fatten the pot by giving them extra resources that would cause them to tilt in our favor. We could, for example, give them a commitment of three years of summer salary, two months each if they would come, and they would have no responsibility except to do their research and writing. We could give a person a semester off after, say, two years, and it would not count against their sabbatical leave. We could give people money to travel, do some things that they ordinarily would not be able to do with the resources
that were in the department. So, those are the kinds of things that we could do. Also, we brokered large grants from the university from systemwide to enable the faculty member to purchase a house. For example, we were giving grants, not loans, of fifty and sixty thousand dollars flat out. [chuckles] It wasn’t a loan; it was a flat-out gift.

Wilmot: “Come here, buy a house.”

Jones: Yes, make a down payment on a house. So, we’d do things like that. We’d broker that through system wide. Those are some things we could do to get people to come.

Wilmot: In retrospect, did you feel that this was effective as a strategy?

Jones: [sighs] Well, I think it was a reasonable strategy, and it was as much as could be done given all the dynamics. I think it was really a good strategy in a competitive environment and given the dynamics of the institution, probably not only Berkeley, but a lot of other institutions. People in departments who had some fundamental, basic belief that people of color didn’t measure up and that somehow when they hired folks, they were compromising in some way, and that some would be willing to accept the person if they were a gift, but not on their merits, often. This was nothing but, in my opinion, flat-out racism.

I was talking to a former dean on another UC campus who is now at another institution in a significant role. This is a person of color. He recounted some of these same challenges he faced when he was an administrator on this UC campus. He had these challenges of getting people to accept candidates of color. That was just flat-out racism. There were some incremental, small gains made, maybe the best that could be expected given the dynamics of the campus and the attitudes of people. But, in many cases, these candidates of color opted to go elsewhere where there was perceived to be a little more welcoming environment.

Wilmot: Was this a sufficient intervention in the systemic structural discrimination that excluded people of color and women from positions at UC Berkeley?

Jones: Well, it was in the attitudes of people who had responsibility for hiring. There were no policies at any level that would support this activity.

Wilmot: The activity of—

Jones: —discriminating against people. There’s no policy. They would say they’re open, and they’re always recruiting the best people. So, there was nothing in the attitudes of folks. It was definitely there; still is, even in this year, 2003. As I talk to people around the country, as I talk to people at Michigan. As I was talking to some people there just recently, one person came through the UC system—bachelor’s degree from Berkeley and a Ph.D. from UCLA. He was a postdoctoral fellow at Berkeley under this program. We didn’t talk about this, but it was my impression that he was not a serious candidate for a faculty position even though he had this fellowship. Some people would do it because they think it’s a nice idea, and maybe if the person turns out to be a really comfortable fit, maybe. But, in my opinion, it was not serious. But, what we tried to do was to grow and develop relationships with the departments and deans and department chairs and then deal with the folks who at least had some kind of interest in this kind of
activity. So, we didn’t force anybody on these departments. We made their resumes and materials available, and then they had to say whether or not they felt this was a viable candidate. And if they did, we made sure they had somebody in the department to work with. Then, they were on their own.

Wilmot: In this report here, *The Challenge of Increasing Faculty Diversity at Berkeley*, which you put together with the Subcommittee of the Provost Academic Affirmative Action Council, in 1989, you mentioned the most cited reasons for de-selection of women and minority applicants were: 1) uncertain research potential 2) inappropriate specialization for position.

Jones: Yes. Nobody who’s outside the field can challenge a Berkeley professor when they say something about uncertain research potential. You are the top physicist in the world, and here’s this psychologist over here. How can they challenge you with respect to your assessment of the research potential of a faculty member? There’s no way anybody can do that.

Wilmot: It’s such vague language.

Jones: Yes, right. So, I’m not even certain that the faculty members even filled these things out because they’ve got the person they wanted, and they might have a secretary and say, “All right, everybody who wasn’t selected was because of uncertain research potential.” So, in some cases like sociology, they might have 500, 600, 700 applications for an assistant professor’s position. English, 1,000 people, you know. I think some candidates, the requirements for appointment are very specialized. We want somebody in Victorian literature and maybe even some subspeciality within that. The way some of these things are phrased, they are setups in that they know, in a sense almost who they want. So, they may be calling around the country saying we got an opening, and they call their buddies and friends at Yale and say, “You got anybody good?” And they say, “Yeah, we’ve got somebody in Victorian literature who specializes in this.” So, they might then come back and frame the ad, which I have to approve. “We want to have a specialist in Victorian literature who is this.” There might be only five people who meet the criteria. It was a setup, you see, and I know that.

But, the department says that’s what they want and I have no capacity to challenge what the department says. But sometimes I know people in departments, and we can have an informal conversation. So, they set this thing up. Now, the thing about a place like Berkeley is that a lot of people, thousands, tens of thousands of people, would like to come to Berkeley. So, if there’s an ad, they put their application in. “What the hell do I have to lose?” [chuckles] Their resume had no relationship to, really, the job that was advertised. So, in some instances, that’s a legitimate response to the advertised position: that is, the applicant’s materials are not related to the area of specialization that they were advertising for or there is uncertain research potential. So, I would say with all respect to many institutions that are not research-based that it is unlikely that people in those institutions would have the research background that would make them competitive for a position at Berkeley. But the people are putting the “application” in anyway because, why not take a chance. So, you get hundreds of those. Departments legitimately de-select these applicants.
But, then that’s not always the case. Also, there are lawsuits that will come from applicants, because some people who really are productive and good, and they may think they are really viable candidates. Then, they don’t get selected, and they say, “There’s got to be something racist about this.” So, they raise questions. I worked with the university attorneys on all those cases where there was a challenge to the process, with respect to selection. The people were good, but sometimes, people probably don’t realize how good the people at Berkeley are. You could be really good. You might be in the top 5 percent of whatever you do, but they people they select might be in the top 1 percent, you know? You might be an excellent candidate for a lot of places, but you still may not be the best person for the job. So, there’s a lot of that. Departments, they could if they want, probably select some good people who were people of color. But, I think these attitudes are there. They just at some basic level in their guts don’t believe that people of color measure up. So, what we try to do is to give them an incentive to do that.

Wilmot: Giving them an incentive to act right, basically.

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: In your role as faculty assistant for affirmative action to the vice chancellor, can you talk a little bit about the support that you got from the administration?

Jones: The support from the administration was good. Now, one of the things that—my role and the role of the faculty assistant was advisory. A lot of your effectiveness related to the people’s ability to have confidence in your judgment and evaluation. So, what would happen would be that the provost, if they had confidence, would talk to you informally about cases and candidates.

Wilmot: The provost would?

Jones: Yes, the provost. They’d ask your opinion. The people who did a lot of the work, in terms of pulling all the information together, were administrative people who worked for the provost. So, somebody would come up with promotions, say, or appointment, and there would be all these committees. First, there would be the recommendation from the department, and they would—what does it take for a promotion?—a merit increase. The department would write its report saying we recommend John Smith for a promotion from assistant to associate professor, step two, and that comes with tenure. So, they would present a package of information that would include the person’s publications, outside letters of recommendation, departmental subcommittee’s evaluation, and the department chair’s independent assessment along with that. The College dean would also weigh in. Then, that would go to the committee on budget and interdepartmental relationships who would appoint an ad hoc committee of people to then review all of that. The ad hoc committee would then make its recommendation.

One of the things that I would do—and this is to help the process—is I would review the recommendations for the committee assignments, because the department of budget and interdepartmental relations would make its recommendations to the provost, saying, “John Jones or John Smith is coming up for promotion. We recommend that this ad hoc committee to evaluate his work be comprised of the following people,” their names. Then, the provost would refer that to me because, in some cases, in some departments,
some faculty members were known to be flat-out racist. They weren’t going to support any person of color, any woman! So, I would also have this connection with the people of color, et cetera, because I would help them, give them advice, at least, and counsel them on how to prepare their materials for promotion and also to ask about the departmental dynamics. “What kind of department is this? Are the people in this department who flat-out don’t like you and would not support you under any circumstances for this promotion?” So, we would have these off-the-record, informal conversations. They would tell me, “John Jacobs has never spoken to me, and I’ve been in the department for five years, six years, seven years—would not even acknowledge my presence. I don’t think that’s a person, probably, who would give me a fair hearing.” So, I would have this information, and then I’d say, “Well, are there other people in the department you think would be unbiased or even supportive. Give me the names of all those people.”

So, when the budget committee is recommending appointments to this ad hoc committee, then the provost would share this with me. If I look down the list, and I see somebody who I know, who I’ve been told would not be a supportive person, then I would say to the provost, “I’m not certain about this person. Here are some other possibilities that might be considered.” Then, I’d say uniformly, 100 percent of the time, the recommendation that I would make would be accepted by the provost. But, the provost would then have to write back to the committee saying thank you for your recommendation because, you see, the provost actually writes the letter that appoints the people. The budget committee makes the recommendation; the provost writes and says these are the people, and he makes the contact in order to get this committee put together. Then, the provost, in the case of woman or man—Calloway was the provost for the professional schools and colleges in one of my terms there—would say, “Thank you, the committee looks good, but instead of John Jacobs, I would like to put in Mary Smith as a member of the committee.” So, that’s what would happen. That was a sort of informal influence that I would have, sort of as an advisory role to the provost to ensure that women and people of color had a fair hearing in these all-secret processes, these evaluations.

For example, when the report comes back from this ad hoc committee that has been constituted to evaluate this person, and the ad hoc committee would be people in the field that the person was in, in addition to related fields and maybe one person from the department, but all the others would be from outside the department. So, they’re reading all this material—that is, reading the actual research material—reading the evaluative letters that came from outside the department’s report, the chairperson’s report, the dean’s report. This is a fairly long and involved process. So, the committee would then do its report, and all of this would come back to the budget committee. They would have their own committee that they had recommended, their report, plus all these other reports. Then, they would make their own judgment on this, whether the person should be promoted or not promoted. Then, they would write their own letter to the provost. Then, the provost had some people in his office, administrative people, who would then take all of this information, summarize it, like, the department said this and the departmental committee said this, the chair said this, the dean said this and the budget committee said this and the ad hoc committee said this. Their job would be to just take all this information. And these are people who are administrative people, who have bachelors’ degrees. They summarize all this information, and then they give it to the provost. The provost then makes a recommendation to the vice chancellor for academic
affairs. The vice chancellor, then, makes his recommendation and gives it to the chancellor. It’s a long and involved process!

Okay, now, so I intervene at an advisory way at a number of levels. When all of these letters—.

[tape interruption]

So, in a case where, let’s say, the budget committee has said no, and I or maybe the other faculty assistants were able to convince the provost that maybe this was not the fairest evaluation, then first, I have to lay out everything for the provost. Then it goes to the vice chancellor. And then he talks to the chancellor. Then we have a meeting. There’s the chancellor, the vice chancellor, provost, and myself.

Wilmot: Do you recall, without saying any names, do you recall occasions when you were able to overturn?

Jones: Yes. Whether it was convincing the chancellor and the provost and the vice chancellor to overturn the recommendation. It was based on solid evidence. So, what would happen is we’d have this conference, and in some cases, the chancellor is looking at how many times in a given year he has rejected the recommendations of the budget committee. He is very sensitive to that. The budget committee has told him to do something, made a recommendation, and he has for various reasons turned them down. So, he’s looking at that, and he’s looking at the strength of the case in this particular instance, if he’s going to turn down the budget committee. Then, we have this little conference and this meeting. If I’m able to convince them with hard evidence that they ought to do something against the recommendation of the budget committee, then the chancellor makes a request to have a meeting with the budget committee. He comes with “hat in hand,” and say, “I would like to have a meeting with you at your convenience to discuss this case.” So, he would go in with the evidence that I presented, and the provost and all, we’ve worked up this evidence of why the chancellor should override the recommendation of the budget committee. He would go in and present the case. Then, the budget committee would thank him for his input, and they would write him a response. 100 percent of the time their response would be, “We thank you for your input, but we don’t change our minds. We still go with what we said.”

Wilmot: After all that.

Jones: Yes, and so the chancellor has to decide whether he wants to overrule them. So, in some cases he will, and some cases he won’t. So, that’s how that went. So all of the work of the faculty assistant for affirmative action is consultation and advising. No ability to do anything but consult and to advise.

Wilmot: Was that frustrating at times?

Jones: Yes. But your value is determined by your knowledge of the system and how things work and the confidence that people have in your judgment. Now, I think I was valued because I was a very highly ranked professor. So I think I had respect because I was among the top of the salary schedule, in terms of rank, and that meant that I was accomplished, in addition to the fact that I knew the personnel process inside and out.
Most deans and department chairs come from the faculty, do this for a few years, and go back to their departments. When they come into these jobs, many of them have little or no knowledge of how the personnel process works. They know that they’ve been in a department, and they write little reports. But they don’t know the inner workings of the process. So, if they have confidence in you, and you can establish a working relationship with them, they will come and ask you questions about how things work and how to get accomplished what they would like to get accomplished, in terms of what you’re trying to do. You have influence, but it’s not direct. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose.

Wilmot: Interesting. Let’s stop there for a minute.

[Begin minidisc 7]

Jones: I think that whole personnel selection process is very detailed and intricate, but I think it is the reason why Berkeley is able to get outstanding faculty people because they do hold them to a very high standard and evaluate them scrupulously. So that’s, I think, a real advantage to the process that it is careful and detailed. But, even with all that, not everybody works out.

Wilmot: It sounds like it’s very permeable to informal discrimination. That’s just what I would say.

Jones: Yes, but the way it’s characterized, it seems like complete objectivity. But it’s not.

Wilmot: I was going to move to [Chancellor Albert H.] Bowker. I wasn’t sure if I’d cut you off. I wanted to ask you, seeing as your time at Berkeley actually spans the administration of three chancellors, though Heyman was vice chancellor under Bowker, I just wanted to kind of ask you to think about their different style out loud, especially when it came to the demands of students and to issues of diversity and access, affirmative action at the university.

Jones: I met Bowker when I was invited to come down to Berkeley, just as I was leaving to go to Ethiopia. So, it was in the summer of 1972. Bil Banks had written to ask if I would be interested in joining the faculty, and he had known about my book on *Black Psychology*, which was at the time a unique kind of book. He also knew that I did work in special education related to children of color. So he wrote to say that they would be interested in having somebody with my background to come to Berkeley. I told him I was going to Ethiopia, and he asked if I could come by and spend a few days. He’d like for me to meet the chancellor. So I did that. I had a chance to meet Bowker. And Bowker is kind of a relaxed guy in some ways. We had a conversation about a lot of things, and he was bemused by some of the things he had to deal with, like a faculty member who’s upset about the fact that he couldn’t get the parking space he wanted. He said, “This guy comes in. He wants to know about parking!” He’s some superstar professor. “I don’t have anything to do with parking!” So, those kinds of conversations. Bil had primed him on what I was doing and that I had the possibility of a position at Harvard and one at Stanford, actually, because the people at Stanford also were interested in my coming to join them in faculty role.
So, we had this conversation, and I thought he was an interesting guy. But, he doesn’t fit the way a chancellor is if you had any conception of what a chancellor would look like. Bowker didn’t look like a chancellor. He didn’t talk like a chancellor [laughs]. Just from the outside, he didn’t behave like a chancellor. His field is statistics, and he had been, I think, a dean or something at Stanford at one time. We just talked in general about what I was interested in and what I did. He knew that I was being considered by Harvard, and he said, “No problem” because, apparently, there’s a lot of competition—well, back then there was and probably still is for faculty—between Harvard and Berkeley. There are a lot of people who were recruited by Harvard from Berkeley and the other way around. Since they consider themselves to be peers, they like that, the idea of getting people from Harvard, stealing people from Harvard, that sort of thing. So, that was understood.

I knew [Chancellor Ira Michael] Heyman best. Heyman was a hail-fellow, well-met, open, friendly, agreeable to almost anything one would propose, but, especially in a pressure situation, he would agree to things, demands that students would make. Rod Park, the vice chancellor, would work for him, and he would express the difficulty that he had in making the things work that Heyman had agreed to. So, Heyman would tell the students he’s going to give them this or give them that. And then it would be up to Rod Park to make it happen. [laughs] So, he was supportive of affirmative action, and there were some instances in which he did turn down the recommendations of the budget committee to support faculty promotions and tenure and that sort of thing. So, in that way he was good. It wasn’t a casual thing, though. He didn’t do it all the time. But, he was responsive to a good argument and good support, because he’s not going to go out there and make a fool of himself by suggesting that somebody be hired or promoted when the case was not a strong case. Now, when I got this offer from Harvard, the university responded by giving me a summer salary and so forth. So, my impression of Bowker was, here’s a guy who was supportive of bringing in and keeping people of color at Berkeley. In the scheme of things, Blackwell of course is a preeminent scholar and a world-recognized mathematical statistician and probably I was at the time at the next level in terms of reputation. So they were happy to have me, and I was convinced that Bowker was interested in building the department and supporting Bil Banks, in building the department. That was my initial impression of Bowker. And when I was there, I didn’t have any additional contact with him after that initial meeting, but I knew him from his actions and behaviors as a chancellor. It seemed to me that he was pretty firm in his stand on things. What I remember is the ten non-negotiable demands that the students made. He turned down every one of them. [laughs] No, no, no, no. So, that’s the impression I have of Bowker.

Wilmot: This is Heyman?

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: How would you compare their operational styles around affirmative action in hiring, in faculty hiring in particular. I’m thinking of Tien, Heyman, and—

Jones: —Bowker.

Wilmot: Bowker.
Jones: Well, I didn’t know Bowker in that role, and I was not involved. But, I think, Tien was certainly a supporter of affirmative action. Tien himself as a faculty member at Berkeley had experienced racism in his own department. So he knew racism, and he knew racism at Berkeley. He knew what he had to do to overcome those problems and issues that he faced as a faculty member of color. So, he was supportive of affirmative action and sympathetic.

Wilmot: Would it translate into—?

Jones: —any appointments? We were only together for a year or something like that, and I don’t recall any cases where we needed to challenge anything or anybody. But, my opinion would be that he would have been supportive. But again, none of the chancellors, in my view, would go against the recommendation of the budget committee unless they felt they had a solid case. It would be up to the faculty assistants to present that case for him—to him rather because nobody addresses the budget committee except the chancellor. I don’t believe even the provost could address the budget committee, I don’t think. But, I know the chancellor—but then they would have to request respectfully permission to discuss with them a case.

I think that Tien was supportive because, unlike others, he, himself, had experienced the racism of the Berkeley campus. He came there straight from Princeton as an assistant professor. So, he went all the way through the ranks at Berkeley.

Wilmot: I wanted to backtrack a little bit now to talk about when you were chair of the Afro-American studies department, what was then called Afro-American studies. Just to lay down some baseline, when you came to Berkeley, was this a joint appointment in education?

Jones: Education and Afro-American studies.

Wilmot: And that was what you negotiated?

Jones: I had negotiated that because I wanted to keep my relationship to special education, and I knew that there were graduate students over there that I would be able to work with to keep that aspect, that area of research going. So, I wanted to have that connection. They had one person in the special education over there, a fellow who is now deceased, by the name of Eli Bower. He was happy to have me because that meant he had some extra support. The Ph.D. program was a joint Ph.D. program with San Francisco State. So, we brought in students who had some experience in the field and generally had master’s degrees already. Then, we took them through courses at both Berkeley and San Francisco State. They did a lot of things and eventually did dissertations and got their Ph.D.s. So I was in that program, and then on a couple of occasions, I was the coordinator of that program. In one case, Bower was on leave and in another case, actually, he was deceased. They were deciding what they were going to do, hiring people and so forth. I did it on a couple of occasions, and what it meant was being like a little department chair, making sure that the students got their proper courses, took the examinations they needed to take, wrote the papers they needed to write, coordinated with San Francisco State, and depending on the interest of the student, supervised, dissertations. I liked that part of it, too.
So, when I first came to Berkeley, I taught some courses in Afro-American studies and psychology and so forth. Then, when I was the chair, I didn’t teach any courses and I had this connection to the School of Education, so that was more than a full-time job.

Wilmot: Was your primary academic home with Afro-American studies?

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: As a department? Not as a discipline.

Jones: Yes. But the thing is that both education and Afro-American studies saw me as full-time. So, I had committee assignments in education, personnel committee, this committee, that committee, and the same thing in Afro-American studies. I had to be on all these committees. Because even though Afro-American studies was a much smaller department, you still had these committees—personnel, you know, where you have to hire people. During my first year as chairperson, I established a black graduation program for any black student on the campus who wanted to participate. It was initially, for the first several years, held at the Oakland Museum.

Wilmot: Oh, how wonderful.

Jones: Yes. Nice little theatre.

Wilmot: It’s beautiful over there.

Jones: Yes, and then in that area we had all the soul food laid out, etcetera.

Wilmot: I notice you were a member of the Oakland Museum.

Jones: Was I at one time?

Wilmot: For a while, yes.

Jones: [laughs]

Wilmot: It’s on your bio bib.

Jones: Yes, I was then, I guess. I forget.

Wilmot: When you think of, in addition to the black graduation ceremony, what else do you think of as the major things that were happening in the department while you were chair—major things you accomplished while you were there?

Jones: Hiring people was a big accomplishment. And also, getting them through the system to tenure was another. And by having good knowledge of the process, I was able to because you see, I had been a chair of education at the University of California, Riverside, before I came to Berkeley. So, I understood the inner workings of the personnel process.

Wilmot: Plus, your work at Ohio State as vice chair.
Jones: Yes, of the psychology [department] for personnel. So, I had an intimate working, and so it was possible to ease the transition to tenure and so forth by having a good understanding of what people need to do and how to prepare the materials for their promotions and advancement, et cetera.

Wilmot: Well, in particular, are there people you’re thinking of when you think of people you hired?

Jones: Well, some of them are gone. One person I hired—that is, who was hired during my watch, and of course the chair always has an intimate role in recruitment and advancement, but mainly recruitment, and I felt I was very good at that because I could sell the institution and I was able to communicate to people that we really wanted them, the courtship. Because the people that we wanted were wanted by lots of other people as well.

Wilmot: Were you able to get enough FTE from the administration?

Jones: Yes, we had FTE to do what we needed to do. You would always have to make the case, but we had at the time—we were always asking for FTE, but we also were recruiting a lot. So, we were getting people. We had some FTE.

And so one of the people I’m thinking about is Earl Lewis, who was finishing his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota. We recruited him, and he has done well. We weren’t able to keep him at Berkeley; he went to the University of Michigan as an associate professor. Of course he would have gotten it at Berkeley. In my role then as faculty assistant—these are the kind of things you can do—I was able to prevail on the administration to work with the development office to get his wife a promotion and to get him a promotion. But, he then wanted to go to Michigan, so he went to Michigan. And his wife, they gave her a job. They do a lot of things at Michigan to get people and keep them. And so he went to Michigan as an associate professor, got promoted to professor, was head of the Center for African American Studies and now is dean of the graduate school at the University of Michigan.

So, we recruited him in history. And we recruited Al Raboteau in history as well. Al had taken his graduate degree from Marquette, I think, and then his master’s in literature at Berkeley and a Ph.D. in religious studies in history at Yale. So, we were able to get Raboteau here at Berkeley. He did well, and he was, I think, the dean of undergraduate studies or something like that at one time. Then he got an offer from Princeton. We tried to do what we could to keep him, but he went to Princeton as a professor of, I guess, religious studies and history. He became dean of the graduate school of Princeton. Then, during my watch, we were able to get Margaret Wilkerson into the tenure track. When I came to Berkeley, Barbara Christian had been in the English department, and Bil Banks was able to convince her to come over to the new program in Afro-American studies. So, she came over to Afro-American studies. But it was during my watch that she got moved through the ranks to associate professor and tenure.

Wilmot: How did that go?

Jones: There was no difficulty in getting her promoted to tenure because she had done a pioneering book on black women writers—one of the early books on that subject, so she
broke new ground, and that was the basis for her movement to tenure. She continued to be productive, and was probably one of the outstanding people in African American literature. She was also an outstanding teacher. She won one of the outstanding teacher awards. So, that was Barbara, and she was married to a guy who was a writer. He wrote the biography of—

Wilmot: David Henderson?

Jones: David Henderson.

Wilmot: Did Jimi Hendrix’s biography.

Jones: Yes, it was Jimi Hendrix. Right. And they have a daughter, who is now an attorney.

Wilmot: I thought her name was Njuma.

Jones: Yes. Right. She went to UC Santa Cruz. I’m not sure what law school; it might have been the one in San Francisco. So, that was Barbara Christian. She and Henderson, I guess, divorced or something. I think he died eventually. Did he?

Wilmot: I’m not certain. I don’t think so.

Jones: So, that was Barbara. She was a good faculty member and a good scholar and a good teacher. So, she was there.

Let’s see, who else came during my watch. A lot of people. We had a lot of adjunct people like Albert Johnson, who’s deceased. In film, he was an internationally renowned scholar. He headed the San Francisco Film Festival. This guy was traveling all over the world all the time and giving seminars at film festivals because his expertise was in black film, black cinema. He had taken his Ph.D. in English, I think at UCLA. He’s a native New Yorker. Albert Johnson, he was good.

Then we had other people who came through. We had a person in political science by whose name was Henry Jackson. But he wanted to be in New York. He had come from New York, and he wanted to go back to New York. So, he went back there to Hunter College, I think. And then we had a person in literature whose name was Erskine Peters, who is deceased. He was tenured, I believe in his specialty. What was the Mississippi writer? He was well known. He did his dissertation on this writer, who was a native of Mississippi, a well-known novelist. I can’t think of his name. So, that was Erskine Peters. He did well, and he went on to Notre Dame as a full professor of English and black studies. And there was Clyde Taylor. He was wanting to probably move along faster than the department felt they could suppor—

Wilmot: In terms of—

Jones: —promotion. So, he went to Tufts University, and seems to have done well there. Now, he’s at NYU. Let’s see who else came there. Vé Vé Clark, I guess she’s there now. She was coming in as I was leaving, but she had been a student at Berkeley.

Wilmot: I know. I’m hoping to interview her.
Jones: Katherine Dunham. She was very much interested in Katherine Dunham. So, I brought Katherine Dunham to Berkeley, during my watch, as a visiting professor. That was quite a challenge because I had to make arrangements for housing and for a driver and for assistants and so forth. But the people in letters and science were cooperative. I had a good relationship with some of the administrative people. There’s a guy by the name of Ed Feeder who was a budget person for the letters and science department. He took me under his wing and gave me lots of informal advice and some resources. How to handle Dunham, because it took more resources than we had. So, we brought Dunham there. And we’ve just brought all kinds of speakers. Gordon Parks, for example. Shirley Du Bois.

Wilmot: Baldwin.

Jones: Huh?

Wilmot: James Baldwin.

Jones: Baldwin. He didn’t come during my watch. I don’t recall Baldwin being there. I don’t recall.

Wilmot: I have a question. You were chair twice. Is there a story behind that?

Jones: What? I think the story is this. That’s the same story—

Wilmot: —once in the mid-seventies and then once in the 1982-85.

Jones: I think the story is similar for both—why I was the faculty assistant for affirmative action more than once, why I was the department chair twice, why I was the coordinator of the joint Ph.D. program twice. I think there just weren’t that many people who had the respect of colleagues who were willing to take the jobs. [laughter]

Wilmot: Who got along well with everybody.

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: I have one more question for you before we close today. Are you ready to close?

Jones: Yes. Oh, I think that could be Michele. She’s in town somewhere, I think. She probably should be here soon.

Wilmot: Well, my last question for you was where did you live when you lived in Berkeley? Where did you and your family live?

Jones: When we moved, came to Berkeley, I had a person I knew, I met, actually, he was a Berkeley faculty member. His name was Rodney Reed. He was an assistant professor of education. When there was money being given out for lots of things, he was given money to travel to Africa to do something. He knew that I was in Ethiopia, so he contacted me and said he would be coming to Ethiopia and would like to meet with me. I had known about him because when I was chair at Riverside, the people at Berkeley had sent his resume saying we have a good, promising person. We commend him to you
if you have an opening. So, I knew flat-out that he was an African American because he had taken his degree from Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia, and he was a member of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity, so I knew he was a black guy but I had never met him. So somehow, he knew that I was coming to Berkeley, and he wrote to me saying he was coming to Ethiopia. So I met him there, and we had a little party for him, actually. I told him I was coming to Berkeley; I was interested in housing. I said I wanted a house with a view of the bay. So, he told me the area that would have that kind of housing, he said up on Skyline Boulevard. So then, somehow, we got in touch with a realtor and told him that we wanted a house with a view of the bay, and we heard about the Skyline Boulevard area. There was a house available up there with an acre and a half of land, sitting up on a hill. It had the space we wanted and all.

My wife and I, we kept the kids with their grandparents in Ohio, and we came out to Berkeley for a couple of weeks, just to look around for housing. No, let’s see, I came out first, and then I looked around and identified this place. Then, I think, my wife came out, and she approved. Then, we had a house, an apartment on Dwight Way that we rented for a month or something like that, while the house was being vacated. So from the time we got started, we lived in the same house, which is up on Fernhoff Court, which is right off of Skyline Boulevard. It practically is a block beyond Skyline High School.

Wilmot: I love that area because they have these lights on the road—

Jones: —which you need when that fog comes in there because you couldn’t see a thing if it weren’t for those lights. It would be very difficult to drive down Skyline Boulevard. So, that’s how we got there, and we liked it. They had a lot of interesting people in there. We got to know them. Our most immediate neighbor had a big law firm, the largest law firm in Oakland at the time. I can’t remember the name of it. Then, the guy next to him owned an automobile repair store. There was one guy next to us on the other side who was a plumbing supply person. And then next to him was a guy who had a Cadillac dealership somewhere. And then the president of Kaiser built a house there. And Joe Morgan, the baseball player, built a house there. The guy who was the orthopedic surgeon for the Golden State Warriors basketball team was there. Those were some of the people who lived there. One requirement was that each lot had to be at least one acre. [phone rings]

Wilmot: Shall we close for today?

Jones: Yes. And so that was the area, and we liked it a lot.

[End of Session]
Wilmot: Today's date is July 16, 2003. Professor Reginald Jones. Interview three. Could you say a few words? I want to see how your voice is registering.

Jones: Do I need to try to bring it up a little bit?

Wilmot: Perfect. I just wanted to backtrack. First, I wanted to ask you was there was anything that you thought of that you wanted to add onto the interview thus far?

Jones: Not at all. But some things may come up as we talk further.

Wilmot: I had one thing to go back to your Berkeley years, one of a couple things. But, this one for the time being, this has to do with this 1988 conference. It was a UC systemwide conference on the future of black faculty hiring. That was April 30 and May 1 of 1988. You were on the steering committee along with William Jackson from UC Davis. Can you tell me how that came into being? How did that conference occur?

Jones: I'm not sure how it came into being, but probably out of the work that we were doing with the systemwide affirmative action committee. One of the neat things about that conference, if it's the one that was in the San Diego area, is that it had representatives from all the UC campuses and also the president of the university was there during the entire period, hearing what the issues were and so forth. Now, one of the speakers at that conference was an African American by the name of Walter Massey, who was at the University of Chicago at the time as I remember. He's a physicist, and he was a top-level administrator at the University of Chicago. Well, he was brought there as a speaker. One of the things we were trying to accomplish was to get more people of color in significant administrative roles in the UC system. So, it was very good, we felt, to have the president of the university of the UC systemwide in that conference. When some of us had informal conversations with the president about this, we noted that Walter Massey should be a good candidate for one of the chancellorships to one of the campuses. He acknowledged that. Then, later on, Walter Massey was appointed—maybe five, six, maybe eight, ten years after that—the vice chancellor for academic affairs systemwide. He was the number-two person in the UC system, way back. We think that at least some of what we did influenced the president to think in these terms. So, he was right below the president, so that was one good outcome. Now, Massey has subsequently left and gone to Morehouse College as president. There were people from all over; the issues were addressed. We sensitized some of the administration to the needs to go beyond faculty. We went to the administration. We needed people at all levels, not just faculty. So, that was a good conference.

Wilmot: Now, the president at that time, did you say—that wasn’t [David P.] Gardner?

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: It was Gardner?

Jones: Yes.
Wilmot: Okay. And then, I think this conference came after that, the one that I’m thinking of, this is this one at UC Davis in 1988.

Jones: I don’t remember. I’m sure I was there. [laughs]

Wilmot: I’m sure you were there, too, because you were on the steering committee with Hardy Frye and Claudia Mitchell-Kernan and all these people. So, interesting.

Jones: They’re all people of color. Hardy Frye was or is at UC Santa Cruz, and Claudia Mitchell-Kernan was or maybe still is dean of the graduate school at UCLA.

Wilmot: Yes. I wanted to begin to, you’ve raised a couple times the Association of Black Psychologists, which grew out of a group that met in San Francisco in the late sixties and early seventies. I just wanted to kind of talk there, talk about that and then also get into your confrontation with the American Psychological Association in 1971-72. First, can you tell me a little bit more about this group—the Association of Black Psychologists—how it started? I understand Robert Williams was very instrumental in this.

Jones: Robert Williams was a big part of that.

Wilmot: Were you a founder as well?

Jones: Yes, I was a founder. There were two or three other people. Robert Green, I think, was a dean at Michigan State University. Joseph White is a retired professor from UC Irvine. Charles Thomas, deceased, was a professor at the University of Southern California and UC San Diego. We were all founding members of the organization.

What happened was that the black folks would attend the American Psychological Association [APA] convention, and it was during that convention in San Francisco that the group decided to get together to form an association. The idea was to use the resources of the American Psychological Association to develop our own agenda and programs. So, the meeting took place. There were probably a couple hundred people in San Francisco back at that time. So, the organization was developed, and I think the first president was Charles Thomas, who is deceased. He was a professor in Third College—Third College, they used to have that name—at UC San Diego. He was the first person. He was an activist kind of a person. So he was, I think, the first president. And I think Bob Williams might have been the second. Bob Williams and I had known one another for years because we were students together at Wayne State University.

I was to be the third president, but I—we would make these decisions right at the conference. It was not like big voting. It was just, “Who can do this? Bob Williams? Okay, he’ll be the president.” Then, by the next convention, there would be a “Who’s going to be the president next?” So, I was going to be the third president, but I indicated that I needed a year to prepare for this because, at the time, I was chairman of the department of education at UC Riverside. So, we developed a practice of having a chairman-elect who would spend a year in preparation, and then they would assume office the next year. So, that was established. So, I eventually became the fourth president of the organization.
Our agenda was a very broad one, but it had to do with three areas: training and preparation of African Americans for careers in psychology. The next was to provide opportunities for doctoral level psychologists to have employment in mainstream institutions; that was an objective. And, probably, to broaden the curriculum to include information and material on the black community. So, those were sort of three of the objectives.

At the time, there was no desire to separate from APA because the organization would always meet at about the same time. Then, eventually, we moved away. But, in the early years, the black psychologists would meet just before the APA. Of course, many of the psychologists would go on to attend the regular meeting. Now, the organization meets in different cities at different times. Sometimes they overlap, like this year. The meeting is from August 6 through 10 at New Orleans, that’s the black psychologists, and the APA’s meeting is in Toronto, Canada. So, we made a complete split. In the early days, the organization wanted to get the American Psychological Association to be responsive. So, we had a program in which we wanted to get a commitment from APA to support some initiatives like a ten-point program. I don’t remember all the details, but commitments would be made by institutions of higher education in psychology to have some slots for black graduate students. Then, there were other areas, probably like making certain that the association supported having referees for publications and journals that would come from our membership. There were a lot of issues like that that we wanted. We wanted the APA to give us space to carry out our activities, which they did—support for personnel to carry out our activities. We wanted some things from them, and they had not been as responsive as we felt they could be.

That’s when we decided to make a forceful statement about what we needed. Now, I probably was surprising to the assembled body because I was a Fellow, which is probably the highest status of the organization. That was thirty years ago. Of course, I had a very youthful appearance. They were probably were beside themselves because they tried to marginalize “you individuals.” That is, “These black psychologists, who are they? We don’t know anything about what they’ve contributed, et cetera.” But, I came as a full professor in the UC system and a Fellow of the American Psychological Association. I think I might have mentioned there were only two Fellows in the organization, probably.

Wilmot: You and Kenneth Clark.

Jones: Yes, probably. Kenneth Clark was well known, extraordinarily well known. I was much less well known because I was laboring in the vineyards of my little research activity and didn’t have a national visibility the way Kenneth Clark had. So, they were probably surprised. We wanted to make a forceful statement to them, which is why we broke into the meeting room. We would not let anybody come in or out until I read that prepared statement that I had written before leaving California.

Wilmot: In this statement you quote Malcolm X.

Jones: Yes. One of the interesting things about that meeting was that the president, at the time, was Kenneth Clark.

Wilmot: Yes, he was.
Jones: And he is the only African American person who has been president of the American Psychological Association. So, it was on our watch that this confrontation took place. Literally, he was chairing a meeting when we went up to take over, which was regrettable in some ways, but we had our issues. Now, the difference between Kenneth Clark and the rest of us was Kenneth Clark was an avowed integrationist. And during that time, we were avowed separatists. So, Kenneth Clark was not in agreement with our position at all.

Wilmot: Was he aware of the activities of the Black Psychological Association?

Jones: Well, we made him aware of them. And we made him aware of the document I had prepared, which communicated what some of the issues were. But, you see, the president of the organization, in this case the American Psychological Association, has a year as president-elect, a year as president, and a year as a past president. So, they really don’t have time during that one year to get into a lot of issues. He was familiar with our activities because the APA provided support of our activities. He didn’t seek us out. He didn’t—I don’t think. I’m sure that the APA provided support, but I don’t think that Kenneth Clark was a visible supporter of the organization because this went against the grain of what he believed, that we should all be together in one big family, even though they weren’t responding to our demands, which we made in a very forceful way. I know he was—I had a line somewhere in there that, “We don’t need house niggers to represent us. We want to have our own representatives.” And after the talk, we had little conversation and he said, you know, “I hope that wasn’t referring to me.” [laughs]

Wilmot: Kenneth Clark said that to you?

Jones: Yes. And I said, “No, but what we wanted was to have representation in the administrative ranks of the organization.” That’s what we wanted, so that we could, in part, be certain that there was somebody hearing what we had to say with respect to what we believed the psychological community needed to do in order to broaden its base and to be responsive to the concerns of, in this case, African Americans.

It’s taken a while, but all the things that probably we were talking about thirty years ago, thirty-two years ago have come to pass. For example, the minority fellowship program is sponsored by the American Psychological Association. APA has participated in an international conference on racism within the past two years. We have been—it’s taken a while, but many of the issues we were addressing years ago have come to pass. We have an office of ethnic minority affairs within the American Psychological Association. The executive director of the entire association is an African American. That’s unprecedented. He had been a professor at Harvard, and he had been head of a big agency in the government that involved psychology and the social sciences. He left that job and went to Harvard in public health school, and APA recruited him. So, at the very highest level, now we have an African American person, and we also have at the next level, an African American person. And APA how the office of ethnic minority affairs, which does not cover only African Americans but other underrepresented groups as well.

Wilmot: You said that at that time, we were separatists. What did that mean for you then and what does it mean for you now?
Jones: We didn’t want to be a part of the American Psychological Association. We wanted to have our own independent organization. Now, we’re a separate organization, but we’re not separatists. At that time, we wanted to make a clear unequivocal statement: we have this organization, the Association of Black Psychologists. We don’t want to be part of APA. We want to have our own organization. We don’t want to meet where you meet, when you meet. We just want to separate.

Now, as always, African Americans attend both conventions. They attend the Association of Black Psychologists’ convention, and they attend the American Psychological Association convention. If you’re in a mainstream institution, it is very important that you be connected to the American Psychological Association. There’s a group now called the American Psychological Society—that you be a part of the mainstream organizations that are in your field. Otherwise, you’ll have great difficulty in your own department, especially in a white institution. “The Association of Black Psychologists, what is that about?” You’re not representing the mainstream psychology. So, many of my colleagues find that it is important and appropriate to hold membership in the Association of Black Psychologists and also the American Psychological Association or one of the related groups. There are a lot of specialty organizations now, but it’s important that African Americans be a part of that, especially if they’re in mainstream institutions because you would have great difficulty in a lot of ways if they didn’t do that.

So, separatism early was complete separation—

Wilmot: And autonomy.

Jones: Yes. But, we didn’t object to using the resources of the American Psychological Association to foster and develop our agenda. We just didn’t want to have any control by them. These days, I guess there is a hardcore of African American psychologists who will have nothing to do with the American Psychological Association. I talk to colleagues, they don’t even know when the convention is taking place. They don’t subscribe to any of the publications, et cetera. That’s where we are now.

Wilmot: Can you talk to me also a little bit about your interactions with Kenneth Clark? Did you draw on his work at all in your own thinking?

Jones: Well, I had done some work that is somewhat related to what he has done. The unfortunate thing is that these doll studies probably came to some erroneous conclusions. So, there have been lots of people that have been redoing these studies. One of the big issues with the research is the correlation that he draws between rejecting the black doll and how one feels about oneself. When he testified in the Brown [v. Board of Education] case, the inference was because these African American children don’t accept the black doll in large numbers, it must mean that they then have a distorted self-image and poor self-concept.

Well, it turns out that that’s not the case. That correlation cannot be drawn that people who are—on the average, African American children have high scores on measures of self-concept. So, when you correlate the self-concept measure with the response to the doll test, you don’t get a high correlation at all. But, the inference was that was the relationship. The reality is research has demonstrated that there is none.
Somewhat related to it, I’ve used some doll studies in a very different context. I’ve been wanting to know whether children associate different levels, certain words, certain concepts with the black race. So, in other words, I’m interested in the labels, the names people give, especially to black children like “culturally deprived” and “culturally disadvantaged,” and so forth. My interest has been what is the impact of those labels on how children feel about themselves. So, in some studies, I had a black doll and a white doll and I asked which one is culturally deprived and which one is culturally disadvantaged. Which one is gifted; which one is middle-class, lower-class? All that. That research is somewhat related.

Now, when I was doing some of that work, sort of an interesting anecdote. One of my graduate assistants at Ohio State was a young white lady, and I asked her to go down to the local store and get two dolls: one black and one white. I gave her the money, and she went down to pick up these two dolls. There was a white woman observing her as she was picking up the black doll and she asked, “Are you getting that doll for your child? What are you doing?!” [laughs] The young lady said, “Yes, I am.” And she threw up her hands in despair. Here is this young white girl buying a black doll for their child. It was too much! She couldn’t bear it, and she had to run out of the store. It was too much. So, my assistant came back, and she was greatly amused by this incident.

So, that’s been some of the work that I have done that is sort of related to what Kenneth Clark had done. But the conclusions that he reached have been—nobody’s challenging it, but they’ve had other research that has indicated that you can’t draw those inferences and there may be a little more complexity there.

Wilmot: Yes, more texture involved here. In one of your bios that I have, you describe your areas of work in two basic subject areas. One is black psychology and the other is education of exceptional children. When you began this work, which was maybe in the sixties, what was the existing thinking around race and psychology? Who were the scholars in the field?

Jones: Among African Americans, the locus of scholarship related to black people was at Howard University. So, they were always conducting studies that had to do with black people. The Journal of Negro Education, which is published at Howard, has been in existence for a very long time and it provides an outlet for the research and writing of not only educators but psychologists as well.

There’s a little bit of history. There was the War on Poverty. Lyndon Johnson was president, and that was part of his legacy, the War on Poverty. It probably came out of the riots. People started saying, “Why are these people rioting? They don’t have equal access to the resources of the country. We have these children who are deprived, et cetera. If we will to make this a better world, we need to work with these black children.” Of course, there were lots of theories about the pathology of the black family. So, Johnson said we are going to have a War on Poverty. We’re going to do something about these underprivileged children. But first, we’ve got to learn something about the characteristics. So, the frame of reference is the middle-class white person, white child. So, we’ll conduct these studies to see well, what are the differences between the black child and the white child.
Now, the research always has the middle-class black child compared to the lower-class white child. Nobody ever talked about the middle-class blacks or upper middle-class blacks. Everything was lower class, and that’s a problem of methodology. It’s a methodological flaw in the research because you need to have comparable social classes and comparable races to make a valid comparison. That was never done. So, what happened, since the government was pouring tens of millions of dollars into studying the black child in relationship to the middle-class white child—there were hundreds, probably thousands, of research studies—they all concluded that on whatever dimension was studied, practically, the black child was deficient in some way. All this work is in the literature—so, when you read something about black children, they’re always missing something. They’re deficient on this and that. A part of that had to do with the way the research was done. But it is out there now.

Then, there were people who summarized all of this research. There’s a book called *Comparative Studies of Blacks and Whites*. Four hundred pages of nothing but elaboration of differences, probably from anything to the size of the toenail to all dimensions. [chuckles] It’s not clear why they conducted these studies, but they were done. So, the conclusion was that there were deficiencies in all of these areas.

Well, I came along, and of course I’d always been sensitive to the subject of race because of my background. In my own personal family, race was always a big discussion around the dinner table, especially differences between blacks and whites. And the accomplishments, of course, blacks were applauded. So, when the Association of Black Psychologists came into existence, I thought we needed to have some literature on this. I thought about putting a book together. I had the experience of editing books because I had edited books in the special education area. So, I pulled together writings for the first edition of *Black Psychology*. Now, the first edition drew upon the expertise of other people. But most people were not doing any research. There had been articles written about various topics. So, what I did was to survey folks, survey the literature, and identify people and individuals who had something to say that seemed positive and relevant to what might be called black psychology. And I put those in the first edition. The vast majority of those papers had already been published, except for two or three. So, I was just identifying articles. We didn’t have any of our own theories in those books at all. That was essentially, the first edition.

Wilmot: You said, “We didn’t have any of our own theories?”

Jones: Theories, right. Not at that time.

Wilmot: It was mostly critical?

Jones: Critical evaluation in some respects. Four themes were in that book. One was that we reject white middle class as a norm for understanding black folks. Our orientation is positive, in terms of strengths as opposed to shortcomings. There were a couple of other themes that were present in that first edition, which was a very novel kind of idea to have communicated back then. So, there was the first edition.

Wilmot: It’s really interesting to me because I’ve realized that with that first edition, you were essentially creating a language that hadn’t existed before in the field.
Jones: Yes, we were certainly bringing forth ideas that had not been widely known or accepted, and by the way, that’s an issue and a challenge that exists even now. The second edition had more original work, and the third edition broke new ground. One of the things that we did in the third edition, we had several sections. One was called “Deconstruction.” In other words, in all this literature, blacks, African Americans turn out to be on the short end of the stick, so to speak. So, we had our own scholars critique this literature on such topics as self concept and delay of gratification. That was a big area of research, and the conclusion was that one of the problems with black people is they can’t delay gratification, they seek immediate gratification. Hundreds of studies were undertaken.

Wilmot: That’s amazing. I mean, that’s a mind-blowing thing you’re telling me that that was kind of widely accepted, mainstream thought. Oh no.

Jones: Oh yes. Absolutely.

Wilmot: So, that would get into all these issues of impulse control--

Jones: Yeah, right. There’s a section entitled “Deconstruction.” In other words, we’ve got to look at this critically and evaluate the literature for its accuracy and look at conclusions that have been drawn. That was very important for deconstruction. We talked about delay of gratification, and the other is locus of control—a construct that’s supposed to explain everything about black people. That is, black people have an external locus of control, so they’re always responsive to the outside. And in the scheme of things, according to mainstream thinking of the time, it is better to have an internal locus of control, to be able to control your own actions and thoughts and so forth. So, there were hundreds of studies on that, and almost all concluded that African Americans have external locus of control.

Wilmot: This was in mainstream--

Jones: Yes. So, in “Deconstruction,” we had our scholars to go through this and evaluate all these studies. Different conclusions were reached. This work represented one of the unique contributions of the volume.

Wilmot: It’s hard though, too, that so much of the work was engaged in debunking these incredibly racist kind of notions that were pervasive in mainstream psychology. I mean, it’s such a drain of energy to have to go back and debunk these people’s notions.

Jones: Yes, but we had some talented people who were able to do that. Also, in the third edition, we had a section called “Reconstruction.” That is, what are some of the positive attributes of African Americans? We had a section on strengths of people of color and blacks and African Americans. We had a chapter on psychologically healthy black adults, because the mainstream literature implies that in living in this society it is impossible for a black person to be healthy, psychologically.

Wilmot: Living in the United States, in a racist society?

Jones: In a racist society, it is impossible to be psychologically healthy. So, that was an idea that we had to deal with. So, we talked about our own definition of a psychologically
healthy African American person. Everybody had to write about that. And what are some of the strengths that black people possess? We were really into some of these psychological constructs. So, we debunk through deconstruction here. We then move to reconstruction, talking about self-concept and psychologically healthy adults and the strengths of black people. So, we’re moving away from a deficit orientation. We deal with strengths and positives. Then, in the last section of the book, we presented information on how the black psychological perspective can be applied to different areas of psychology such as organizational behavior, educational psychology, child development, social psychology, all these different areas. There is a perspective, and there is research that is related to these areas that people need to know. You know, what are some unique considerations and concepts in psychotherapy with African American clients. There are some areas that you need to be concerned about if you’re going to be an effective counselor, to be involved in effective treatment. So, that was the third edition.

Now, the fourth edition is one in which we do see some of our own theories being developed and tested. One of the things that was especially important in this fourth edition, we expanded upon--many of the psychologists have adopted an Afrocentric perspective and they want to go back to Africa to draw information. So, in this fourth edition, I have a scholar who has laid out the parameters of what you call African psychology. She is making a case that we need to use African thought as a background for understanding African Americans.

Wilmot: Do you believe that to be so?

Jones: I believe that’s something that we can look at, but I have not been totally convinced of its value. But I’m open and what I’m trying to do is to put the ideas in the scholarly arena so that scholars can look at them. In this particular case, the chapter on African psychology, I have asked three scholars to react to the work on African psychology. Then the author has prepared a rejoinder, several packets. So, prospective students and others who want to know, “Well, what is this about and does it have any value?” I’ve had scholars from different perspectives say, “Well, this is how I think of this,” and some say, “I don’t think this is relevant” and others say, “Yes, it is.” And then, the author of the chapter on African psychology has responded to all those evaluations.

Wilmot: I wonder if this pulls up that old debate between E. Franklin Frazier and Herskovitz about retention of Africanisms?

Jones: Yeah, many contemporary African American psychologists are embracing that idea. So, I have some work in the book that has an Afrocentric perspective. I would not be supportive of Frazier’s thesis, for example. So that’s represented in the book as well. Again, the fourth edition gives examples of how the perspectives of African Americans can be brought to bear on different sub-areas of psychology. That’s sort of how it’s evolved first presenting perspectives, then creating or critiquing existing literature, then moving to developing our own notions about psychological health, strengths, et cetera, and moving to developing our own theories that are very much different from the mainstream theories. That’s where we are at the moment.

So, I’ve been presenting perspectives and then leading by putting out ideas that reflect the thinking of people. The idea is that we have, then, the basis for research on these
topics. Some of the other books I’ve done have sort of fed in, like *The Handbook of Tested Measurements for Black Populations*, because there are issues that are important in research on African Americans that will not be reflected in mainstream tests and measures. For example, racism—African American psychologists were interested in racism as its impacts on the psychological function of African Americans. We have some measures that get into that sort of thing. People have complained, African Americans in particular, that mainstream instruments are inappropriate for use with black people.

Wilmot: For example?

Jones: —with African Americans because they have not been developed on African Americans. So, there are measures of ability, et cetera, like assessment of the gifted. When mainstream teachers look at certain attributes like test scores, et cetera, there are many African Americans who would fall into the gifted category who don’t manifest any of those characteristics that teachers look for. So, there are a couple of African American psychologists who have developed scales, which call attention to attributes that are related to the behavior of African American children that would not ordinarily be thought of as representing a gifted person. Some of these bright kids, they’re distracted, they’re clowns and so forth. So, one of the suggestions is they have to look at this person is a little bit more deeply, who is a person who is always saying clever things. A lot of these attributes would lead a teacher to make her look at a person as potentially gifted. When using ordinary language and thought, that person would not be identified. Because what is—the reality is that the IQ test is a major basis for classification. Some of my colleagues are saying that we need to develop other kinds of measures to tap into potential giftedness of African Americans. See, because the test is a double-edged sword, the IQ test, or ones that lead to the over-representation of blacks in classes for the mentally retarded and under-representation in classes for the gifted. It’s the same thing. But there are many forms of giftedness. So, we are suggesting ways that people can identify them. There are lots of different kinds of instruments that deal with issues that are unique to African Americans. The handbook is a big two-volume book. It took a long time to do it.

Wilmot: You said it’s something that when you brought a box to Hampton University or Howard University, it just flew out of the box. People found it so useful.

Jones: The graduate students—

Wilmot: This was at Howard?

Jones: Yeah, at Howard but other places, wherever I am. For example, I gave a talk at the University of Missouri this past spring. There were lots of graduate students, and they really resonate to the book because of the measures and the instruments that are there. Because many folks think that the instruments are not appropriate, but it takes months, years to develop an instrument. So, if you are thinking about doing a thesis or dissertation around concepts that you have some interest in, you welcome a book that has the instruments. You don’t have to worry about that, you can just begin to test your theories and hypotheses.
Wilmot: I have a question for you. I asked you this question about existing thinking around race and psychology, which you fleshed out for me. I wanted to ask within that, who were your influences? Who had been your major influences, thinking about race and psychology?

Jones: Well, I cannot think of any one person. I think, if anybody, my parents [chuckles] because of conversations we were always having at the dinner table about blacks and whites. I think that stuck somewhere, so they probably made an influence on me.

Wilmot: Okay, and then the other thing I’m kind of wondering is if you think of a continuum, your continuum, who do you think of as your intellectual ancestors, and who do you think of as your intellectual children?

Jones: Ah, I think I have a lot of intellectual children. What I’ve been doing is building on the work of, and highlighting the work of a lot of contemporary scholars. If I were to think about, well, who and where in psychology, unfortunately, there have not been any individuals who have systematically worked in trying to understand the psychological dimensions of African American behavior. Some of my colleagues are doing that now. In terms of looking at psychology and its relevance, I probably am the person, probably. [chuckles] There were no progenitors that I can think about. There were some people who were active fifty years ago, but they weren’t working systematically. They attempted to try to understand African American behavior. Well, I’ll say I probably am the person who has done that, and I didn’t have any clear models, at least not in psychology.

Now, the sociologists, they had Frazier and some other people, Johnson, and a whole series of studies on Negro youth, the studies that were undertaken. But, that’s mostly sociology, maybe a little anthropology, et cetera, but not psychology. I’d say I probably am the main person in the world, actually, if you look at the psychological dimension.

Now, a lot of people influence me. For example, the woman who taught me all the courses I’ve taken in psychology, practically, at Morehouse College. Now, there was nothing in the curriculum in psychology, at least, that addressed black folks. But, she did talk about some of the people that were at Howard University, people with whom she studied.

Wilmot: People like?

Jones: Blayton. James Blayton, for example, would be one of the persons.

Wilmot: James Blayton?

Jones: Yes. But there was never anything like psychology of blacks. The sociologists have been much more active—

Wilmot: —in that area?

Jones: Yes. Even anthropologists, as well.

Wilmot: Have you drawn then from the work of sociologists and anthropologists?
Jones: To a degree or talked about it, yes. Michael Cole, for example, is one person. He’s a professor at the University of California, San Diego. He is one person who has been active in dealing with issues of culture in psychology. There are some other people in the UC system, but they were not influences back then because they are contemporary folks, and they are now writing in some very interesting areas.

Wilmot: It’s interesting because I’m kind of striving to construct this lineage, and it’s difficult. I had another question for you—existing work when you entered the field. You mentioned that there was a lot going on at Howard. For me, could you kind of flush out the story of the kind of studies that were happening at Howard?

Jones: Well basically, studies would have to do with black people, and earlier on, the field of education where they were looking at achievement and some of the factors that impact achievement. In the early days at Howard, I don’t think they had a Ph.D. program; I don’t know how long the Ph.D. program had been in existence. But they did have a master’s degree program. And a lot of that work would be called mainstream psychology but using black people as the subjects of experiments and studies. So, they had activities, and a lot of them were related to educational issues in the psychology department. The psychology department, way back then, was racially integrated, at Howard. It still is.

Now, I want to think about the idea of lineage. Were there any people who influenced me and who are models, in terms of work that I do in psychology? And I don’t see any clear path. There were no people. For example, there were no African American psychologists who were doing anything like what I’ve been doing. So, I’m probably, at least, involved in bringing a lot of it together. Although others may believe that I have influenced them. But you see, I’m seventy-two years old, and back when I was doing Black Psychology, there was nothing systematic really being done.

There’s a book that is very interesting called Even the Rat was White. It is a study of the history of psychology with respect to issues of race. Robert Guthrie, who lives in San Diego now, he did a book in which he looked at race and racism in psychology. He pointed out, he identified, some of the early psychologists, people at Howard University and what they were doing. He looked at theses and dissertations that were done on black people. But nothing systematic. I think if you were to talk about who was a black psychologist of any reputation, it would be Kenneth Clark.

Wilmot: Were you both collegial at all?

Jones: No, I had never personally met Clark until that confrontation back in 1971. We have not communicated. You see, there weren’t that many black psychologists back in the 1960s.

Wilmot: There’s someone else I’m thinking of, Nathan Hare and his wife?

Jones: Yes. Well, Hare was basically, I think, a sociologist, and then maybe he and his wife got degrees in psychology later on. But, that was not their original orientation.

Wilmot: Let’s stop for one second.

Jones: Okay.
Wilmot: This used to be a basketball court?

Jones: No, that’s what they wanted. They were looking through the house as it was being constructed. People do that; you know, they come into your house before it’s finished and walk all around it. They want to know, “Oh, I was wondering about are you planning a basketball court?” I’d say, “What are you doing in my house?” [chuckles]

Wilmot: It’s nice that they felt comfortable enough to come over.

Okay, I guess there was a couple of areas I wanted to ask you about. We ended on a note, you were thinking about your work, opening spaces for people to publish that wouldn’t be available otherwise, as I understand. I’m wondering, what do you do in order to kind of locate and bring in new scholars who are doing this work? What are your networks, so that you are always kind of in touch with what’s happening?

Jones: I’m reading the journals and publications; I’m attending the conventions, and looking at what papers are presenting; and I’m talking to my colleagues, usually at conventions. I spend a lot of time networking with people, young people. You know, I learn a lot! I always have a notepad, and I take notes. When I was at Howard there, I came across a couple people who were in graduate school, who are doing interesting things. So, I’ve gained some of the information for the book that I want to write in the area of child development.

Because one of the problems is, in psychology and probably other fields as well, there is an enormous amount of literature that is not published—dissertations and theses—many people don’t publish those. There are people who have gotten grants to study things, and they often don’t publish the results. So, what I have is a large number of contacts that I’ve made with people, and I’ve made mental notes and physical notes to contact them. When they get there—they’re in the process of doing different things. You know, well this is a person working on resilience and black children. That’s her dissertation at Michigan State University. So, I made a note to myself, I met this lady at University of Missouri when I was giving a talk. There was another person there who had a grant to study the strengths of black children. So, I made a note to be in touch with him to see when he has results he can share. I do a lot of that kind of networking with people, and there are many—they are not all professionals with Ph.D.s. Many of them are graduate students whose work I may draw on.

Now, I’ve made some notes. I’ve counted these up a few weeks ago, contributors to all the different books. There were over 600 African American scholars who had been involved in these different projects; some graduate students, some senior scholars, some intermediate. But I’d make a special effort to be in touch with the young people because they’re the ones who are really producing the fresh ideas and knowledge.

Wilmot: Why do you do what you do?

Jones: I think there’s a need and there’s an outlet for alternative perspectives that need to be represented, that are not represented. Really, I’m working for and with the next
generation. I think if this work is going to flourish, it’s going to be from the result of these young people who are doing something, who are exposed to these ideas early on, who want to take them and run with them. That’s my audience. And then, my thought is that they will educate others. For example, when the students get their degrees and go on to the mainstream institutions, they will be able to insert this information into the curriculum, their courses, their research, et cetera.

The unfortunate thing is that most faculty in the mainstream institutions are not familiar with this, but the average American graduate student, I’d say, overwhelmingly—I want to say 95 percent—wants to work with theses and dissertations that relate to African Americans. The problem they face is that when they present the information to their supervisors and dissertations, their professor supervisors, they will want to know, “Well, where is the literature?” I want there always to be an answer to that question. I want the students to be able to say, “Here is a body of work that relates to what I am talking about. And here are some instruments that have been well developed that can take these ideas forward. And here are some theories that have been developed that relate to what we’re talking about.”

What I have done, and consciously, is to make sure the format is a mainstream format that includes copious references and documentation. The ideas are ones that are unique, but mainstream readers are not turned off by the way the material is written, documented. That enables us to move research along because students are able to communicate with their mentors in a way that is acceptable. That makes it easier for the ideas to be received. But, if you read something which looks like a bunch of rhetoric and there’s no documentation, then, it is not likely to be accepted. But if you have something prepared that is outside of the expertise of the graduate advisor, but who can understand what is being proposed and is not turned off by the way it is presented, then we have a win-win. The idea is to educate. It’s unfortunate but true, I think, that many of the mainstream psychologists are not going to be familiar with this material. And, it is the graduate students who are going to have to familiarize them with it as they pursue their own studies. My intention and desire is to present the information in a way that will grow the field by making it accessible.

Wilmot: In your own estimation, what are some of the new directions that the field has taken that are the most intriguing to you?

Jones: I think the most interesting, intriguing really, and something I’m struggling still to understand completely, is the notion of African psychology. It gets into retentions and so forth. Psychologists are trying to make that connection. So, I think the next frontier, as far as a black psychology is concerned, is the development of African psychology as a field and presenting the ideas in such a way that they can be widely understood, but more importantly, tested. They are just ideas and thoughts people have at the moment but there still is a process of validating these notions. This is only going to be done by a handful of people, unfortunately. Because it’s hard work to try to understand a lot of this. This is not always the case that you can test these new methods. So, you’re dealing with ideas that reject the approach and methods of Western psychology. But, then you can’t use Western psychological models to validate ideas that are antithetical to those methods. So that’s the challenge—what kind of instruments, methods, procedures you are going to need in order to validate this.
People who do this work have to be in a very secure spot. You can’t be an assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley in the psychology department and be working on these ideas. They are just too far from the mainstream. Now, it is possible that you could be African American studies and do some of this. But you are still going to be held to a high standard, and we are not there yet. So what we need are senior scholars, people who are secure in their institutions, in their understanding, and in their ability to do this kind of work that we’re going to have—that’s where the work is going to take place. We’re talking about a very small number of people, and as it develops, then more people will come into the fold. My idea is to make it available to people who are always a little bit on the frontier of pushing and putting forth ideas that would not be acceptable in mainstream psychology and then having people, hopefully, be able to run with it. So that’s sort of what I hope to accomplish.

Wilmot: Is there a danger with the idea of African psychology—is there a danger of these concepts or this area being co-opted by people with a more racist framework?

Jones: I don’t think they will ever engage themselves to that extent. I think what will happen most likely is that they’ll just flat-out reject it. So, our challenge is to not have that happen. But one of the realities is that most of the ideas are not in the mainstream literature. The challenge is to get our ideas and thoughts in mainstream literature. Now, I was talking about this last week. Introductory psychology textbooks—they have very little, if anything, on African Americans, and what they have is pejorative and very limited. For example, in a mainstream introductory psychology text you might have just a couple of sentences that have anything to do with African Americans. They might be, “Well, the average African American has a fifteen point lower IQ than the average white.” That’s the only information that would be present in many textbooks. So, the information that is available about black people is very limited.

One of the things being done, and I do take some credit for this, is that the American Psychological Association has a textbook project. Now, when I proposed it—I was a member of the committee there several years ago—I just said we need to get valid information about people of color available and accessible to people who write textbooks. That was presented. Years transpired. I was talking to my colleague, and he was talking about co-opting. Then, this initial proposal was in the ethnic minority program within the American Psychological Association. They would have a committee, the committee that represented center. So, they would present the idea to the main body. And it took so long because they decided that it would cover also gender, and race, and something else. They had a broader vision, and that required then that more people get involved, different kinds of people, because there are a lot of areas that are either ignored or misrepresented. The whole notion of the gays, lesbian, all those issues—they are not represented often in psychology books, and the information is not prepared by the people who understand it, the people who specialize in gay and lesbian psychology, male-female things, and so forth. They are scholars, but then that work is not represented. So, there are a lot of areas of psychology that need to be represented in textbooks. Now, I was reading one article that indicated a review of forty introductory textbooks in psychology. There were only two names that were common to all forty textbooks. Now, you’d think they were introductory; there should be a common body of information that would be present in all psychology textbooks.

Wilmot: Two names as far as people profiled or authors?
Jones: Referred to. Only two: B.F. Skinner and [Sigmund] Freud. And Freud is not a psychologist, strictly speaking. So, what I’m saying is that there is great diversity in the field, and there’s going to be a great challenge to try and get valid information about African Americans, in particular, in introductory books. Because there’s no agreement on anything really, even though it is supposed to be a survey of the field. None of the books have anything. There ought to be probably fifteen or twenty names that ought to be common to all introductory psychology textbooks. The point I’m making is that if they can’t agree on that level, it is really going to be really difficult to get valid information with respect to people of color. But the project is designed to make the information available to them with the idea that if they aim to discuss issues of gender and race and culture, at least they have information that has been prepared by people who are experts in the field.

Wilmot: In this exciting work you were seeing around African psychology—are there any references or connections being drawn between [Carl G.] Jung and Yoruba understandings of the universe and the relationship between nature and archetypes?

Jones: Well, probably not Jung. People have a mixed feeling about Jung, and some believe he was a flat-out racist. But, the people who are proposing and expanding the notion of African psychology do get into the belief systems of Africans and what that means. An important construct is world view, so there is a Western world view and an African world view. In this new edition of Black Psychology, I’ve got a section on world view—the European world view and the non-European, non-Western world view. And the ideas of the African American population are not essentially oriented to the Western world view. So, we are trying to introduce those ideas into the literature.

One of the things I had in the new edition, something called foundational themes. There are some ideas that might be important in understanding the psychology of African Americans. There’s a chapter on African philosophy, as one example. And then there’s a resilience characteristic of African Americans in spite of all the difficulties; they bounce back and deal with it. Spirituality and religion are characteristic of many people of color. And world view, there is a distinctive world view, possibly. Those are some of the directions in thinking about the psychology related to African Americans. A lot of this is on the forefront of thinking with respect to these matters, which is what I attempt to do, to always push over it.

And we have a mixture of scholars who are involved, young people, and one graduate student who is contributing is really good. People at all levels—there is one young lady at Hampton University who is a first-year, post-Ph.D. work, maybe third-year. I paired her with a senior scholar to write a chapter. Colleagues at Howard University bring in their graduate students in preparation of chapters. So, I have the people at the assistant professor level. Another colleague right here at Hampton; I got him involved with a senior scholar in preparing a chapter. So we nurture, develop, in putting material together, books and so forth. Because if you have a chapter in the black psychology book, it will carry you a very long ways.

Wilmot: There is a couple of questions here. You have this publishing company, Cobb & Henry, and I wanted to ask you first where the name came from.
Jones: Cobb was actually—my father’s mother married a gentleman, and so he adopted my father. My father took his name, Jones. But my paternal relatives were Cobb, and my maternal relatives were Henry. So, I took Reverend Jones and Henry Cobb and Henry the original—two families that represent my lineage. So, that’s Cobb & Henry. Also, there’s a marketing side. It sounds like it’s been around. “Cobb and Henry, I’ve heard of it. They’ve been in existence for years!”

Wilmot: Yes. It does sound like it dates back to some very important event and person, which it does. Okay, and what year did you get started?

Jones: Well, let me tell you how I first got started in the 1980s. But, I started preparing for it way before then. I completed the program in publishing at UC Extension. So, for a couple of years I was taking classes every week in a publishing venture—computers in publishing, editing, marketing, the legal aspects of publishing, and all kinds of classes really, that I took over a two-year period. So, I got the certificate in publishing.

And what happened is where I really got into it was the second edition was published by Harper and Row. I had put the book together, and then they had these limitations of pages. It’d be so big, and I had the embarrassing situation of having to disinvite some people that had already been invited. So, I said if I want to have any control, I need to publish myself. So I embarked on preparation for that, and I thought that when I retire, that’s what I’m going to do, just run this publishing company.

Wilmot: What are your current projects coming out or upcoming projects coming out of Cobb Henry?

Jones: Well, there is only this fourth edition, and I’m going to do just one more book. There are people who want to publish in the company. But, I’m not going to do that, I think. After I do this one book—its development will take a couple years or so—I’m not going to do any more publishing because at seventy-five years old, I think probably, if I am around, I’d probably want to be doing something else. [laughs]

Wilmot: Okay.

Jones: I’m seventy-two now, so—

Wilmot: Do you have any notions of what that next frontier is at seventy-five? Are there things you want to be getting into?

Jones: The beach.

Wilmot: The beach! You don’t strike me as someone who is not busy for very long. You are always very busy.

Jones: And that’s a problem. I want to slow down. That’s what I want to do. I want to finish this one book in the developmental area. And I’m not going to edit it. I’m going to just do it flat-out, all the labor. I’ve been collecting material for years, boxes of material and dissertations that I’ve purchased and theses, all of which are important because this information is not in the mainstream. This is not going to be published. Unfortunately, some people have a very bad experience with research and publication and they get
their dissertation done and never do another piece of research. But, they have done something very important. And it's not available! So, my view is that if you want to understand the phenomena, you have to look at not only what's published in journals, because there is a screening process there. A lot of stuff is screened out. We need to do unpublished works, papers.

We also need to go into different fields. That is anthropology, sociology, political science, history. All of these are relevant to understanding some of the issues that I want to deal with in this book. So, I’ve been just collecting and reading broadly and so forth, which is, I think, important to have rounded picture development of people of color.

Wilmot: Do you consider yourself a race man?

Jones: Probably. [laughs]

Wilmot: And then my last question for this moment is, in the time that I’ve known you, you have just been busy from seven in the morning to late at night. You’re a very active person, you’re very involved; you’re very productive. I wanted to ask you what keeps you going? What sustains you?

Jones: Probably, unfortunately, the next project. There’s always something I’m excited about. Like, I want to get this done, so badly, so that I can get to the next one. I think I have a perspective that really is going to blow people’s minds in terms of the breadth and the range of the book. For example, you see, publishing of textbooks is business. What is in books and what isn’t is a function of political marketing and other decisions. For example, which is why you don’t see any information in books, in psychology at least, about religion. They don’t want to alienate anybody. So, therefore, they just don’t because if they alienate some people, they won’t sell their books! They won’t talk about religion, for example, whereas you can’t understand African American behavior unless you talk about religion, spirituality. Those are very important dimensions of the lives of many black people. But, you won’t see any of that in your textbooks.

Then, the whole notion of strengths of black people, strengths of children—you don’t see that positive side, and I’m getting and having to go into history, for example, to learn about the wonderful things that black children have done. They have been at the vanguard at the freedom movement, for example. Birmingham, kids were out there, being exposed to these hoses and so forth. During slavery, kids would used to deliver messages because they could get through these lines, things like that. And they also were involved in the abolitionist movement. They had their own little clubs and so forth. They also fought actively, including such things as trying to poison the folks they worked for, their slave masters. So, I want to talk about Black kids have been in the vanguard of movements for freedom. You’re not gonna find anything like that in an ordinary psychology book. You’re not gonna find anything about religion. They’re just not moved to what is called positive psychology. They’re trying to—it’s been the past five years that they’ve introduced something called positive psychology, whereas twenty-five years ago, the black psychologists was talking about strengths of people, the positive things they bring to the table. So, it’s that kind of thing that excites me that I want to get into. But it may involve more than just psychology. So, I have to learn history. If you look—I’ve got history books, contributions of women to a lot of these things, areas and so forth. That’s exciting, I want to get to reading.
Wilmot: I think you told me that one of the books you’re proudest of is this book, *Black Adult Development and Aging*. Would you tell me why that is?

Jones: Because it’s interdisciplinary, and it brings a perspective to development that has not been represented anywhere else.

Wilmot: It’s a life span.

Jones: Yeah, and also, there have been no books on life span development of people of color. I think I’ve got some very good people writing and put together well, but I think that probably this book has not been as popular as some of the others. But, I’m proud of it. Because I think it broke some new ground.

Wilmot: Thanks.

Jones: Welcome.

Wilmot: I know we have to go, so I’m going to just stop for a minute.

[interview interruption; interview resumes in a moving car]

I’m wondering if you can tell me a little bit about this case the *Riles v. Larry*—[sic. *Larry P. v Wilson Riles* (1972)].

Jones: —Larry P. The Larry P. case.

Larry P. was a student in the special education program in San Francisco, and somehow he came to the attention of Black Psychologists [Association] who re-tested him and found that his IQ was not in the mental retardation range. So, the association, through its testing committee and a person by the name of Harold Dent, enlisted the assistance of a law firm in San Francisco and brought suit against the state for inappropriate use of IQ test for placement in special education. The testing people, of course, were very much at odds with our position, and they brought in all their big guns. Then, the six of us, Black Psychologists, testified extensively with respect to this case. The judge ruled in our favor.

Wilmot: Do you remember the name of the judge?

Jones: Peckham. Judge Peckham ruled in our favor, which was that the use of IQ tests were inappropriate for placement of students in special education programs. Some other states followed suit in that regard. Of course, the states came back again and had some black parents who claim that they needed the IQ test in order to get the support they needed for their children. But I believe in California that they still do not use IQ tests or use them very reluctantly with black children and children of color in making assessment plans related to placement in special education programs. Part of that suit was related to the fact that African American males were disproportionately represented in special education programs. And the IQ is the primary vehicle for determining criteria for placement. It is not the only measure, but it is one measure that is used. Psychologists and others who make decisions place more weight on that than they do other bits of information that they might have. So we challenged, re-tested the six
children, and found that they had higher IQ scores than what was reflected in those initial assessments done by the school psychology people in San Francisco. This lawsuit lasted for years, several years and involved lots of testimony.

Wilmot: When it says versus Riles, that was Wilson Riles?

Jones: Wilson Riles was the state superintendent of public instruction in California.

Wilmot: So, he was opposing you?

Jones: Yes. Of course, he did not, himself, testify. But the people in special education and psychology within the school system were involved in the suit. These were the people at the state level who were defending the use of IQ tests.

Wilmot: Would he have made the decision to go ahead and pick up that case?

Jones: No.

Wilmot: Not really. He was just the person who was at the head of the machine, basically.

Jones: Yes. That’s why he was--.

Wilmot: Okay. So, what was your strategy, the six of you? And who were the six of you?

Jones: Let’s see, I’m not sure. I would say there was [Asa Hilliard?], William Pierce, William Hayes, Reginald Jones, Harold Dent—so Dent, Hayes, Pierce, Jones—

Wilmot: —two others.

Jones: Yeah. Two other folks were involved in this suit.

Wilmot: Was Robert Williams involved?

Jones: No, he was not. I think most of the people that we had testifying were psychologists in the Bay Area, of California. Of course, we had a group of very powerful black psychologists in the area. I was at Berkeley, and my expertise was in special education as well as assessment issues. Harold Dent had been the director of Personnel Services for the city of Berkeley. That involved all the special education and so forth. Pierce had been director of the Westside Community Mental Health Center as a psychologist. And Hayes was director of a research project in the Bay Area.

Wilmot: What was Hayes’ first name again?

Jones: William Hayes. The late William Hayes, he’s deceased.

Wilmot: What was your strategy then as a group?

Jones: Our strategy first was to present evidence that the IQ tests did not yield valid measures for the students who were placed in the special education program on the basis of IQ. So, we re-tested these students and found that the scores were higher than those that had
been reported by the school psychologist, and that increased score placed them outside of the level needed for placement in classes for the mentally retarded. So that was a big part of our case, that these students had been inappropriately assessed.

Wilmot: What was the strategy of the opposing counsel?

Jones: To demonstrate that the tests were valid. They had big guns from the testing industry to come in to testify as to the validity of these tests.

Wilmot: Did they engage your work at all?

Jones: Yes. I was probably the only one who had published work, so they had identified articles that I had written, and had underlined things and were asking me questions about things that I’d probably written ten years ago. [chuckles] “Professor Jones, on page 238 in this article that you’ve wrote on,” whatever it was, “you said so and so. What did you mean by that, and what was the evidence you had in order to support this position?” So, those were some of the kinds of questions, questioning part of the work.

Wilmot: So, they really engaged you?

Jones: Yeah. They were serious because testing is a multi-million dollar business, and these people who sell these tests have a lot at stake. So, if a state and people across the country decide that these tests are inappropriate, then, they won’t be purchasing these tests. And they’re losing millions of dollars. So, they had a vested interest in the testing and procedures and use of the test.

Wilmot: After this test you were on the monitoring team for many years. [moving vehicle stops]

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: Can you tell me a little bit about what that was like?

Jones: So, they became sensitive to issues and placement of children in the special education program. So they constituted a group of people that would come in periodically and look at the records and see whether or not inappropriate activities were still taking place. So, we’d go in there once in a while and pull records and interview people and look at things to see whether everything was still as it should be in terms of use of tests, the appropriate use of tests and so forth. So, that was a big part of what I did as a monitor.

And then, there was another big activity I was involved in in San Francisco, which was a study of the San Francisco public schools. My job was to evaluate the testing program, all the tests they used, whether they were valid and appropriate, et cetera. That was another relationship I had with the San Francisco public schools. Out of that grew a consulting relationship with the San Francisco Foundation, which was actually in Marin County. It’s an organization that had millions of dollars that they used to give to research for charitable, basically, purposes. I was a consultant for them around a lot of different issues that they had—grants, reviewing grants for them. They gave out millions of dollars. One of the more interesting proposals was one in which somebody was asking five or six million dollars to build a golf course for poor people, saying,
“Poor people don’t have access to golf courses, so we need some money to build a six million dollar golf course.” So, people were asking for all kinds of things from the San Francisco Foundation. They had a lot of money that they gave for charitable purposes. So, a lot of things just sort of fell into place as a result of being involved in all this—in the testing of businesses and so forth.

Wilmot: Are you aware of the crisis in the Oakland public schools currently?

Jones: About ebonics? The ebonics controversy?

Wilmot: No, this is more about, basically, there was a huge budget shortfall, and the state ended up taking over the whole district. They got rid of Dennis Chacones who was the superintendent. Anyway.

Jones: Oh wow.

Wilmot: Dr. Jones, I wanted to ask you this question about the book *Mainstreaming and the Minority Child*. Can you tell me what did that book come out of? What kind of issues, what kind of social moment did it come out of? What was it intended to profess?

Jones: Well, it’s a special education topic, and it has to do with disabled children and their placement in regular classes. So, there’s a movement that was a legal movement, public law 94-142, which required that children with disabilities be educated in what is called the “least restrictive environment.” The least restrictive environment would be a class that had children who did not have disabilities. So, in many cases, children of color are disproportionately represented in special education classes.

So, the requirement that students be educated in the least restrictive environment is what is referred to as “mainstreaming.” That is, putting students with disability in the mainstream of the educational system, which would be the regular classes. Well, there are many challenges that have to be dealt with when you’re trying to integrate children with disabilities in larger classes. There’s a tremendous need to educate teachers about the characteristics of various ethnic groups.

This book was supported by the University of Minnesota. I think they had a grant to do things. It was one in which we brought together experts from the different groups—Native Americans and Hispanics, African Americans, Asians, and others—to develop and communicate information about these different groups so that the regular teachers could use this information in planning their work with children with disabilities in their classrooms. That was the purpose of that book, and it was very successful in accomplishing what it set out to do.

Wilmot: Can you clarify for me the idea of *Mainstreaming and the Minority Child*? As I understand it, the concept originated with disabled children. Is it fair to move that concept from the arena of working with disabled children to working with minority children?
Jones: Probably. Some of the same principles hold; no question about it.

Wilmot: In terms of—?

Jones: —teachers needing to understand something about the characteristics and behavior of children who come from other than white middle-class backgrounds. Of course, there is the whole multicultural education movement so there are now hundreds, probably, of books, and thousands of articles and studies that deal with that now. But, this was some years ago, and it was a new concept. Mainstreaming was a new concept, and the government was interested in making it work for all students. There was some other requirements in the mainstreaming, and that whole law which said that you have to assess the students in a certain way and develop what was called an IEP, an Individualized Education Program. And the idea was that some people have asked the question like the one you’re raising now. Every—not only children with disabilities, but those without disabilities could profit from an individualized education program. But it was required for students with disabilities but not required for regular students. They could profit as well among these programs, and some parents have pushed for this. But, it’s a very expensive matter.

Wilmot: Okay. Should I stop? I’m going to stop now.

Jones: Okay.

[interview interruption; interview resumes, audible storm sounds like thunder and lightning!]

Wilmot: Okay. I wanted to ask you a question about the work that you’ve done over the years. Who have been your dearest, kind of, partners, in terms of your intellectual partners? Who have been your dearest kind of conspirators or partners in crime, facetiously speaking?

Jones: Yes. At Miami University—well, I’ve had several. One was a fellow graduate student by the name of Frank Peter Gross. He was from Akron. We did probably one of the early articles together that had to do with psychological reports and how readable they were. He was a friend and fellow student at Ohio State. He didn’t go on to get his Ph.D., but we kept in touch for years.

He was from Akron, Ohio, and his father was with the Goodyear Company as a chemist or something. He had graduated from Ohio Wesleyan College. He then came up to Ohio State to work on his graduate degree in school psychology. So, we became friends and worked together one summer at the institution for the mentally retarded. We wrote the article. So, that was one of my early collaborative ventures.

Then, I had a colleague, Nathan Gottfried, who is now retired from the psychology department at Louisiana State University. We were students together at Ohio State, but we didn’t begin to collaborate until we both arrived at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. We did a number of research studies together on motivation for interest in special education teaching. Why do people go into certain fields? What is it about a person’s makeup that causes them to be interested in wanting to work with mentally retarded, gifted, or emotionally disturbed children? We did a series of research studies on that
topic. And we did studies in other areas as well. We probably published at least five or six studies together.

Then, we had a colleague, the person who hired me, Lawrence Segal. He also ended up at Louisiana State University as chairman of the psychology department. But when he hired me, he was director of the Instructional Research Service at Miami University. We did a lot of research on characteristics of students who came to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and what we could do to predict their performance. That sort of thing. We had large grants that we worked on, at least, I worked on with him. Today, these are probably grants that would be $2 or $3 million. But back forty years ago, they were half a million dollars. Just with inflation, they would be really big grants these days. We worked together on a number of studies. And he was my mentor, in a sense. He helped me with writing, for example, and we had resources that enabled me to do research in addition to the work that I was doing for the institution. So he was a very important person in my career development.

This was a time when 1959-1958 when there were not African Americans employed in mainstream institutions. So, he hired me because my advisor, John Horrocks, recommended me. There were two candidates for the position: Gottfried and myself. I guess Siegel asked Horrocks who he would recommend, and he said he would recommend me as the first person. Siegel took that recommendation, and I was the only faculty member at Miami University, back in 1959, of color. I don’t know how long it would be before they had another person, but it took a while.

They did have a librarian later on who was my classmate at Morehouse College. He had gone on to get a Ph.D. in library science. He had been a librarian at a number of institutions including Washington University in St. Louis. Then, he worked at Miami University and a couple of other institutions. So, he came, I think at some point maybe after I had left. But, I visited him when I came back to the campus to look around.

During this era there were not many people of color in institutions of higher learning. At Ohio State, when I was a graduate student, there was only one. When I came back as an associate professor, there was only one, and I made the second person. That was in 1966. There just weren’t people in these institutions who were being hired.

Larry Siegel was an important mentor. Nathan Gottfried was an important collaborator. Then, when I went to the University of California, Riverside, one of my former students became a colleague and we published studies together in the area of mental retardation and related areas. So, a good deal of my work has been in collaboration with various colleagues and some students.

Wilmot: This person at Riverside—I know you’ve said his name before. Could you say it again?

Jones: Donald MacMillan. He is now a distinguished professor of education at the University of California, Riverside. Highly regarded scholar.

Wilmot: Is there anyone else you think of when you think of your primary collaborators?

Jones: Well, those were the people, I think: MacMillan, Gottfried, Siegel, and early on, Pete Gross, my fellow graduate student. For long many years, I maintained contact with a
number of them, probably fifteen, twenty years. I would have conversations. With Macmillan even now, probably every six months, we have conversations.

Wilmot: I have one more question about African American studies at UC Berkeley. This is a question about departmental dynamics in the seventies. How would you kind of describe the balance of power, and what ideas had intellectual sway?

Jones: I’m not so certain that there was. Let me start by saying African American studies is a collection of disciplines. What you try to do, what we tried to do was to identify areas where there were people doing work that was relevant for African American studies and disciplines. History was perceived to be an important component of African American studies. Literature was an important part of African American studies. Then, there were people who were in the area, like Margaret Wilkerson, who was in the dramatic arts who had developed an interest in and some expertise in black theatre. So, she was in the department. And then we had a number of people in literature. Some of them moved on for various reasons. Some like Roy Thomas remained. But, Roy had not finished his doctorate. He had written his dissertation, but he never quite got through revising it. But he was an extremely popular teacher and person who was revered by many. He was helpful to all kinds of people, both in his role in the professional development program—I think that’s where he was housed—and then he taught in African American studies.

Wilmot: That’s the name of the program that you were talking about, and I was spacing on the name of it. It’s PDP, yes?

Jones: Yeah. I had some connection with them over the years.

Other than—we had black film with Albert Johnson, the late Albert Johnson. We had political science, and we had a person, Henry Jackson, who had a Ph.D. from Columbia. He eventually moved on because he wanted to return to New York. He was interested in comparative politics, as I recall.

It would be difficult to say that there was an intellectual thread that ran through all these disciplines. I think what we were looking for were scholars who had expertise in some area of African American studies or Afro-American studies, then, in their particular discipline. So, historians who specialized in African American history, people in literature who specialized in black literature. There was no necessary political agenda that we were looking for in persons selected as I recall. Certainly, I was involved in the recruitment of most of the people during the time I was there, either as a member of the search committee or as chairman of the department. We looked for the person we thought would be scholarly, and would be able to move through the system by doing the kind of research that was appropriate to Berkeley, one we thought could be a good teacher and would relate to the students, and someone who wanted to be in Afro-American studies. Not all black scholars wanted to be a part of African American Studies. Many wanted to be in the more traditional departments, and in some cases, we tried to make certain that they had that connection. For example, [Al] Raboteau, who was in history, taught a course in African American history in the history department. Earl Lewis, I believe, taught a course in the history department. Now people in literature did not—Barbara Christian came from the English department at Berkeley. She had been there in the English department for a couple years before she moved over to
African American studies. So, she never went back to doing their teaching. I taught in the School of Education. And I think that was pretty much it at the time.

But, what we looked for were people who wanted to be in African American studies. That was not always, as I said, the case. Some people just didn’t want to—somehow they didn’t see that as legitimate as they wanted it to be. So there were lots of people we tried to recruit. And, of course, they didn’t say, “We don’t want to be in African American studies,” but we weren’t able to recruit them.

Now, one of the sad things about trying to get people to come to Berkeley, and this is independent of race, and it is that the requirements are a little bit more stringent in terms of publication and research. So there would be people who would have, in some cases, a research that, in our view, would barely qualify them to be assistant professors. But, they were like full professors in these institutions. So, often they would not be offered positions because it would be insulting. You were a full professor at, say, Indiana University, and people look at your credentials and say that doesn’t measure up to what we expect at Berkeley. So, people would not be offered a position.

But the thing we did that was great is that we went for the very best people that we could find at all levels—full professors, top scholars in the field, who had some research that was related to African Americans that was highly regarded—we tried to get those folks. Promising young people, we tried to get. And we succeeded in getting some people. But, we were after quality, but with the proviso that the person wanted to be there and also we believed would be effective in relating to our students.

Wilmot: Interesting. And the administration.

Jones: One of the things we did to make certain that we had some success in getting our appointments through was that we enlisted as committee members highly regarded faculty in other departments who were sympathetic to what were trying to do. We had Litwack, for example, Leon Litwack in history would be on our committees. Winthrop Jordan—these are renowned historians who did work, in actually, African American studies. We had people like that who would be on our committees. They would help with the evaluation. When we put forth our cases, which were strong, we also had, in addition, these renowned scholars who were on our committee who were writing persuasively about these candidates. It made it easier for us to get the appointments that we wanted.

Because the reality still is and was, probably still is, that many individuals who had something to do with eventual employment of our candidates had very prejudiced views about the field, the department, and individuals—African American individuals. So, to counter that, we made certain that we had scholars who could interpret for others what we were trying to do, give an evaluation that would be congruent with ours. We would get our people through, and got some very good people.

Wilmot: Were there other challenges associated with building a burgeoning department in a field that was sometimes less well regarded?
Jones: Well, one of the big ones was getting the people we wanted. I think we did a good job of turning around the perception of the department. Now, I believe that there was some tension as a result of moving from ethnic studies to—

Wilmot: COL [College of Letters and Science]

Jones: Yeah. People thought we were turncoats, that we were leaving them. So, there was a lot of tension around that. I think we eventually were able to establish some relationships with ethnic studies and so forth with, for example, a joint Ph.D. program, which developed after I left. It involved the ethnic studies group and not just African American studies. So, they had eventually come around to collaborative work. And Charles Henry, who was the chair during a lot of that time, and Margaret Wilkerson, who was chair, did a good job, I think, of working with ethnic studies in the development and implementation of the Ph.D. program in ethnic studies.

Wilmot: Was the department very hierarchical during your time?

Jones: Well, I think for a while, and maybe a long time, and maybe almost during all the time that I was there--I think almost--I probably was the only full professor. But, we had some associate professors that we grew and developed. Barbara Christian might have become full professor on my watch, while I was there. I’m not sure about Bil Banks, but he got been promoted. I know that Charles Henry was, Percy Hintzen—not then, they were moving up through the ranks. We were sort of egalitarian, really. A group of people got together, and generally, we were in agreement with respect to hiring of people, recommendation of people for hiring.

There is an interesting thing about Berkeley, probably more than any other institution that I’ve been in, and it was that people of all levels throughout the department had input and was valued. The other thing was that people were generally cooperative. Part of that, I think, was probably, I don’t want to say self-serving, but you are evaluated by your colleagues. So, it is not in your best interest to establish relationships that are not positive. Whereas, say at this university, Hampton University, the decisions are made by the administration. So, there is not as much collegiality among the faculty, at least not in the department that I was in.

Wilmot: Well, let’s shift to that now. I’d like to shift to Hampton. You came here in 1991, and you came to the department of psychology—

Jones: —as the chair.

Wilmot: As chair. I wanted to ask you a little bit about what you have done to kind of grow and nurture and develop here at Hampton. You did tell me a little bit about the grant that you sponsored and won that operates through 2006, I believe, to develop doctoral students.

Jones: —Candidates who would be competitive for Ph.D. programs like Jolanda Nolan, here.

Now, the first thing I did when I came, very early, was to get permission from the dean and of course I had to go up through the provost and the president—to have an evaluation of the department by external individuals. So far as I know, there had never been such any activity that was independent of accreditation. Now, when they have
accreditation, people come in from the outside, but this was initiated in our department. And so we identified people we thought would be helpful in—

[minidisc 10]

And the other thing I did was to bring in some very large grants, which in the social sciences were of significant magnitude. There had been no grants of this magnitude in the social sciences. One grant was $5 million. For the liberal arts and education, that was practically unheard of. What that did was to enable us to hire some students to work on the project, so they got valuable experience. The project was to provide training in grantsmanship to a faculty in HBCUs in the area of special education research. We had that grant for five years. We had a lot of students to help us.

Then we had the CORE grant, Career Opportunities in Research, that provided training for students in preparation for careers in mental health research. That one extended at least through ten years. We started out with four students, and now we have ten each year who are supported very handsomely. And they’re going on. They’re in Ph.D. programs. We have two at Berkeley now, which is unheard of, probably, and one has just been admitted this year. These people are in the School of Psychology. That’s in the School of Education. The fact that we had a second person admitted this year, the first one about three years ago, says something about the performance of the first student we sent. Because if she had not been a very good and effective student, there would have been little if no opportunity for the one who just got admitted. So, they have done well. The students have done well in these institutions of higher learning in pursuit of their Ph.D.s.

We have students at—well, this year one’s going to St. John’s. We have two or three at the University of Pennsylvania. We have two or three at Purdue University. We have one at the University of Missouri; one is going to the University of Michigan, Boston University, University of Massachusetts. So, we have put the students in some very good programs, and they are being successful. We have one at Virginia Commonwealth University. Jolanda is going to Howard University. One is going to North Carolina State University this year. So, the students are doing well, very well. One is going to the University of Illinois.

Wilmot: Are you still too close to the Hampton experience to talk about department dynamics and administration with a critical eye?

Jones: No. I was a chair, and then I was a member of the department when we had other chairs. The relationships were congenial among the faculty. One thing that I had expected was probably more collegiality in personal ways. I thought there would be more cocktail parties and that sort of thing.

Wilmot: [laughs] So, you arrived, and you said, “Where’s the cocktail parties?”

Jones: Yeah. I thought there would be more of that, there would be more interaction among the faculty in social ways. That does not appear to be the case. Many of the people with whom we associate are not Hampton University faculty members. That was surprising because I thought—and I haven’t seen many of the cocktail parties like we used to have
at Berkeley. You know, on a Friday afternoon, somebody would have a cocktail party. You’d have interesting people to talk to and drink wine and have cheese and crackers. That didn’t work, and we did a lot of invitations, initially. Michele has done a great job of making friends in a wide variety of areas. But, we’ve had to work at it a little bit. It hasn’t been easy. But, you do have to nurture relationships, I guess, wherever you are.

Wilmot: Yes, many different types of relationships. That’s for sure.

Jones: Yeah. And what is the case here is that people, they’ve had their friends and their relatives for years. They literally don’t need anybody else. So, you have to force your way into it; you have to work at it.

Wilmot: You have to work at becoming necessary and relevant.

Jones: Yeah. So, the fact that there was not more collegiality was somewhat of a surprise and actually a disappointment. But, we had some good students here, some very good students. And, I’ve seen them improve over the years.

There’s still lots of things that need to happen for them to be better students, and one of those things is that they need to have more writing assignments. There is, in my opinion, in certain departments including psychology, too much emphasis on multiple choice exams and true-false objective tests. So, when I came here with my essay exams only, some senior students, as a matter of fact all senior students, had never had an essay question on an examination in psychology. That was terrible. But we moved to try to do something about that, which is when I was chair, we had an agreement that there would be at least one essay question on every examination.

Wilmot: That’s really where people learn to write. It’s very important.

Jones: Yeah, and students weren’t getting that kind of experience. Now, the reason for that—there’s some structural reasons. One is that—I don’t want to say too many students to be taught—but there are many students. So, a person might have a load of 150 students, 120 or 130 students in several class sections. And if you have essay examinations for a hundred and some students during the middle of the semester, it would take you weeks to evaluate those papers. So, you don’t have graduate assistants and other folks who will grade and evaluate these papers. You have to do it on your own. And at the final examination time, first they have two-hour examinations, two-hour finals, whereas many institutions have three hours. So, the informal rule is do not give essay questions on final examinations because you could never get them graded in time to be turned in within the seventy-two-hour period you are required to turn them in. You see, so these are structural things that make it difficult for you to give examinations that would really challenge the students and enable them to integrate and synthesize information, extrapolate, go beyond—. See, they don’t get that kind of experience because of the requirements with respect to time, et cetera. So, one of the things that I was able to do was, at least, to have some movement in the direction of essay exams.

Wilmot: Can I ask what has been the most gratifying in your time here at Hampton?

Jones: Some of the students that we have produced have gone on to work in graduate programs. It’s really satisfying because, here, you can see the growth of students, and
you can have a feeling that you made a difference in terms of their growth and
development. So, that’s been very satisfying. That was also satisfying at Fisk
University, when I had three students who, under ordinary circumstances, would not
have been admitted to any major graduate programs, who were able to be developed to
a point where they could, after their masters degree, go on to be admitted to major
programs and be successful. Here is a case where you know that you’ve made a
difference in somebody’s life.

Now, Berkeley I understand—I think at some point, Purdue--have more students to go
on to get Ph.D.s than any institution in the country in terms of absolute numbers. Not
necessarily percentage but in absolute numbers, and a significant percentage. Of course,
things happen that have enabled them to be admitted to these schools but it’s not the
same kind of nurturing and development that takes place in a place like Hampton
University. I mean, the students when they come to Berkeley are pretty sharp and
developed in a lot of ways. They know how to write, et cetera. It’s all relative but the
majority have skills that many of our students don’t have. Now, the university has a
commitment to admit certain students or a certain percentage of students who don’t
meet ordinary criteria.

Wilmot: Berkeley or Hampton?

Jones: Hampton. To develop those students. So, HBCU play a unique role in development of
students. There’s a personal interest in students. My students who were my advisees and
many others, especially when I was chair, I know something about them as persons. I
know where they were from. Sometimes, I met their parents. I’d know how they were
performing in classes. So, there’s a personal connection, which I didn’t see at Berkeley.

Now, Berkeley would give some of that to graduate students because there’s some more
one-on-one, depending on the department. But you get that at the undergraduate level.
There’s nurturing; there’s development. And that is especially true for those who have
some talent. We know who the good students are; and we know the students who are
good but who need some nurturing and development.

Now, one of the sad things is that the black males don’t perform as well as the females
at Hampton. I’d say the students who graduated with honors, the numbers are very
small among the males. In psychology, for example, when we try to recruit students for
our CORE program—and these would be students who would have at least a 3.5
GPA—over the past several years, we have not done well. Three years ago, we had two
males. But most years, we are not able to recruit a single male student who has, in
psychology or sociology, a 3.5 GPA. Of course, that’s sort of like the minimum cutoff.
The people that we actually attract probably have 3.8. Jolanda has something like a
cumulative of 3.9. These are the kind of people we are able to attract, but no males! So,
there’s some special challenge that is needed to enhance the performance of black
males. That’s across departments, not just psychology.

Wilmot: Are you familiar with the work of Ann Ferguson?

Jones: No.
Wilmot: Okay. She does some work around looking at the ways young black boys are treated in schools from a very early age.

Jones: Now, is that the woman who wrote a book about that where she had a Berkeley Ph.D.?

Wilmot: She wrote a book. She had a Berkeley Ph.D. She was one of Troy Duster’s students, and she is Jamaican.

Jones: Is she at some place like Smith College now?

Wilmot: Yes, precisely. That’s her.

Jones: I have purchased her book and it’s one that I want to read. That’s the kind of relation that is very needed. It’s an in-depth study of a very small group of people, which is what we need to do, ethnographic studies and so forth. With the work that I want to do, I want to pull some of that in, not just the quantitative studies but also the probably more useful are these ethnographic studies where you go in and observe for long periods of time. She was not I recall just skimming the books, but she was in that school for years observing what was going on.

Wilmot: Dr. Jones, you are one of several people that I’ve talked to as part of this project whose career has traversed both the HBCUs and mainstream white academy. I don’t know if that’s the correct language. But you’re probably the only one who’s made a commitment, who’s made such a commitment, to return to an HBCU and kind of have your career be finished at an HBCU. So, I just wanted to open up the door to talk about what that’s meant to you, if you have anything more to say about it.

Jones: You know, I think it’s something that you really have to want to do. HBCUs versus research university, that’s an issue. But also, there are white schools that are probably comparable to HBCUs. First, you’d have to want to be in the institution. And if you are a research-oriented person and accustomed to having a lot of resources like great libraries and graduate students, you probably won’t find that. You’ll find many challenges, a lot of rigidity in the administrative structure of the institution. This institution, Hampton is one of the primary, one of the more well-regarded of the HBCUs. And resources are still a challenge. I’ve seen great improvements since I’ve been here in the library. I think a lot of the computerized library resources, in a way, equalize, level the playing field. Because the Internet and so forth we have and the inter-library loan possibilities, and these books that are digitized, and the journals that are digitized makes it accessible to people at all levels, not just in the mainstream institution. So, that has helped a lot.

The students probably have a wider range in terms of ability. I’ve had students who are as good as the best students I’ve had at Berkeley. But the majority would not be at that level. But what you can feel good about is you can take some students who are not at the Berkeley level and elevate them so that they are at least competitive for admission. That’s a great source of satisfaction when you see you’ve made a difference in somebody. You saw them in that rough state when they came, and you see how they have progressed. But it has to be more hands-on. For example, we don’t have a—well, there’s probably some support service—at the same level that you would have at Berkeley. But there is some support.
Wilmot: At the same time, I imagine that if you are a student at an HBCU, you also have the comfort and support of just being surrounded by other black people, which would be a really good experience.

Jones: Yeah. Race is not an issue with the students. But, when the students leave, often race becomes an issue because they have not, in some cases, been immersed in the kind of environment they will face when they go into the world to work. My own son, for example, had some adjust problems when he—

Wilmot: Your—?

Jones: —Seaun. When he went to work at Merck, when he was essentially in an all-white environment. All of his training had been in an all-black environment. So there is some adjustment often there.

Wilmot: Don’t you think there is a strength, though, in coming from a place that’s an all-Black environment so that you kind of step out on a stronger leg where you haven’t experienced gradual, kind of, blows to your self-esteem, that can happen when you’re in a predominantly white environment as a young black person?

Jones: That’s absolutely the case. These schools crush black students who are talented, often.

Wilmot: Predominantly—?

Jones: —white schools. They damage their sense of self. They’re not encouraged, often academically. Even, I had another one of these but I expect that even our students who are admitted to schools like Wesleyan and Harvard and Bryn Mawr and Brown, et cetera, still in some cases are viewed as suspect. They often don’t get the same level of treatment. I know that’s the case at Harvard because I’ve read extensively about that, that the Harvard faculty still believe that the university is lowering its standards in admitting black students with 1300 SATs. You’re almost like a stranger; it’s not your institution, and people often let you know that, that it’s not your institution. Now, I don’t know about Wesleyan, but often, that is the case in lots of places.

Wilmot: [laughs] Well, I know about Wesleyan. But in any event, I wanted to ask--and this isn’t meant to be a definitive closing because we may follow up with more questions. I’m really just drawn to this time in your career when you were moving around, somewhat, and raising a family. So, I wanted to ask you about the birth of your children and naming them and who they are now.

Jones: Well, my first wife’s name was Johnette Turner. I met her at Ohio State; she was an undergraduate. I finished my Ph.D. and we went to Miami University. There, she finished her master’s degree. We decided that when I had opportunities for other employment, we would go to an institution where we could both have work. The master plan was that she would have the baby, finish the program, and then seek employment. Well, it didn’t quite work that way.

As I had indicated earlier, she had a thesis involving painting and the fumes made it difficult for her to finish. So, she did finish, and then we had the child. We had the child when I was at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Because of this problem, she
was not able to finish her work. So, at the end of that year at Fisk, I had a visiting professorship at Indiana University. That summer, she finished her thesis and every weekend, we drove to Ohio to do something in connection with her thesis during that summer period. So, she eventually finished it. So she was not able to take the job at Tennessee State in the art department. So, we had the baby and then—

Wilmot: This is your first daughter?

Jones: Yeah.

Wilmot: What’s her name?

Jones: Her name was Juliet Melinda Jones.

Wilmot: Who did you name her after?

Jones: That was from Romeo and Juliet. I had been somewhat of a Shakespearean actor in the university Players at Morehouse College, my undergraduate institution.

Wilmot: You were an actor?

Jones: Yes, when I was at Morehouse. One of the plays was Romeo and Juliet, and I had a role in that. So, I liked that name, and so we agreed that that would be a nice name.

Wilmot: Juliet.

Jones: Yeah. So, we had Juliet. Then, we moved to Los Angeles, to UCLA. There, Johnette just was a housewife and she was involved in painting, and we lived in a little community. There was a community in Los Angeles, and it was about maybe three or four miles from the UCLA campus in a little canyon type area—really neat.

Wilmot: Not a commune, but a community?

Jones: Yes, a community.

Wilmot: [laughs]

Jones: And in that community, there were art people, and—my next-door neighbor was a professor in theater arts. There was just a lot of interesting people. There was some faculty from UCLA and we would have these gatherings of different kinds. For example, we’d block off the street every year and have a fair. We had a lot of creative people who would do jewelry and paintings and sculpture and all that. People would come from all over. So, my wife would be actively involved in the organization of that as well as in selling her artwork. We did that for a couple of years while we were there. Then, the opportunity came to return to Ohio State, so we did that. We were wanting to have a boy. So, the second child was born in Columbus, Ohio, a girl we named Angela Michelle. Then, about a year later—

Wilmot: Who was Angela named for?
Jones: Well, my wife had a good friend whose name—oh no, there was nobody that we had identified. Somehow, my wife liked that name. Now, the third child was Cynthia Ann Jones. Her middle name was Ann because my wife had a very good friend in Nashville who was Ann Martin. So, she adopted that name. The names, for the most part, didn’t have any significance. They weren’t tied to people we knew like grandparents and mothers like that.

So, those were the three children, and two were born in Columbus, Ohio, one in Nashville. My wife stayed home to take care of the kids and did artwork, painted, drawing and photography and things like that. In some cases, she even took some classes in water colors and photography. Then, when we got to Oakland, for example, we had a photography studio in the house that we built and developed and an art studio and recreation room for the kids and a billiard room. It was a really nice house. We put in a swimming pool and a basketball court and a tennis area as well.

Wilmot: Was this the house up on Skyline?

Jones: Yeah. On Skyline, up Skyline. So, we developed that, and the kids had a wonderful area to grow up in. But those children were named basically without regard to history. It was not like we had identified significant people we admired and wanted to name the children for those individuals. We didn’t do that.

Wilmot: I understand you have two other children with Michele.

Jones: Michele. And these are children that Michele had when we were married. The oldest, the son was in, let’s see, high school when we got married. He attended Berkeley High.

Wilmot: This is in 1986?

Jones: We were married in 1988.

Wilmot: Okay.

Jones: Leasa was in elementary school, so she literally grew up with us from something like the fourth or fifth grade up to the present time. She went to, I think she went to Arts Magnet School in Berkeley. Then, when we moved to Oakland hills, she went to the schools in Oakland through the junior high school. Elementary school was in the Oakland hills, Carl B. Monk, which was a good elementary school and she attended Montera Junior High, which was a good junior high school. Then, we came here, and she was in the middle school for a year and then went to the high school.

Wilmot: Here at Hampton?

Jones: In Hampton.

Wilmot: This is Leasa.

Jones: Yes.
Wilmot: Okay. What’s been most rewarding about being a father? It’s such a hard question; you can throw out the question if it’s too—

Jones: Seeing the kids grow and develop and move into their professions. Seeing them happy. I think all of our children have faced challenges at one time or another, but they seem to be doing okay. Leasa went through a number of trials and tribulations before she decided what she wanted to do, which was to go to law school. Initially, she majored in biology, she wanted to do pre-medicine, and then she wanted to do pre-dentistry and dentistry. Then, for some reason, she decided she didn’t want to do that, and the people at William and Mary told her she was a wonderful actress, and therefore, she decided to pursue theater arts. But admission to graduate programs are very competitive. None of the programs that she applied to accepted her. Then, she had to figure out what she wanted to do. Now, she was fortunate in that while she was in these auditions for theater arts after she had graduated from William and Mary, she had a position at William and Mary as a roving ambassador, which is essentially a recruiter. It was a one-year position. Well, she did well, and they offered her an additional year. So, she was able to further develop, think about what she wanted to do. She came up with law, and then she prepared vigorously for the LSATs and did well. So, she was admitted to the law school at William and Mary which, in Virginia, is highly regarded.

The College of William and Mary, as I was saying to you earlier, is the sixth ranked public institution in the United States, and there is no comparable institution of its size. So, you have Berkeley and the University of Virginia and the University of Michigan and well, some other school or two, and then there’s the College of William and Mary. People don’t know about it. This is an excellent, excellent school. Michele and I were members of the parent advisory committee for the school, and so we had a little bit of opportunity to see some of the inside. But, I was able to see carefully the kind of work that was required. It’s just a very fine institution, very good.

Wilmot: What role has your wife Michele played in your career?

Jones: She’s been supportive of everything I have done, really. You can get lost in this scholarly world and maybe not do all the things you need to do to make your family function effectively. I think among my colleagues are many individuals who have been exceptional in their achievement have often had spouses who have taken more than their share of the load with respect to the family. I think that was the case with my first wife and with Michele. That’s not a good thing, but I think that’s the reality; she’s been exceptionally supportive, which is why I wanted to say that to her in this statement that I prepared for the American Psychological Association, which I want to share with her this evening.

Wilmot: Yeah. And to quote it, you’ve said she’s been “the wind beneath your wings.”

Jones: Yes.

Wilmot: Okay, is there anything else you want to say today?

Jones: No.

Wilmot: [laughs]
Jones: I’ve enjoyed the conversations we’ve had.

Wilmot: Good.

Jones: I had a chance to think about some things that I haven’t thought about some in a long time, some ever. [chuckles] I hope that it will be useful to people as they reflect on the history, and some of the activities related to people of color on the Berkeley campus. I think we had some success in making the Berkeley campus responsive to the needs of students of color. We had an environment where they were respected for their academic prowess, and also developed and nurtured, probably in the way that we develop and nurture students at a place like Hampton. I know that Michele has taken a similar role over when she was in Student Activities and Services and as an advisor when she was the ombudsperson because her students sought her out because they knew that she could be enormously helpful to them in a whole variety of areas. Michele, I think, has been so valuable because she is careful in evaluating situations and her recommendations. She has the respect of people, and she could and did often make the case for students, and it was accepted because her predictions had borne out with the administrators that she was trying to influence. All of that is possible because she has outstanding verbal skills and so she is able to speak persuasively.

Wilmot: Yes, persuasive of speech.

Jones: Yeah. So, as she has done a great job on the Berkeley campus and, by the way, she had done something very similar on the Hampton campus as the graduate advisor to the AKA. She still has—I would doubt if there’s not a week—and this has probably been four, five years since she was graduate advisor—I doubt if there’s a week when she doesn’t have some e-mails from some of the students she worked with when she was at Hampton, which is a real testimony to how she is perceived as a mentor and friend. She has been great here as well.

Wilmot: Well, on that note shall we close for today?

Jones: All right.

Wilmot: Okay, I really enjoyed our work together. Thank you.

Jones: I did, too.

[End of Interview]
Nadine Erika Wilmot

Nadine Wilmot has worked in oral history for the past seven years and has been with the Regional Oral History for three years. She began to use orality to explore race, place, and power while directing the Oakland Oral History Project as a graduate student at UC Berkeley. Since then, she has worked in documentary film and with community based arts organizations. Nadine holds a Master’s in City and Regional Planning from UC Berkeley and a BA in African American Studies from Wesleyan University. She is from Oakland.