

TT: Toni-Michelle Travis '69

MA: Myra Armstead

Student: Hist 117 Student

*This interview was recorded as part of Myra Armstead's 2017 course, Hist 117: Inclusion at Bard, which produced a series of oral histories with alumni/ae of color.*

MA: So I'm gonna lead out. And my first question is, would you just restate the years you were at Bard?

TT: Okay. I was at Bard four years consecutively from sixty-five to sixty-nine.

MA: Okay. Now what about your decision to come to Bard? Explain that. Did you consider other schools? Why did you choose Bard? I mean, Bard wasn't very well-known, so...

TT: That's for sure. Well, back then there used to be something called the College Bowl. And it was a quiz program that matched students from one college against another and Bard was one of them. And that interested me—I found that something to note. But then, I had my heart set on going to Antioch. Why? I couldn't tell you. But that's in Ohio. And my mother said quite frankly to me, after she realized that I was not going to Howard—which I could have gone to for free because she was a staff member—she said 'I'm not paying for you to go to the midwest. And I'm not paying for five years. And so pick something else.' And so Bard fit that description in that it had a work study program, the field period each December through February. And it was acceptable because it was Episcopal, and we are Episcopalians.

MA: Wow, it's very idiosyncratic. That choice.

TT: (laughs) Yes.

MA: Wow, I do remember College Bowl. So, Bard, in other words, appeared—it had a team?

TT: Yep.

MA: This was a national show that came on Sunday nights—

TT: Yes.

MA: As I remember.

TT: Yes, it did. And Charlie Hollander who's an active alum was on it. He preceded me at University of Chicago. (laughs)

MA: Oh?

TT: And he didn't finish the PhD.

MA: Ah, okay.

TT: And he went on to tell me the female on the team, I think, left the school and he gave me the update on the other two people.

MA: Wait, so Bard must have done well for you to—

TT: It lost, but I liked what they said about Bard. (laughs)

MA: (all laughing) Oh! And do you remember what they said?

TT: Well, I think I hadn't made the distinction between a College and a University. And I decided Bard sounded fine. My high school had twelve-hundred or more students. I'd been around Howard University all my life and I didn't want a big school to go to.

MA: Right, and so that was gonna be my next question. I wanted you to talk about your background, where you were coming from—obviously D.C. Did you feel you were prepared for Bard academically and socially?

TT: Academically—that was one of the key questions to ask the Director of Admissions who came to Washington to interview us—the D.C. area people. And I said 'I go to an inner-city High School, how are my A's—grades of A—gonna stack up at a place like Bard? I mean, am I gonna be able to handle this?' And he said he thought so. But I also met a Black female who had been at Bard and hated it and was leaving. All she told me was 'It's a lot of reading.' And I said 'I do that all the time.' I didn't think that it was a big leap. You had to be diligent about doing your work, but I had prepared myself—the high school had not necessarily prepared me. Socially, I had White teachers in a student body with only three Whites out of whatever we were—eleven-hundred or twelve-hundred. And I was beginning to interact with the White community in a limited way. I didn't feel alienated.

MA: Okay. Okay. So, talk a little bit about the demographics at Bard when you got here and during your four years. How large was the college? What percentage was minority? What percentage was female?

TT: There were approximately five-hundred and fifty of us as students. Or as my roommate used to say, 'something like 1.5 acres per person.' (laughs) Talking about percentages—there were no percentages. I think there were ten Blacks in all, totally, out of the four classes. When we got to graduation day, Carla Sayers Tabourne and I lined up and the two fellows weren't there. They'd finished—I know one finished at another time. I don't know if the other one ever finished. There was one African student—male African student. And one of my friends that I keep in touch with was Liberian, but also held American citizenship, too. So, over the four years, there may have been eight or ten of us in the whole school.

MA: Okay. Any other minorities that you can remember?

TT: There were two French fellows who came and they tried to live in Kingston or nearby. And they happened to end up with a Black family. There were racist remarks—and perhaps threats—and they dropped out. Quickly. Otherwise—oh, we had two students over time from Luxembourg. Pierre Joris, who went into College teaching, and Frances David. And they did not know each other was coming to Bard (laughs).

MA: So the rest of the student body was—

TT: White.

MA: White. Okay. So—

TT: I don't know the percentage of women versus men. I don't know that.

MA: Okay. So what were your initial reactions to Bard? What was surprising? And did the college meet your expectations when you first arrived?

TT: Well, I think it was that there were a lot of lazy people who just thought it was a place to have fun. And I got turned off initially about beer-drinking. Never did learn to drink beer. Or like it. I don't know that I had any fixed expectations other than it would be quiet and pastoral. It was. And beyond that, the classes were stimulating and many of the classmates were quite interesting.

MA: Okay. So would it be too simplistic to ask—did you like it? Did you not like it? Or, you just went with the flow?

TT: I liked it very much because you were left alone. No one said 'It's time to get up.' No one said 'You've gotta go to chapel.' No one said anything. It's just—you had to be fairly self-sufficient and not looking for the in-crowd because, in those days, certain people looked like they were the in-crowd, but they would've told you 'We're not. There's another group that is.' You know? And I wasn't interested in that and it didn't bother me. I made very good friends and we ate lunch and dinner every day together for the four years.

MA: Okay. Now you were at Bard during the height of the Civil Rights Movement—sort of towards the tail-end—when many of the changes that were being fought for in the early fifties were being realized. So, 1965, I think right before you started, was the Voting Rights Act. Sixty-eight was the Fair Housing Act. I'm wondering: how were those things refracted among Bard students? Were they aware? And then, of course, there was Bloody Sunday, as well, in your senior year. So was this talked about? Did this influence you at all?

TT: Well, it was interesting how the dean handled housing before I got there. What he did—I was assigned to Tewksbury. (all laughing)

Student: Tewwwks! (all laughing)

TT: (laughs) And I was in B10, and he decided to put me with a young lady who was from Rhode Island, whose father was a Universalist Unitarian Minister. She was a big civil rights person. Her brother was in Alabama doing voter registration. And so we had something called 'The Bard Racial Action Committee', BRAC. And it got a bus from the college and they got permission to go over to Kingston to integrate things. They said 'We have to go over there and do that.' And so she came to me and said 'Are you going?' And I said 'No. I'm not going. I'm not here to integrate anything. I'm here to get a college degree.' And she just was totally upset about that. She couldn't understand that I wouldn't be out there, forthright with my very liberal, White classmates. And I never did go out and do any of that. So that was one point. The other was, on that floor in Tewksbury was a woman from Georgia who sounded like she was from Georgia. Even when she was doing her drama in theater. (laughs) I mean, you know, she came out with a Georgia accent no matter what role she was in. And somebody took the New York Times one day and plastered it on her door: 'Portrait of a Southern Liberal in Trouble' or something. But there was—Bard was so removed on the Civil Rights issue. Nobody said much about it, thought much about it. The big issue was 'Are you going to D.C. to demonstrate against Vietnam?'

MA: Yeah, that was a big student issue. Yeah, it was the Vietnam War.

TT: Yeah the—

MA: A little bit more about this Bard Racial Action Committee—what was the plan in Kingston? What were they going to integrate in Kingston?

TT: I'm not sure. I don't remember. It may be in the old newspapers from that era.

MA: Okay.

TT: But they were mostly New Yorkers. Very liberal students who felt this was what they had to do. And this was the appropriate thing to do. And I was on scholarship. And I did not want to go to Howard University. I had been around it all my life. It's six blocks from where I grew up. So my goal was to stay at Bard. (laughs) And widen my world.

MA: Okay. During the last class, I had students read from DuBois's autobiography, the last one where he recalls his years at Harvard in the 1880s as an undergrad. And he describes—I think you may have already answered this—that outside the classroom, he had a separate life. He lived off campus with a Black family, socialized in Black middle to upper-middle class circles, and—I was going to ask you where you lived, who you socialized with, but you kind of answered that. So there wasn't anything like a Black student organization?

TT: No. When I moved into B10, on that floor were two African American women. Well, one African American woman and a person I told you was from Liberia. And so we became friends but I was not into drugs. And one of them had a boyfriend who was, and so I sort of drifted away

from her. The Liberian went home to New York City almost every weekend. But by junior year, I went to South Hall. (all laughing) And they were both—they were next door to each other in South Hall and I was above one of them (laughs) in South Hall. So we didn't stick together, but we remained friends—very friendly throughout the time there.

MA: Yeah. Well this was a time when general student experimentation with drugs was really taking off—

TT: Yes.

MA: During this time. And Bard—

TT: Very much.

MA: Was very much a center of that. (all laughing)

TT: Yes.

MA: Yeah.

TT: We had the drug bust in sixty-eight.

MA: Oh, while you were here?

TT: Yes. (all laughing)

MA: So do you know about that?

Students: No.

MA: The Drug Bust. This was G. Gordon Liddy, right?

TT: G. Gordon Liddy and 'The Mighty Quinn'.

MA: And 'The Mighty Quinn'.

TT: Sheriff Quinlan of Dutchess County, New York.

MA: Well, G. Gordon Liddy was involved in the Watergate, um, kerfuffle. (Noisy laughter)

TT: (laughs)

MA: I think he—wasn't he operating out of—no that was—Timothy Leary was operating out of Millbrook—

TT: Millbrook, at the time, yes.

MA: Yeah. So, Bard being a place of experimentation, you can imagine.

TT: Well, also, they did Stonybrook and then they were looking for a private—my understanding is—I don't know for a fact—they were looking for a private school. And Vassar was all-women. And Marist was Catholic. And so then they kept looking, and then it became Bard. (laughs)

MA: (all laughing) Wow. Wow. So anyway, Martin Luther King was assassinated in the spring of your junior year. And what was your personal reaction to this? How did the Bard community react to this? And were—

TT: Oh. Go ahead.

MA: I think you might have said that you weren't aware that MLK Jr. had gotten an honorary degree at Bard. That never came up?

TT: No, I did know that, but it was before my time because my year the honorary degree went to John Hope Franklin. Who—

MA: Oh, wow.

TT: Who gave the address.

MA: That was my mentor. (laughs) At Chicago. Oh, wow.

TT: Right, yeah. And I'll tell you a funny story about that later. (laughs)

MA: Oh. Tell us—

MA: I think the Bard community was in shock. They were very upset, in terms of King's killing. And they weren't sure what to do or how to do it. And I think it was a Black guy who was in the class behind me, a guy named Wes Moore, who was the one that was working in the library that evening and went out and rang the bell. And, you know, the old thing of ringing the bell in an erratic fashion indicates something is wrong. But you couldn't hear the bell, of course, at Blithewood or Tewksbury. (laughs) You could only hear it going up the hill. So people were just upset because—it was only one TV on campus now. At that time. That was in Albee with the boys' dorms.

Students: (murmuring in disbelief)

TT: And it was single-sex dorms so, in any of the women's dorms, none of them had a TV. So it was like this place where you waited for news on Sunday and then you didn't hear anything all week. (laughs)

MA: Wow. So you were really sort of in a bubble.

TT: Yes.

MA: Now, don't forget the story about John Franklin afterwards—

TT: No.

MA: After graduating Bard you went on to the University of Chicago. In political science, you got the doctorate. Was that interest shaped during Bard? You were interested in politics and (coughs) how did you know—did you know what you wanted to study when you came? (coughs) What was your major? (coughs) And how did your professors influence your eventual focus on politics?

TT: Well, I came to Bard to study political science and I was—wanted international relations—

MA: Oh, I did, too.

TT: And there were only two professors: Heinz Bertelsmann and Robert Koblitz.

MA: Ah.

TT: And I was interested in international relations because I had been at the State Department in the summers working as a clerk typist. And in fact I did that through every summer in college. And so Heinz influenced me far more than Koblitz and the word was Koblitz didn't give females A's until junior year. You just couldn't get an A from him. And we didn't know of any women that had. And there was only one other female in government, in political science. And Connie, the Liberian, may have been the only one ahead of us—I mean, this was not a popular major. Psych and English lit were the big majors—and performing arts, back then. So, I never wavered from being interested in political science and I went to Chicago to study India and I found out that advisors there essentially saw themselves as gatekeepers, not advisors. And I felt very betrayed and spoiled because Bertelsmann was very hands-on. And very much in guiding me. So I had applied to Columbia and Berkeley and a lot of schools that had India. And U of Wisconsin was number one, and then Chicago offered more money, and that's how I ended up there. But I consider—to this day—Chicago to be one of the most racist places I've ever been.

MA: Interesting. And I know who those people were in the political studies program. Yeah because—you know, I went to Chicago. My undergrad major was government at Cornell.

TT: Mhm.

MA: And I went to Chicago in IR [international relations]. So that's interesting.

TT: Yeah.

MA: Before I get to continue there, tell me a little about why you were interested in politics in the first place.

TT: I grew up in Washington, D.C. and my father used to talk about politics at the dinner table. In the years when I was growing up, we had no vote for anyone in the district. No school board, no mayor, no anything. It was run by three White men appointed by the President of the United States, known as Commissioners. So they could do something you didn't like, but you couldn't throw them out. And we hadn't elected them anyway. And I didn't learn until much later that they were in lockstep with Congress and the Board of Trade and a lot of other people to suppress the African American community in the district. And then things sort of changed after fifty-eight when the African American population became a majority. But my idea was, 'I'm gonna figure out how government works.' And then my first job was at the State Department and I was there for four summers. And that complemented three very different jobs in the Bard Field Period. So I had a lot of work experience, which I thought was good before graduate school.

MA: Right. So, you wanna tell us the John Hope Franklin story very quickly?

TT: (laughs) Well, since I think all of the parties are deceased—but, um, Mrs. Kline—evidently, in those days, the honorary degree recipients were housed in the President's house if they came the day before graduation.

MA: Up on the hill?

TT: Yeah, the President's house on campus. And John Hope Franklin arrived and went to take a nap. And Mrs. Kline is going around, and she sees a door that's closed, (laughs) and opens it, and awakens him and says 'Who are you?' (laugh) or 'Why are you here?' or something. And they had the strangest of meetings and it was rumored—and I think perhaps it was true—that Mrs. Kline, unfortunately, was an alcoholic. He told the story much later of having met Mrs. Kline (laughs) in the bedroom when she was wandering through the house. Looking, inspecting.

(all laughing)

MA: Okay. We need to have a separate conversation about Chicago.

TT: Yeah.

MA: So, going back, this is kind of going over some material that we covered, but asking it differently. How would you describe your racial consciousness while at Bard? Would you say

you had one? Did it increase? Did it decrease? Did it change? And how did you navigate in terms of your identity as a Black person?

TT: Well, I think it increased, but not because of anything at Bard. I was dating a guy who was at Syracuse, and when he finished the Masters, he returned to Washington and went to Howard Law—which was quite militant those days. They shut down the Law School and all sorts of things. And so he would say, ‘We’re now Black. We’re not Black people.’ And my grandmother would talk about being ‘Colored’ and my mother about being ‘Negro’ and then I started used the term ‘Black’. At Bard, it was a funny issue in that the Black people knew I was Black. Bertelsmann knew I was—he didn’t like the term ‘Black’ but he knew I was. And people I associated with knew that. There were a number of people who didn’t know that or believe that, so they would go and ask my roommate, whom I’m still in touch with these days. And we would make up stories. I don’t know. It was just funny. She was extremely liberal. She was from Massachusetts. And she asked to room with me second semester after I got rid of the Civil Right-er who went out to live at Schuylar House, which we owned and had as a women’s dorm then. But I think people didn’t believe me. They’d never seen an African American who looked like me. And so I let it go. That’s—they’re gonna believe what they’re gonna believe. But the intermediary was usually the roommate who would tell them ‘Yes, she is’ or whatever we decided at the time. It was a joke for us. And what was the other part of the question? Did I answer?

MA: ‘How did you navigate that?’ But I think you have explained that.

TT: I think when people ask me that sort of question—I think it’s a problem for people who look as I do who grew up in the suburbs. I have a cousin who’s very conflicted, a much younger cousin. I say, ‘There’s no confusion in my mind. I went through twelve years of segregated education. It’s clear to me that I’m Black.’ I grew up on or near the campus of Howard University. There’s no confusion. It’s other people making assumptions or drawing their own conclusions. I’ve never denied it. But I don’t go around—I write with a woman who’s Jewish—I don’t go around announcing ‘I’m here today. I’m you’re Black professor to teach government.’ She walks in and says ‘I’m Jewish’ to dispel anything that she might hear negative. I don’t—I take a totally different approach to it.

MA: Well, yeah, I think historically—just as a footnote—maybe through 1980 or so, or maybe sixty-five with the liberalization of the immigration laws—

TT: Mhm.

MA: Within the Black community, there was a wide spectrum of understanding of who was Black. So, you know, what you’re saying makes sense. Totally makes sense.

TT: Yeah.

MA: But anyway, looking back as a whole, what would you say were the most memorable aspects of your time at Bard? What were the most favorable aspects of those years?

TT: Adolph's. (laughs)

MA: Adolph's doesn't exist anymore.

TT: I know, I know.

MA: The entire triangle—

TT: I know, and it changed the entire college when it ceased to exist, yes.

MA: It was a bar and—

TT: It was the bar. Yeah.

MA: At the triangle—

Student: Aw, damn.

MA: And professors and students used to hang out—

Student: Oh, I heard about that.

MA: Basically as peers. They would dance with each other—

TT: Yes.

MA: A lot of things happened, you know. (all laughing)

Student: Wait— (laughs)

MA: It's not necessarily a good—you have to judge whether the experience of Adolph's is a good thing—personally, I think it's a good thing—

TT: Well, I think Adolph's was many things. It set a tone in that one could go there and drink or relax or whatever. I drank with faculty who I never took courses with. And that made for great friendships and for great intellectual discussions. Of course, it wasn't a place Heinz Bertelsmann was ever gonna come (laughs) but he had his spies and he knew I went there. And he did make a big effort—I don't know why—but Connie was his favorite, the woman ahead of me, and then me. And he came down on my birthday that particular Spring when I turned twenty-one. But I think it was a unique place, a unique atmosphere for discussions, for looking at the world, all of those things. And I'm sorry it's not there. I know it's a different time and different place. And the

people who went there were a rather small group because, as you said, people were experimenting in drugs. And so those who went to Adolph's were small in number compared to the people that were back in the dorms smoking pot or, you know, 'mixing their medias', as we used to say, between two things that frequently didn't go together well. I mean we had a coffee shop, the old Hegeman thing. And that used to be a campus place where people would get their coffee in the morning and the New York Times. But that was a very small percentage of the faculty. A larger percentage would go to Adolph's and sit at the faculty table, as they claimed it. Or sometimes would sit with us at the smaller tables. But outside of the classroom I thought that was a wonderful experience and an important one. I appreciated the theater and used to go watch Blythe Danner who was very good then. I went to chapel and knew Father Shafer. And that was an even smaller number (laughs) there. But it was a part of the fabric of Bard. And the cemetery to know the history of Bard. And classes were, you know, okay. I mean, as I said, I think Koblitz was a bit anti-female. There were a couple of others who weren't in government that might have been. They tended to favor male students in and outside the classroom. But I didn't find it as isolating as other people, and I didn't have money to leave on the weekend. It was very much a suitcase school. The cafeteria went down to one on the weekend cause everybody left, you know, Sunday night dinner, they're all back. But when people live between Massachusetts and Baltimore primarily, they could get in a car and go visit their friends or go home. And they did. So I got a solid education. But I appreciated these other outlets.

MA: Okay. And would you change anything about your years at Bard? And if you could, what would it be?

TT: Well, I think a shortcoming was that we had so few faculty they were stretched. We had one economist. And I studied under Wiles. Prior to Wiles we had a marxist economist, so if you were gonna be an economics major, that's all you were gonna get is the marxist perspective. Koblitz had his views of the Vietnam War. He was the only Americanist. Bertelsmann was the only international. You can get some different views if you study history. Bertelsmann would rotate with Fred Crane on American foreign policy. One year it would be political science, the next year it would be history. But I think the narrowness of the departments was a real problem. There were students who wanted to do music composition. We didn't have someone in composition then, evidently. We had one philosopher, I think. I don't think we even had two there. We did have two French teachers but maybe—two German teachers, but maybe only one French, or something, at a time. And so you didn't get contradictory viewpoints on a lot of subjects. Because it would've been two different ways to teach the same subject.

MA: Okay, so are there questions that you would like to ask... (inaudible).

Student: (inaudible)

MA: Identify yourself.

Student: Hi, I'm Marley, I'm a senior and I study math and computer science.

TT: Okay.

Student: My question is, did they have science back then?

TT: They had science (laughs) and the joke was we had so few, everybody had their own lab. (all laughing)

Student: Yup. I do though. (all laughing)

TT: And for senior project, you essentially did. But prior to my time at Bard, Sottery, for whom—or did they, they tore Sottery Hall down, I think. Anyway—

Student: It still exists.

TT: Sottery was a chemistry professor, and in the early fifties they produced a number of MDs, people who went into medical science. But it was an afterthought. Bard was very literary and hardly any science or math students. Yeah.

MA: Hyden.

Student: So I wanted to ask, like—oh, hi, I'm Hyden. I'm a composition major at Bard. Junior. I guess I wanted to go back to what you were talking about earlier.

TT: Mhm.

Student: When you were talking about how, for you, knowing yourself and knowing your Blackness was easy because growing up you were always—well, for at least a part of it—separated from everybody else, and then was able to join in. But now that we're in this age of more hidden separation that isn't as obvious, what do you think in today's times should young people do? Who don't know themselves or who are like having issues with where they fit in, especially on a race level. What advice would you give them to get to know themselves?

TT: Well, certainly to read history. I think that's a major shortcoming here at this university.

Student: (laughs)

TT: The other is the difference for them and me is the law defined who I was. And the census taker used to come and not ask you 'Are you Black or White?' They would put down on a form what they perceived you to be. So I think it's much more difficult for people nowadays because if one parent is Black, one is White, one is whatever, you can choose now. But part of it is being rooted in a community. I've always been Episcopalian. I went to a Black Episcopal Church from Sunday school on. So that isn't confusing in my mind. My husband, who was Black, elected to become Catholic. I said, 'Why would you ever go into a church that wanted to put you in the back seat—in the back pew only?' But people such as my cousin, who is many years

younger—she's in LA and they think she's Latina or hispanic. The Blacks reject her because she's about my skin color. And the Whites don't fully accept her in some cases. I've learned to be my own self. You know, I don't assert myself or put myself on other people. If they come to me or we're working together, fine. But I think that was because my parents were trying to make sure, years ago, that I wouldn't go into a situation and then be rejected. I was very sheltered. D.C. was very much a protective situation for Black children whose parents had either gone to Howard or were educated, parents who worked in the government or whatever. And we were kept away from embarrassing circumstances as we were growing up. And then by the time we were eighteen or twenty we had enough, so to speak, armor to respond to the insults or, you know, survive them. But today it's very different.

MA: Mm. Yes. Jamar.

Student: Hi, my name's Jamar. I'm currently a senior human rights major at Bard—

TT: Mhm.

Student: And it was interesting to hear you speak about Howard University because I actually wanted to go to Howard. It was my top choice school but they didn't give me any financial aid. So I ended up coming to Bard. So I'm just curious to know, what is your—I mean, today at least—opinions on historically Black colleges and universities versus predominantly White institutions for students of color? Do you feel like there's something to gain from going to an HBCU to help, you know—

TT: Well, I think it depends a lot on the individual. I've taught students here who have transferred from Black schools because they didn't think they were learning very much. But Black schools are very nurturing, and some people need that safety net—a lot of attention—growing up. I mean, my general answer would be: go to a White school because that's what the competition is, and that's what you're gonna meet. You've got to be able to function in a multicultural world. And therefore you need to understand other people, other cultures. I've got students from Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates. I've got people who probably live forty blocks from here. Someone from Appomattox County. And the person from Appomattox may never have met a non-Christian until they've come here. But when they go out to work, when they leave here, they're gonna be with all sorts of people. So that's why coming here or going to Bard, I think, is invaluable.

Student: Thank you.

TT: Mhm.

MA: Other questions that you might have wanted to ask? Uh, Hyden has another one.

Student: It's a follow-up question to what you were saying about D.C. So, I'm sure as a Bard student you heard of the 'Bard bubble'. I know you even mentioned it. Now I'm thinking just a

little bit outside of the Bard context, like with Black people in the mid-to-late sixties that were living in this D.C. area, this kind of 'Black bubble', so to speak—how was that bubble used to be a constructive tool to actually build the people coming out of that community? And how can Bard and its bubble be used to actually make people more constructive, instead of it being deconstructive, and shielding people from things they don't wanna see?

TT: That community prepared us for—to be challenged. And it gave us a grounding in history, Black culture. I mean, there was no question about 'acting White'. You acted and spoke with, so-to-speak, the King's English. Because, frequently, your father was a professor at Howard or your mother was a secretary there. I mean, there was a whole idea of—you were going to go into the White community and be just as prepared as they are. For Bard, I would say the problem is thinking the world might be or should be as liberal as many Bard students are. And you've got to meet the conservatives. I mean, I have the Republicans come to speak in my government classes just as well as the Democrats. I teach government—I don't teach Democratic government or Republican government. And you need to see the contrasting views to better understand where you are, really. So maybe listen to Rush Limbaugh. Listen to Fox News. I mean, it can be a great shock leaving Bard and finding out 'These people think so differently from me! Where did they come from?' And they'll say 'Where did you come from?' So that's what I would suggest. Alternative reading. Alternative websites that don't necessarily agree with your view of the world. Oh, someone in the back.

MA: Well—Oh, I'm sorry. Yes.

Student: Hi, my name is Eli Minga(??) I'm a sophomore written arts major. So Jamar's question \_\_\_\_\_(??) and I'm kind of curious as to what you would think about—um, there's a group, BAB: Brothers at Bard, on campus. And you mentioned, um, kind of like the, certain Black colleges have a sense of nurturing for those people that are clearly students of color. So that's essentially what BAB is, kind of like—it's a group of young men of color to get together and, you know, kind of sit in a space in which they can talk about the issues that they may face specifically as men of color, and then they can bring that to the outside community and mentor and tutor in Kingston. I wanted to know your personal opinion about a group like that at a PWI. I know you mentioned a lot that you were fine being by yourself and kind of learning from others, but in your own kind of space. So I'm curious as to what you would—(unintelligible).

TT: I think today it's very different. It's probably appropriate to have such an organization, and it may be needed. I should also add, I was one of the few Blacks who went to a public school who went to Bard. Connie from Liberia had been in private school. Chris from Chicago had come out of private school. Carla was out of the Cathedral School in New York. Denise Shaw, who followed, came out of California and a Catholic school. So, I think we were well prepared and we were trained to act individually. And that's how we thought back then. I think now it's a totally different world. There needs to be some collective bonding. If that's what you've got at Bard, that's good. You know, if there needs to be more connections to alumni/ae, maybe that should be worked out—to see success stories and to know people will get through Bard and will go on to whatever they think they're gonna do in life. But I don't think I can really judge fairly, except to

say that in these times it's probably appropriate. I mean, this university has, I don't know, somebody said fifty to one hundred organizations based on almost where you come from. So we've got the Iranians and we've got the Persians. It's two different groups. One is first-generation American and one is an international student. So it's needed in a big context. Bard is much more integrated, much more multicultural than when I was there. (laughs) Go ahead.

MA: I wanted to sort of follow-up with some of the questions that're coming from the students. Because you said you were prepared, in a way, to go into a place like Bard. It's almost counterintuitive by your segregated lifestyle.

TT: Mhm.

MA: But then you went from Bard to the University of Chicago, which you described as racist.

TT: Mhm.

MA: So how did you—how did you learn to navigate that.? What resources did you have? Was there anything coming from—now this is sort of strange—from Bard that helped you?

TT: Yes—

MA: Or were you feeling totally lost?

TT: Yes. Well, I applied to eleven graduate schools and got into nine. And got scholarships from seven out of the nine. American University and Michigan State didn't give me any money, I think. (laughs) Bard, I thought was rigorous. I took French, German. I looked at my transcript one time. I had taken almost as much history as political science. I'd written a senior project, which I think gives you a lot of confidence. And somehow, if I was good enough to get in any of these schools—Berkeley, or UPenn, or Columbia—then I didn't become dumb flying to that place and become inadequate by showing up. And Chicago gave me a hard time. They were outraged that they had made a mistake and given me Ford Foundation money, when they had another pot of money, only for Blacks. And I'm pretty sure that Bertelsmann or Koblitz said 'She's a good Black student.' They said she's a good student. And so when I got there, they didn't know I was Black. And they were very upset about it. And kept trying to take back the Ford money the entire time I was there.

Student: Wow.

TT: And I didn't know this 'til toward the end of the first year when I'm talking to Pinderhughes, who I mentioned earlier, and she said 'No, I'm on trustee money.' And I said, 'Oh, I'm on Ford money.' And then it began to dawn in my head. They had also let a guy in who had gone to Hampden-Sydney, who they gave a trustee fellowship to because they thought it was Hampton. And they thought he was gonna be Black and he was White. (laughter)

Student: That's funny.

TT: That's my introduction to Chicago. (laughs) After that, most of the professors fit the model that they had come up from the South to a great extent, or somewhere. It was the Jewish professors who took an interest in the Black students, to see them finish. Almost to a person.

MA: So you would say that the fact that you had confidence in your intellectual ability—

TT: Yes.

MA: That that had been cultivated at Bard—

TT: Yes.

MA: Is what helped you to navigate the racism that you faced at Chicago, where you felt that there was a separate pool of money for Black students—

TT: Mhm.

MA: And separate money for White students.

TT: Yes. And the Ford money was prestigious and the other money was just some money, you know. Yeah, but I think going through the senior project and all of that is a good foundation for graduate school, or any number of things, yes. Because it's your project—you've got—the outcome is what you make of it.

MA: Okay. Yeah, Dario(??) you had a question.

Student: Hello, my name is Dario \_\_\_\_\_ ?? I'm a senior history and sociology joint major. My question is, at Bard—I'm a senior so I've been here about three years, \_\_\_\_\_ (??) concerned about what's next after college, what's next after we graduate. So I was curious: in your experience at Bard, how do you feel Bard prepared you for the workforce? How do you feel like Bard prepared your peers? Or how accessible were jobs to you after you graduated Bard? A lot of my peers now are concerned about where they will work after they graduate. Or if they will be able to find a job.

TT: Well, I was really quite fortunate because I lived in Washington, D.C. and unlike my roommate who was in literature, I mean, all she could get was at a local newspaper writing the obituaries. I think the three years that I went out during Field Period to work—the fourth one, when I had the senior project, I didn't, I read—but I worked for National Geographic Society and they said, 'Well we've never heard of Bard.' I said 'It's like Antioch.' They said 'Fine, you're hired.' (all laughing) I worked for then-Senator Bobby Kennedy of New York State, then I worked for Society for International Development. But I had those opportunities because I was in an

urban area in Washington, D.C. And I think the work experience plus the classroom experience matures you. Because you meet new people, you meet challenges, expectations. Bobby Kennedy's office was fascinating because we went back to school approximately February 15th, and at the end of that February I believe he announced he was running for President. Which is what I suspected all along, given what I could understand of the office. And I worked with the "Boiler Room" group, all those women. But I think it's professors talking about where they went to graduate school or why you may need preparation beyond Bard, so you can begin to think of a career path. Or why travel may be the next thing for you. Or whatever.

MA: So, yeah Bard had a long Field period—

TT: Yes.

MA: It was six weeks between the semesters then. And were you graded? I know at Oberlin they used to. That was part of your curriculum, what you did during—you had choices, you could come up with something and I think it would have to be approved. It's sort of like the internship that you're encouraged to do during the summer. But could you explain that Field Period?

TT: No, um, (laughs) it started with a card file that was totally useless, which was kept in the registrar's office. And so I gave up on that and went through what were then the yellow pages and did anything international. (laughs) And then I thought of Bobby Kennedy. It was like a criteria sheet the employer had to sign off. They said it was a satisfactory work experience on their part. And I don't think we got a grade. I'm not sure. It may have been satisfactory or pass, fail, or something like that. But something went back to the school, as I remember, each year.

MA: Now there's, of course, a career and development office—

TT: It's needed.

MA: But that's sort of the answer. It's an internship.

TT: Internships are invaluable nowadays, yes.

MA: Okay. Any other questions? Coming from anybody. Well, then we want to just give you an opportunity to just say anything that you would like to say. Something we haven't covered. Anything as you think about your Bard experience, as you think about your Bard experience generally, as you think about your Bard experience as a woman of color, anything.

TT: Well, I think the diversity is a huge plus. And I'm glad to see it. I think there's a little more emphasis on athletics and that's what keeps you healthy when you're in situations of a lot of stress. To be able to play tennis or walk or ride a bicycle or do any number of things. I think Bard has only gotten better. With the building of the science building which is absolutely beautiful, with the expansion of science literacy and all of that. The only other thing I would add is that

when you get a job, if you're in the DC area I have an apartment that you can come rent. And I will get on the alumni/ae bulletin thing on that to offer it to Bard graduates.

MA: Oh that's good. Good to know.

Student: Thank you.

MA: How about people who want to do research at the Library of Congress?

TT: The Library of Congress is a huge operation. I think they still require a library card.

MA: (unintelligible; laughs)

TT: You need to plan to—they have to go pull the book so it takes time to get that book to you and it's not gonna be a fifteen minute thing. Plan a few days in there if you're doing research there.

MA: Well, I think that apartment offer is fabulous.

TT: (laughs)

MA: Thank you very much.

TT: Well, thank you.

MA: Alright—

TT: And any of them can email me. You've got my email. You can give it to them. And if I can be of help, you know, I know students who are getting jobs—or were, at least, before Trump came in. (laughs)

Students: (all laughing)

TT: But if I can help you, I will try to do that.

MA: Okay, thank you so much.

Students: Thank you! (all clapping)

TT: Thank you.

MA: Bye.

TT: Bye.

*Transcribed by Helena Isabella Haid in the fall of 2022.*