

History of Black Women at the University of Maryland
Interviewee: Kecia Hansard
Interviewers: Rachelle Sims and Shantel Frederick
Date: November 20, 2017

Rachelle: So, we are your interviewers Rachelle and—

Shantel: Shantel.

Rachelle: Shantel. And please state your name.

Hansard: Kecia Hansard.

Rachelle: And the date.

Hansard: Monday, November 20th, 2017.

Rachelle: Okay, perfect, thank you. So, we want to start with just telling us a little bit about yourself and like, you know, how you grew up, your family and what led you to UMD.

Hansard: So, I'm the biological oldest of two, my sister also went to the University of Maryland. I grew up in Boston, Massachusetts. And I say biological oldest because my parents ran a halfway house when I was a toddler. So, twelve delinquent-ish boys, so boys that had been in and out of some trouble and the state had removed them from their homes. Some of them had been in and out of the foster care, but they were all teenagers, so everybody was in high school, toddler me, and a puppy. I don't know what my mother was thinking about. That seems like a whole lot to be managing. But those young men, now adults, have been in and out of our lives so I always say it that way because I think sometimes when you meet a random white guy who is my brother, he's not random he is my brother. We have a whole family relationship, right. So, my parents were activists. My father made film. So, for early years of *Sesame Street*, the *Electric Company* things on PBS, he made the shorts probably some of the things that you guys might have seen like in history class and science class things like that my father made educational film mostly. My mom was a nurse, public health nurse, so they both were very grounded in the community. My mother wouldn't let my father join the Black Panthers officially. He had a family and all these boys and this halfway house, right? But he made film for the Black Panthers. So, that set a great foundation, I think, for who I am and things that I believe in in terms of social justice; the kind of career I thought I was going to have. So, I was going to school during the busing riots. And if you're not familiar you can Google that, Boston busing riots. It is disturbing. It is grown people throwing bricks and rocks at buses, children just trying to get 'cross town. Better education. We were part of forced

integration. My parents put me in a voluntary busing program that took me to the suburbs, so no more stoning and things like that. But still, I was on a bus for three hours every day. And so, that was all of my, I guess, fourth grade through high school I was bused outside of the city. So, then I came to Maryland. I had two big options when I was choosing colleges. I could go to Syracuse. The snow was really deep even for Boston standards. It was insane. And that same week we came to visit Maryland, cherry blossoms! [Rachelle and Shantel chuckle] Other black students, no snow! I chose this one. So, I was part of a scholarship program with the local paper and the college split part of the cost for the scholarship program for journalism students, so that's how I ended up here. So, I think that probably encompasses maybe sort of how did I get here parts.

Rachelle: So, our next question, so, thinking back to when you first arrived on campus, what were you feeling and what were you expecting?

Hansard: So, I skipped a grade. I went to what would best be like a charter school before I went to traditional grade school. So, pluses and minuses. Pluses, it was like the Montessori system so if you excelled in an area you moved up. Bad when you go to a structured school system it's like, where do you put this kid? So, I skipped a grade. I ended up coming to college when I was 17. I think I was all things that everybody else, you know, you're terrified, do you let anybody else know you're terrified? I could've walked all the way back to Massachusetts before I ran into a friend, you know. So, everybody was going to be new and just. I think at that time I was really hopeful; it was the fall of 1984. Don't even tell me that you weren't born because I have pretty much figured that out. Or that your parents hadn't been born or they hadn't met or any of those things. Yeah, no, it was different, a lot of things were different. D.C. in that fall if you were 18 by Halloween, you could go to all the clubs and drink in all the bars because you were already 18 and you are being grandfathered in D.C., not Maryland, Virginia, just D.C. But if you were 17, then you had a much longer wait to go to proper dance clubs and all of that, so. But the campus here was a lot more... I think I was surprised. It was a lot more racially segregated than I thought it was going to be. It was not a hundred percent. But there were still a lot of incidents like, you know, the random selection freshman dorm roommate. Oh, it's a black girl and people are upset about that. And so, I was a little surprised by that. Like coming from the North, there were a lot of things I expected. But one of the benefits of coming from the North, if somebody doesn't like you, you're not guessing about that. Whereas in this mid-Atlantic stretch of territory, there's a lot of microaggressions, and there's a lot of uncertainty, a lot of gray. And so you couldn't tell if standoffish was racist, standoffish was shy. You know, there was a lot. I felt like we did a lot of interpretation. But for the most part, you know, I look over my whole Maryland career, I think because I was a journalism student and I think because I was also dance—I started

as a double major—I was always going to be in a position of having the opportunity of having friends that were going to make diverse whether there were more gay, openly gay students in the dance department, more white students and then even dividing white up through journalism. Like my experience was, I think, a little bit more diverse than some of my classmates who I know graduated but like the only people they're connected to from Maryland are also black. And there's nothing wrong with that, I just left with sort of a bigger diversity, but still mostly black.

Shantel: I just had a question to piggyback off of something you said. The freshman dorm policy. Could you explain that a little bit more?

Hansard: It wasn't a policy.

Shantel: It wasn't a policy, okay.

Hansard: We didn't know who our dorms—well, maybe it was a sort of a policy. So, we didn't find out who our roommates were, you showed up to move in and I lived in Centerville, it was all female as God intended to not be coed [Hansard sighs] Very disturbing. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] It was called the nunnery for a reason. It was quieter, it was cleaner, and I chose that, just putting it all out there! Other colleges, like my friends that went to UMass, they knew who their—and a lot of colleges—you knew who your roommate was going to be. And then you could contact them over the summer. And Maryland wasn't quite there yet. So, you moved in and there was another empty bed and at some point over the weekend somebody is going to fill that. So, there were other situations where people were waiting for the roommate to show up and she ended up being black and people were really upset. And they and their parents would go and complain to the RD and all of that. Some things are still the same, like if you've lived on campus you know the first couple of weeks are really you don't know who's coming and who isn't going to show up for a variety of reasons. You've got overflow still. We had overflow. Triples in some of the dorms, you know. So, all of that is still the same, but we didn't get to connect with each other. So, there were people that did not want to be with a black roommate. My roommate just happened to potluck be black. Just by the roll of the dice. But that's just like a one off. I was in school at a time, once you decided what your major was going to be, I was already accepted into the College of Journalism and I like the second or third class of being accepted to Maryland and then into your major like engineering and business had already done that but then I'm part of the next wave where other non-technical majors—like I had to audition ahead of time for dance to be a major. So there was an audition part of the application, and then journalism they did a second screening so you can be admitted to Maryland. It is sort of the same now where you probably have classmates that are pre, right? But, once you knew what your major was and you

started meeting black students, and other students of color, they would tell you, don't take professor so-and-so's class he's never going to call on you. And if that factored into your grade, you were already at a deficit. Right.

Rachelle: Was that a common thing you encountered with the teachers, in that set up?

Hansard: So, in a way, no because then I listened. There were a lot of things if you tell me once I'm going to just take you on your word and just believe that and not try to do it, you know, the hard way, if you will. So, I tended to take the classes that were not going to have those faculty members who, you know, if I could avoid it. Sometimes it's professors, staff until the day of class you don't know who it's going to be, right, and then if it turns out to be a jerky person then you try to do an add/drop and switch it if that happens and sometimes you can't. So, I tried to avoid anybody that was just sort of like don't take this guy because it's just going to be horrible. And it was usually a man, always white. Right. I explain to people always the whole time for me being at Maryland, we were really like Hampton within Maryland. We were sort of like an HBCU and then the big ole Maryland around us. I went to school at a time when if you passed a black student you spoke. And so, you all are in a different environment where you can pass each other and nobody speaks. Not the knowing nod, not the what's up, not even a glance up sometimes, and that just to me is just amazing. I give extra points when I'm not on campus and you all say, good morning ma'am, ugh, that means I'm old. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] But even just a head nod or an acknowledgement, you know? In my head, I'm playing this other game where I'm like you get an extra point. So, if I see you coming and you just look happy enough I get a point because you look happy. If you are wearing something cute and I'm like I could totally rock that [Rachelle and Shantel laugh], you get a point now we are even. And then if you say hello to me or something, bonus, we're all winning [Rachelle and Shantel laugh]. So, it's a silly game that I play. But that's what it was. We knew the black faculty. We knew the black staff people cause there weren't so overwhelmingly so many, they came to some of our programs. We referred each other to them. So, like Dr. Ross I was never going to have his class, Animal Science not my thing. Totally respect it, not going to have it. But he knew my first name and I knew him cause I knew all the students that he mentored, he came to some of our events, he was on panels and things like that so it was like that. What I appreciate is that people were looking out for us, like this guy's just going to be an ass, don't even take his class. And I appreciate that. You all still have the Big Brother/Big Sister program, right. And so, you know, people are still very proud to say this is my big this is my little. Right. I was part of that too. And so, but those are those lasting things you always hope you have a good one or you adopt somebody else if your big just happens to be a sham. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] It happens. Sometimes people

sign up for things and they're not really committed. But having that support really helped, I think, all of us just sort of make it through. Depending upon who the editor was going to be for *The Diamondback*, you might not get great stories. So, that's really hard too. You're a sophomore and you're trying to be, you know, a daily reporter, you want to work up to editor. So, you haven't published anything yet, maybe, so they're gonna try you out with something smaller. So sometimes you can't tell, it's like I'm low on the poll because I'm like an underclassman and whatever. But by your senior year, if you're as talented or your grades are better and you're still not getting stories, that's a thing. So sometimes even whoever the editor in chief was going to be or the department editor, sports, news, entertainment, that was going to set a tone too. You know, we were always mindful and trying to stay in front of all of that.

Shantel: So, speaking of *The Diamondback*, can you tell us more about your experience there, like topics that you were able to talk more about through *The Diamondback* and such things?

Hansard: Yeah so... as a freshman, I joined the *Black Explosion* which I know is in an iteration through the Nyumburu [Cultural Center] now. But Maryland Media—not to give you a history lesson, but it's going to feel like it, but not really—Maryland Media sits as the umbrella on top of everything. WMUC the radio station, the old TV station, whatever that was called, and then *Mitzpeh* was the Jewish student newspaper, the *Black Explosion*, and then *La Voz Latina*, and *The Diamondback*, I think those were all of everything. So, when Maryland Media, like the food co-op, became independent from campus they were able to generate more for revenue, they were able to change technology for layout and things like that. It was good for it to be separate from campus anyway. Right. There's always pluses and minuses, and then what campus did was rented that space at pretty dirt cheap because it was still going to be sort of like a good experience for the students to either work at the food co-op or do whatever. So, I started with the *Black Explosion* in my freshman year. There was a vote to change the name. I actually didn't vote to change the name to *The Eclipse*, but I went with it, seeing things in a new light because our readership was really way down, and they were thinking it was going to be a way to increase readership and by changing the name. But still it was still going to be black messaging. We also changed the format to a black news magazine which meant that we could get—it didn't have to be all hard news, so we could do a special topic issue. We were biweekly. Okay. I was lucky that the things I covered—back to your question—for *The Diamondback*, I tried sports because it was required for our class and it was hell. I don't know football. And it went like this: A big guy, that's everybody [Rachelle and Shantel laugh], like it was just so bad. Just think of any kind of skit and I was just right on top of that. I asked for the sports that I could cover but other people were doing it. They are like,

oh our football guy is sick so you're doing it, and it was horrible. And I had to have somebody come in. At least I have the numbers, the right numbers of the people, you know, he's a running back. They were all running. The back? [Rachelle and Shantel laugh loudly] Like it was just a disaster. Right. So, that just sounds very stereotypical. Luckily, I like other sports, so it's not that, but. I wrote some opinion pieces with colleagues, so sometimes with my friend Rachel. And so, Jewish and black women uniting to write a piece. Sometimes with another student who was also African-American, Rhonda Williams. And it depended. Mostly I wrote stories that were hanging out in the artsy fartsy space or they were probably going to be part of just general news coverage, so I wasn't really assigned to a one desk. And I actually kind of liked that because I was still—so I did *Diamondback* while I was still writing for *The Eclipse*. That's a lot. I took a semester to try out the writing news for the WMUC. A little bit of a mix. Mostly I enjoyed it. The guy was matched with, so I wrote the copy, he read the copy. He was broadcast, I was news editorial. He'd be all hung over on Friday mornings and it made for really—like he was late, like we were missing deadlines, and it's so stressful. And then this was broadcast through like the student union campus buildings, you had the opportunity to turn it on and turn it off. But it was just, c'mon, dude I need your Thursday night not to be part of my, right. But I think probably the consistency of *The Diamondback* has been coverage, some of it's been political, there's always been comics, Aaron McGruder launched while I was still an undergrad, *The Boondocks*. If you don't know it, Google it. Oh yeah, that guy, right. And I liked not being assigned to a one desk. So, if there was a speaker coming, Gwendolyn Brooks, the poet, I could put in a request to do that. But I also didn't want to do just the *Black Beat* for *The Diamondback* because I was already working for the news magazine. So, you get a lot of information I think from advisors, from your parents, from all kinds of people. And when I started to look at the portfolios of like the *Baltimore Sun* scholars and the people that went to *The New York Times*, and you know I'm really now starting to pay attention to the people in front of me could be making a hiring decision. You know, this is all pre-digital. So, our portfolios were photocopies of a bunch of different stories but then you had a book where you could flip through and show somebody. Everybody that was getting hired and getting good stuff had a mix. So, it wasn't just black, it wasn't just sports, it wasn't just—to cover, to show that you actually had some diverse talent and reach. So, that's what I was really trying to do.

Rachelle: Was there any pressure from *The Diamondback* to only cover black stories? Did they have a range of diverse mix?

Hansard: Oh, yeah. You go to a news editorial meeting, the BSU is having a protest, Kecia. Nah, son, I did that the last time. Because when you cover a black story and you're black, guess who's mad. Black people. Yes. You didn't

put this part in there. Well it wasn't like the most relevant part, or you're forgetting that my stuff gets edited and it ends up on the floor. So, there's a little bit of that. Because the black community was also so close, I ran—there were, I think at least three of us that worked on this story because there had been missing money from then it was the Pan-Atlantic Council, but now it's the National Pan-Atlantic Council. That's going to be close. You're accusing a classmate of not having money, let that shake out. You're not a judge and jury. You know, there's a situation, there's no money. It's an ongoing investigation. That's news. Put it to press. Because the community is so small, it's really easy for people to be antagonistic. I didn't do that much with that story. I mostly was going through, with somebody else, going through data and where the bank accounts weren't reconciling. But the lead writer, he got the most heat for it. Right. But yes, *The Diamondback*... I think as students, we would push back. I would cover sports, but I was always saying, let me cover something I know. I had been a gymnast, give me that. Poor gymnastics team wasn't that great so they didn't get a lot of coverage, that wasn't a thing. But I think I did like two stories. But it was fun just to be back in it. But you did have to push back, just because I'm black I don't have to get the black story. The other thing is you learn so much when you go into another community because you're supposed to be reporting what's happening and not your feeling, that's an opinion piece and so people told me really early on try to get into where you are not going to party, at a club that you don't know, young Republicans. What the heck, I don't want to do that. But then, you just—wow, these are people that feel differently and where they're passionate. And you do end up picking up some things. And we were really clear, we were lucky too because our media passes actually got us into a lot of things. So, there was a while where our media passes looked pretty much like the same ones that like the White House would use, or, you know, for other bigger things. You could get to a Senate hearing unless it was closed. I mean that's a long way to go on the metro and all that. But I mean we were able to... so for a while student media. And this was all before 9/11 and all kinds of other different things but if they had space, you could cover a story. And where that was helpful, I think for all the colleges here, is that we were able to get some clippings and do some things on the Hill because we are so close to D.C. because it is part of like a classroom we were getting grades for that. But yeah, *The Diamondback* definitely had a heavy hand in what you were—sometimes, so some people fought back a little bit and other people just went along with it I suppose.

Rachelle: But you definitely were writing back then?

Hansard: [Sighs] Yeah, I think I was in a—I never thought about it, but it was sort of a place of privilege because I was already writing for a biweekly. So, as a consistent staff writer I was always going to have something. And if it was

a longer-term project then it might be something I was working on longer. Like community service that athletes were doing. I don't have to publish that October first. That can wait and be shelved. But I was going to get bylines. So.

Rachelle: Did you feel any pressure as a black woman on *Eclipse*?

Hansard: The *Eclipse*? Uh-huh.

Rachelle: *Eclipse* especially for not even the topics you were choosing, but how you wrote, or how you came across, or what the critique was about?

Hansard: Yeah, so when you work with an editor, and so, it's usually upperclassmen. And we had a mix of men and women, but certain editors had a—for *The Eclipse*, we had the news editor, an entertainments editor, a sports editor, I don't know, that probably was our big three. Whoever that editor was every year—so I started as a freshman then that changes over the next year as a sophomore and junior year I became one of the editors and then I just retained going on as a senior. But, you see somebody else's style and then they help you and they help you like, that's inflammatory we can't publish that. That's a great editor right there. Fox, I'm talking to you if you're listening. But also, sometimes they would help you figure out scope. So, it's not just going to cover a Klan rally. Oh, yeah that happened. But what is the takeaway? Is it just that they're having it? Or are you listening for what they're talking about, or how inflammatory, or how big it was, or how close it is to campus or what else is happening? You know, the Jewish Student Union and Hillel is right behind us. They were upset that Louis Farrakhan came to campus. I stepped away from the second story because my sister was introducing Farrakhan because she was on the BSU. And as a freshman now that's going to be weird. My byline, Hansard, she's going to be quoted. It's going to just. All right. So, I let her have that and I stepped aside. But to talk to the Jewish student leaders, saying what's your deal? Because he's black because he's Muslim, you're assuming that he is anti-Semitic, you know, and not rising to even trying to get a sense. I think so much of what so many of us were trying to do was to make sure that we had a voice; to make sure that there was sort of a watchdog. If the, you know, the police are better about detailing if this suspect is of Latin descent if they're white if they're black or whatever. Because it's helpful for all of us if you're somebody is breaking into a dorm, who are you trying to at least be on the lookout for. But you should be looking out for anybody breaking into a dorm. But I think there were a lot of things that weren't covered that were just really good. Like one of our pushbacks, this wasn't my fight, but how come *The Diamondback* is only covering them at that time is Miss Black Unity pageant. No shade to pageants, no shade to Nyumburu or whatever. But there were so many other great programming going on that had

nothing to do with that kind of portrayal of women. So your biggest spotlight is step show and around the corner is going to be Miss Black Unity. That's all we do. Whole community services are going on here. There's a student-led sleep-in that Phi Beta Sigma's doing, there were all these others. You know, so sometimes I think it was really good to have somebody else there to realize like, oh when you look at the whole year the coverage we've done has been—right. Yeah.

Shantel: So, in your journalism career in general at the UMD campus, what was the piece that you were most proud of or was the hardest to do? It could be either—from any paper, anything.

Hansard: I've already covered my failed football. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] So horrible. I guess proudest, if I made them sort of a series. In like, over two and a half years I got to meet Dizzy Gillespie, I got to meet Audre Lord, Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, and Gwendolyn Brooks. So, as a reader, to have these black poets all here it was just great. So, this is before selfies and all of that. [Rachelle and Shantel chuckle] But if you're covering the story then you can work it into your advantage to have a little time whoever that person is. And if you do your homework and you read her stuff, or you always your whole life have been reading any of their stuff, then it just makes it that much more phenomenal. Because then for ten minutes I'm in conversation with Nikki Giovanni and it doesn't matter what that's for, if that's for a grade. That's my moment. So, I think there's that. We had a basketball player, we did a series on the other side of sports. So, not just the high scores, but other things that students either were dealing with or what they've overcome, or just interests or special hobbies. And they were all black athletes and I interviewed a young man—young man, he was older than I was—Brian Williams who just had an incredibly tumultuous life, and the short of it is that he was incredibly sensitive, incredibly thoughtful, and very misunderstood. He was like 6'8" and not quite as aggressive as they wanted. And so, there's just a lot of pressure in all these teams to win and all of this stuff. And that's actually not who he was inside. And when later on, he was murdered by this crazy—some horrible scheme gone wrong. But he was just very misunderstood. But, you know, when I'm interviewing him he's very much into the arts and I said, well I have to end this by one o'clock because my class is taking a trip to the museum, and he asked if he could come. And I'm like, I guess so. I mean we're just going to take the Metro down or whatever. But that was his passion point and he had such a good time just with other college kids. It was like he had an afternoon off, they didn't have practice, they weren't traveling, like one of those things so I think that's something I was certainly proud of. And it's not hard-hitting news. Some of that is selfish but I don't know. I thought we were lucky to have those women writers come. And the beauty of having them all come is that they were sometimes required by classes like English classes or whatever would

require people to go. But I know that everybody left maybe a little bit differently because all those women: super smart, quick to curse. But relating it back to something that might be important to young people. You have a voice, you have thoughts, put 'em down. Keep 'em here, share them, you know, and so I feel like everybody changed with that. I think the hardest thing I ever did, it was for a class. Two of us took a big project and separated it. We looked at sexual assault on campus. I took the people who supported victims of sexual assault, the rape crisis line, counselors on campus, student volunteers, the trainers that got people ready to handle this. And then my good friend, she took the side of trying to hear the experience of the victims and we were just spent at the end. You know, 'cause the assailants are people that we see every day maybe because you don't always know who they are. You might hear a bad behavior thing of a male student and now you're skirting that guy—maybe that's a poor choice of words—but you're avoiding him if you know that person but you don't know because you can't really confront and so many of the victims wouldn't. So, that was just incredibly painful. We had to do a final presentation and we'd already been given the go-ahead from the professor to share a big thing. But since we were doing different, but it was going to overlap, we were going to present on the same day. It was just a lot. It was a good learning experience and I'm also glad that we worked out how we were going to separate the project so it would be related but not the same.

Rachelle: You mentioned there was a Klan rally, and a sleep-in, but were there other—like today, I think these past couple of years recently on campus there's been racial incidents that have been well publicized, when you were on campus, I'm pretty sure there were—

Hansard: We don't have enough beverages or time, yeah. So, you asked about class—not really classroom, but the newsroom, maybe, if there were like tensions or things there. So, *The Eclipse* was every other Monday is when the paper would come out. Which meant if I covered a story on Saturday, put it to bed—that means we hit final, that means it's set, the layout is done, it's ready to print wherever—it might not actually run for a week. So, I could put it to bed early but the release date. Right. Because it's every two weeks. A white student stole my story. Oh, I'm sorry, we came out on Tuesdays. She took my story and it ran in *The Diamondback* on a Monday. Word for word. My story comes out on Tuesday. So, the professor calls who in? Not both of us, me. So, plagiarism was a big deal and you could get kicked out, losing my scholarship, all those things. Like I had to climb the chain so high. The dean was out of town. The assistant deputy dean or whoever that guy was and my adviser and like anybody else who would listen to me, I'm like, for real for real. This is just, right. She [the girl who plagiarized] didn't want to take the meeting. And I went back to the assistant dean and now the dean is back. I'm like, I'm not

losing my scholarship because this white lady is not going to talk to me. And then when it was all said and done the white girl was crying. I don't know if she was on scholarship because you can look at the kill date and that was what I was saying, look at when this story was put to bed. It's the kill date, that's final. Of course it was me. I had done it. We all have a code. Done and done. That lady didn't apologize. In the end that lady gave me a C. Now, I've got to fight a class grade. So, I went back to the dean and I'm like, I don't want you all to hate me but I have a feeling we're going to have some hate in the room. And that's hard for a young person to have to do that. And luckily I had a really good relationship with the deputy dean and then the big dean just—I don't know why—he just ended up liking me, whatever. But when you can't get in front of an audience and it feels like every single ticking, you know, like people are looking' at you because it's such a small community. So, I'm like, somebody is going to not hire me because this woman is just—because all of our professors were still working for *USA Today* and, you know, so they were teaching and a lot of them were adjuncts. Yeah, so in a lot of these fields you have people that are still connected. It was a nightmare. So, I had to do an independent project for somebody else just to prove that I gotten the foundations done. Whose got time for that? Then they were like, you're gonna have to pay for that. I'm like, this is biased and just crazy. So, then people—again black faculty and staff—they were just like, go to the general counsel's office; you're about to be bringing a thing. So I didn't want to have to go through judge board all all those, you know. So, it just ended up being like a much bigger thing. And so, that's really hard. In relation to sort of what is going on now and then some of the things that we had. So, the noose thing I don't remember from college at all. I remember a noose hanging off of a tree. I started working here in [20]01 so that might have been in like [20]03, [20]04. But earlier in my working at Maryland the second time. But like it wouldn't be uncommon for—so, in the old days when you pledged the fraternity and sorority you would greet the dorm. So, you'd stand out, all dressed the same, that was still allowed. I mean it was all in public, so this whole new situation where nobody knows who's online, except everybody shows up a sign that says, way to go Molly! And I'm all like, if this is all secret how do y'all know to put Molly's name and number, all right then. Right. And, then the parents are there, so it's all a big secret until... [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] And you're giggling so you've been out there too. All right, good. And I'm the city's adviser so I am well aware of Greek things and **probity** shows and coming out shows and initiatives, whatever's, right. But drunk white guys would throw half full beer cans and bottles at us as we came around the dorms. That's not only annoying and racist, that's pretty dangerous. My first semester on campus, my very first weekend, moved into the dorm. My roommate is a junior so she didn't have to be at new-people-move-in time so she's not there. She's black. I still don't know that. Four of us from the hall went to a frat party because we got fliers under our doors or whatever and then they ran us out of

Kappa Alpha across Route 1. So, we're running into oncoming traffic because we're focused on what's behind us. Now, I grew up in Boston where I have seen some foolishness. Yeah. So, we had things that were still happening. So, it's not just people not wanting to live with you, and not just people not wanting to be by you, but, you know, asking you to touch your hair. You know, you think of all the things that we've heard as just stereotypical. But then there are other things too where you know professors weren't calling on people, or they gloss over your contribution, or the team didn't want to make you a leader on a group project. You know, there was always room for all of that. Not always for everybody and not in every space, but certainly—like we knew the five black students that joined the IFCPAJ fraternities and sororities: Paddy, Darrel, Tyler. For real! When you can name the people, right! [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] That's a big difference now. Some of those fraternities and sororities are a lot more inclusive. Inclusivity is defined differently by a lot of people. I use food metaphors in the work that I do like, inclusion is when you make lasagna, separately ricotta cheese, meh. But when you bring it together with, I don't know, a sauce and some spices and some noodles, suddenly it's amazing right. So, I'm being very flippant, but usually that gets people going. And then I can go deeper if that makes any sense. This was all still a lot of not bringing people together. Still a lot of diversity. That's not inclusion, that's just a lot of different stuff altogether. I think the sleeping-out for the homeless was phenomenal. It was very black in the beginning. So, the Phi Beta Sigma hosted it. You had people pledge a certain amount for the number of hours you were going to sleep outside. And they did it in November.

Shantel: It's cold. Freezing.

Hansard: Mom was so salty she's like, you are picking all of things to just get a pneumonia! [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] Right? We built a shanty and so you can Google that as well because that'll come up in the archives right in McKeldin Mall. We wanted the university and the board of regents to divest from South Africa. No more Coca-Cola please. And that really has set some tensions for—we used to be a Coca-Cola school. But Coca-Cola was a big investor. We wanted us to **[unclear]** the university, but we wanted that money not to perpetuate the apartheid system. I got walking pneumonia and I was really glad that my parents lived ten hours away because that makes a difference between, I will come up, don't make me come up there! [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] Cause you had a ten-hour head start on that, right? And she gotta pack a bag, right? And probably stop at least twice on the road. Right, right, right. So, that's what? fourteen hours. You start thinking like that, right? Yeah. So, there are things that you can giggle about, but then there are other things that were just really serious. You know, and people were mean to athletes; people are still mean to athletes. Oh you're just here cause you're a big athlete jock guy.

No, I'm kinda here because I speak four languages and this is my third bachelor's degree. And so, you know, that is something that isn't—we haven't even talked about the gender stuff yet. There were some journalism professors that were like, you want to go to a magazine and write style? I was thinking like news editorial at a magazine but I like style enough, but that's, you know, as a consumer not as a profession. The nooses I don't remember. Fights were tough also. Fighting hard because most of the parties I went to were gonna be with black students and we still had parties on campus, you guys do not have parties on campus. The security is now too high. But like, you would pay a dollar or two dollars for the party and now you're laughing. I'm laughing too. So, the student union, Preinkert, the downstairs which I think is no longer that big function space where they have parties. But you just needed like a box for the DJ to come. It's a party, right? So, there were the fights that students would have that's within group. And then other things that might be more like a football game because people were drunk in the stands, and then those looked often more racially based, but not always. Because sometimes those were fans from other—so, it was hard to tell, like the student sections, I think my sister's year they moved the student sections so they wouldn't be side by side. So, the visiting students and us. That was never somebody's great idea.

Greene: And how about the Klan rally, like where was that?

Hansard: Klan rally. There were a couple, but the one that I covered was on Pennsylvania Avenue. It was supposed to be a march, and ended up not being a march, it was a gathering. Oh, I went with a photographer, which is good because then the Klan took the Amtrak back to wherever they're from or we would all have been at Union Station Metro. It just would have been a nightmare.

Rachelle: So, it was like non-UMD students? Like no UMD students were involved?

Hansard: I don't know. So, it wasn't on campus. I think things that were more tenuous on campus were like really conservative Jewish groups that were pro-Israel, anti-Palestinian and that didn't sit well with a lot of our more left-leaning black brothers and sisters and others. Young Republicans always just seemed to not bring joy when they tend to have a big rally, but, you know. They're bringing joy but it's not like universally everybody's joy, how about that? [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] There were some NRA things, people who were really very—so, when I graduated George Bush the father was the president. So, we also had a lot of people that did a lot of work, you all seem to have more of a community that's engaged with prisoners' rights, we had a lot of people that were very focused on what happened to military personnel because we were still within draft. So, my classmates were still draftable because they'd already registered with the

government. That ended while I think my sister was in college. I would have to look that up. But then who is making decisions about a cold war? Cause those guys could be called up at any time, so that was going to be a different— the sleep-out with the homeless thing: I think my last year in school, it was a lot more diverse and integrated because I think they partnered with a white fraternity. I did it at least three times. But it definitely changed understanding because we also had a training session like, who was homeless? It's not who you always think is having the experience. They encouraged people not to eat all day so that you would know hungry. They wanted no alcohol. We don't want you out there drinking. Which I give the Sigmas a lot of credit for because that could certainly have turned into like a party outside. There could be no fire. That was the agreement with campus. But sometimes you also don't have access to warmth. And so they really wanted you to feel. And there were subsequent other programming that different groups would also do: collecting food, going in and helping to clean up areas. Right.

Shantel: What would you say was like—I don't know if I want to say safe haven, but like the place, was Nyumburu [cultural center] still the place for black unification?

Hansard: So, Nyumburu used to be in South Campus dining hall. Above it. I know! And then a group of students protested that and they marched down to the president's house and my sister just happened to be the black student union president there, so. [Rachelle and Shantel chuckle] But people in her class, including my sister Maïga, were on a team that looked at what the design elements were going to be for Nyumburu. Like what the space was going to be used for. They definitely wanted to also have the multi-purpose room. What we have now, but now has a kitchen. We didn't used to have a kitchen, but we did have a room with mirrors so you could have a dance class or a fitness class or whatever. Tables and chairs you could move around. The old space didn't have a stage. That's always going to make the viewing better to have a stage. The AV stuff I think they accrued over time but it was all going to be in there. But to have the student offices with the staff offices. And then conference rooms for meetings and things like that. But if you look on the outside, I think it's four different kinds of deliberate African influence art. There's tile directions on the top, on the bottom when you look towards whatever that overhang is—

Shantel: The dome thing?

Hansard: The dome thing. Right, yeah. So, the next time you go—because most of us just walk in and it's break or it's nighttime you can't tell, but there were things that were very, very dedicated. That director, the very first director, Otis Williams, saw me walking in Nyumburu; there's that glass case on the left side with those drums. He was a percussionist. He taught the jazz

class. The amphitheater was his idea because from that amphitheater, if you hit the drum, you could hear it across the mall. So he wanted that call and response. It's actually quite sweet. But for us it was a combination. So in OMESI there used to be a man named Charles Richardson who just happened to be a member of Kappa Alpha Psi. But Charles was the guy that we all knew by first name. And Charles was the person who would look out his window and say, hey, what's your name? Uh Kecia, sir. Kecia sir, come inside. I don't know you. Oh I'm a freshman, I've been here for two weeks. You know, you have no idea and people are giggling in the window. But he was the person that looked to see if you were walking by yourself and you didn't seem attached. Do you have a big brother, a BSU big brother? No sir, I do not. And he would write that down. I did a one-day orientation. I didn't do the two-day. If you did the two-day, you got to sign up for the BSU Big Brother Program, Big Sister Program. I did the one-day. So when the administrators figured that out, anybody who didn't have [a brother or sister] they figured a way to get back in. So he found this nice junior who was as nerdy as I was, and that guy didn't really have time to commit, so he goes, all right, me and my roommate will be your big brothers; we're juniors. Oh you know what that meant. I'll tell you it means: juniors might buy ya stuff. Could be a burger, could be an ice cream because they feel bad because they don't necessarily have the time and you can kind of make them feel bad a little bit. But I'm still friends with those guys and they did an awesome job but that was like a big part of it. I'm trying to think about Linda Lenoir, have you met her?

Interviewer: No.

Hansard: In the university career center? Okay so she's been here for thirty-five years. She is amazing! But she's another person. So there were those people. Dr. Zeigler was here. He was in OMESI originally. So between OMESI and Nyumburu there were people. You know, there were graduate assistants and other black faculty and staff. Do you know that we have that here on campus? Because you're not faculty or staff but that's another thing they would do outreach.

Rachelle: So, I'm going to stop to make sure our devices are recording.

[48:58-49:07]

Rachelle: So, from our research, Reagan was also President while you were in school, right? Was there any conflict with that? Cause I know Reagan was—with the black students.

Hansard: Yeah, we were not, as a group, Reagan fans. I'm trying to remember, Mike Dukakis ran against—I can't even remember all the people who ran against Reagan and Bush. Bush won but I voted for Dukakis and I can't

remember who ran against Reagan. But... [phone dings] I'm not gonna say it's easy to rally behind a guy. But I mean it's sort of—if he's not Barack Obama he's not for you, right? That's what *Saturday Night Live*, if you didn't see that skit this weekend it's amazing. Chance the Rapper. Yeah, you gotta watch it. Yes. Reagan did—there are so many things, gosh, so many layers. So we were the college students who would go home and see crack eating away at our communities cause crack hadn't existed. Reagan was the first person to do something really loopy to subsidize student aid and loans. And so there were a lot of black middle-class families that were getting caught in that crunch. I think that a lot of the HBCU's were also feeling the decrease because students were opting to go to state schools because it was going to be a money thing. So I was admitted also to Hampton but they didn't give me any financial package. I can't blight my family, you know? So, I think that there were a lot of things going on: cost of oil, unemployment. Unemployment was horrific when I graduated from school, and then a war started right after. So, I mean just a lot of things were just working, it felt like, against a lot of people. All of the news magazines were starting to print less and go to digital and we hadn't been trained—that's not where we were. We knew digital layout, but we also learned layout by hand, so you print the copy and you do a manual. So we were coming into that. But yeah, I mean Reagan still had—if he created a war there were going to be my classmates, cause I think it was like up to twenty-six or twenty-seven from selective service, you know, putting your name to the draft. It was gonna be men not women; they could get called up. So those things are always sort of hanging over you. So many of us wanted to be in majors that didn't feel like... working for the man, like getting an MBA. Here I am saying this while I work for the business school. So I work for the man. So, there was a lot of that. I think that some of the majors are really hard. I didn't have any friends that made it through architecture. It was very male, it was very white. They were just really hard. It's always gonna be hard, but the women weren't coming through and nobody black. I didn't know anybody black—I was in school for five years—not who started. You saw the fallout that black engineering students, it started, you know. And then that's tough because you came to school for a thing and now you don't have a support who's going to help you fit that in. Lenny Bias died while I was in school.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Hansard: And... that probably more so I would say personally and for a lot of my classmates, that probably had much more of an impact than Reagan specifically. Reagan was still doing his best to just deplete the black family it felt like. [Reagan] Did not address, you know, we talk about the war on the opioid crisis. Hello? We had a whole war on crack and ain't nobody but us talking about the war on crack, right? But for Lenny Bias to die—and I knew Lenny, I was one of his—I was a friend. I was not a girlfriend ever.

We had a class together. They traveled so much. We had Ballet together. And so he didn't know any of the French terms. Yes, this is old school. And so, I would have to review because his test would be similar but not the same. But he didn't take any of his terminology quizzes or anything because the class was such a pain in the butt. And they would not pay for it because it was not one of the approved athletic department things. I'm like, this is just like come on dude. No, you can't ask me out. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] You get one or the other. Actually you get one. So it was that kinda thing. But that was actually great because we were platonic friends. We ended up having a lot of music stuff in common and just we talked about other stuff that had nothing to do with sports or whatever, and then in the end he was drafted and was to go to Boston. My family was so excited, and then he had an overdose of cocaine. From that, we had—so President Lo is now the president; it used to be the chancellor—so the then chancellor was John Slaughter [quietly] my favorite, my favorite. And then the board of regents was the president, and so those positions switched. When Slaughter was essentially forced down, they also fired Lefty Driesell, the coach, and then they hired a high school coach from Baltimore who was very winning, but he hadn't worked with college men. It's a difference and it didn't really work. That whole thing was just a mess. I think that was the part that we didn't see that coming. We had seen other athletes—I mean lacrosse players, I mean, were all doing a lot of cocaine. You would see it on like their coffee tables in Old Leonardtown. Like that was not a secret at all. But I never saw Lenny drink more than beer, so I wasn't even seeing him drink hard alcohol. And that's why he gave me free t-shirts from places that they went. Like, we can't pay you and you're still helping me. And here's a Hawaii t-shirt. [Rachelle and Shantel chuckle] Hey, swag is swag so I was, you know. And I'm [motor revving outside] 19 and that's fine. But that [Bias' death] impacted the community. And again, we're Hampton within Maryland. So there were the things that people were saying negative about Lenny and you want to defend him because we knew him. And he was a guy that would speak to you because you were just black too. But then, you're seeing the same people over and over at the parties. The athletes always came to our parties. And that was hard. They would come off of a bus from wherever and still make it to part of the party. The football players—actually, they don't do this anymore—but the football players used to have a big party and that was a big deal to be invited because you had to have a ticket to get in. And it was black and white students. The team, having this big party. But, I think that the death of Lenny Bias because it made everybody look at how the athletes were doing, how students were doing, coming back to drugs and race and roles of who's your advisor and who's lookin' out. Like all of those things. Should they be paid as student athletes? All of those things just compounded because it's still somebody personal. And that just weighed on us through graduation I think.

Rachelle: So my research Chancellor John Slaughter, he was I guess, it was seen in a very positive light how he handled the Len Bias situation and that he really stabilized the university during that time. And I wanted to know how you thought he did in that situation?

Hansard: He did. He was a noble leader. He was a wise leader. He was an inclusive leader. So many of the things that have been put into motion in terms of diversity in recruitment and hiring practices and trying to get other people to the table, different speakers, different perspectives on campus still comes from John Slaughter's reach and the people that he mentored. Brit Kirwan, who was president for a long time and then went to Ohio State and then came back and just retired in the last four years for the University of Maryland system over the Regent Board, was mentored by this engineer science guy, John Slaughter. He always had meetings with students which is great because you're always going to hear from them. Sometimes it was just a student meeting, sometimes he was incredibly targeted. He was an Alpha. So not every year, but they got to have a little bit of a special kind of mentoring with their frat brother which I didn't appreciate as much then as I do now. That's just an extra special treat. Yeah, if you invited him to a student club event, and if he could make it, he would come. So he was there when Nikki Giovanni was reading but he didn't introduce her. He was just in the back. You know, this other department—it was the English department and some student groups. But that was the kind of guy he was. And he said from the beginning, you know, a student has died, parents lost a son, we have lost a friend, we should have been able to see this coming and do better. But everybody was so blindsided. You take care of the problem you see. If you don't see somebody has a drug problem or if it's the first time, I still think it was Lenny's first time using drugs. Should we have done more to talk to athletes about the other things? I mean so much is like don't drive a Mercedes-Benz if it's not yours and it's like a donor's car. That was real talk and that was going on. And so did we not talk about the other pressures? And white students and faculty and staff admired him as well. He was just very approachable, incredibly just gifted and bright and pretty darn funny behind the scenes. He's funny in appropriate moments too, but other times you're just like, oh, you're really funny! [Rachelle and Shantel laugh]

Rachelle: So there was great pride in the Hampton of UMD and like the first black Chancellor? Were there any critiques of him in any situations?

Hansard: There were times, and there's always going to be someone that will say you can do more. And so, you know, you look at someone like Tavis Smiley, Obama could do more. Really dude? You are on a talk show for an hour, he's running a whole—the world. Somebody will always say something. And so sometimes that's okay and sometimes it's not. I also

know that sometimes people can't see that he is not the president of the black students. He is the president of the campus and whatever else that means. And so, trying to be fair looking at funding and money, looking at new opportunities. A lot of the STEM things that you all, I think are benefiting from or at least your generation, those were starting to be put into place. Trying to do summer camps that would bring students from Upward Bound, those Upward Bound students, they also got to rotate through the labs and that wasn't done before he got here. Doing some things with some high school programs so that people would think like, you know what, I might be able to go to college, this might be a thing for me. That was all part of his bigger workings. And the people that surrounded him, so it was Slaughter, a guy Ray Gillian who is one of his special assistants, Dr. Marie Davidson who was just a mentor to me. You know, after I graduated she would call and say, Keisha, I got a freshman. I think it's a boy. He doesn't have a dorm. I need to tell his mama that he can be at your house with your roommates for that first weekend. And we're going to work this out. But can you do that? Of course... You didn't always have to do that, but that couldn't be the reason that his mother said no. And now he's going to miss out because his money is going to be tied to Maryland and to do all the financial things, I don't know where he's coming from. Of course you're praying he's not a serial, horrible, use all the toothpaste boy. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] And I only had to do that a handful of times and those were always lovely people and their parents were incredibly grateful. Overflow always sounds like a horrible thing to anybody's mom.

Shantel: Could you tell us a little more about the other organizations you joined at your time here on campus?

Hansard: Yeah, see you all have the luxury of having a lot of dance troupes right now. And we had a couple. So, one was Shades of Harlem and so the two co-founders wanted to—I was a founding member, but the two women that brought this together really wanted a renaissance company. They wanted artists and poets and dancers. They wanted it to be very collaborative. So, we would do an annual show, and it was the teamwork of everybody. So there was probably going to feel sort of like a production play but not a full on break out in song. So it was more like a host and a narrator, and maybe there would be song and spoken word and dancing and some musicians and all that. That was really great. Our first two years all of the students were students of color. And then after that I think other people just saw this as like, oh, I'm a fan of Langston Hughes, I like the sound of this renaissance, or, you know, I'm Taiwanese but I really feel hip hop, or this is why I came to this country and this is the voice that I hear the most. So for me that was really good. What else did I do? BSU, NAACP. I didn't hold any offices in those, but I was always active member. Since I didn't have a little I always felt like I should be a big sister. And

then my sister came and then I had all her classmates. We ran out of money, it's amazing! It's not amazing, you guys eat a lot. Let's see what else did I do? I did pledge. I had the fortune of having these wonderful ladies in Centerville—all female as God intended—who were in the different sororities, so when I came to school Sigma Gamma Ro was not an active chapter but Zeta Phi Beta, Alpha Kappa Alpha, and then Delta Sigma Theta. And so a lot of the RA's on different floors or just different women, you know, again, Hampton within. But not a lot of pressure from anyone like, oh you look a certain way or you do a certain thing be in my sorority. But, you know, hey we're having an event you should come. And so I feel like we felt less stigma about like I'm going to go to a Zeta event on a Monday and an AKA event on Tuesday or whatever. Like that was just you were going. It was also a good way to meet women that weren't in your dining hall and many others on campus were different majors and things, so that was cool. I didn't feel pressure. My mom and dad aren't in fraternities or sororities or anything. Yeah, I was a non-paraphernalia sort of—active but I wasn't like a recruiter. I wasn't like, I'm in a sorority you should do it too. And then they're like, eh. Because I made my own decision, and I wasn't an honorary sister or anything like that. None of the community service things that I did are still in existence. Journalism had—we were part of a tutorial group, so we tutored at Northwestern High School, there were journalism students that went there. And then the BSU also went as well. As it turns out, there were probably seven student organizations tied into Northwestern High School in different kinds of mentoring and tutoring and so we would see a lot of different people out there. So that was good. I'm trying to think if I've missed anything.

Shantel: Black Women's Council.

Hansard: Oh yes, the Black Women's Council. So, it no longer exists and sometimes I think it should come back.

Shantel: Yeah, we were trying to figure out why it doesn't—like looking for current research and stuff, but it was just old stuff.

Hansard: It is, yeah, it's old and I don't know what you would find. The nice thing was that it allowed there to be sort of a leadership conference with black women, faculty, staff, students, sometimes alumni we'd come back. One year one of the—Renee Poussaint was a local newscaster and the ABC affiliate here and she was our emcee. But each of us, if you think of each of the clubs on campus, you know, there were a lot like Mane is a hair one and there's all kinds of stuff out there. But everybody could, I guess, nominate one person who has just been a really strong leader and exemplifies something that you hold to be valuable or that scholarship service, and it fell into like three or four categories. So, they would honor those recipients and I guess you got a certificate and it wasn't just like a

money thing, and there was like a lunch, and so that was just really nice. And so it was something nice to look forward to. Working on the council helped me meet these women who worked in departments that I might not ever see. Like we had one black faculty member in journalism. We all took his class and not because we wanted to go into broadcast. He was mostly like grandpa tell old stories. I'm pretty sure I learned something. [One interviewer wheezes] But could graduate and say I had a black guy for my major so there's that. But the Black Women's Council was—I think that there were ways, I hope, that you all are getting some of that attention but in different ways and different programming kinds of vehicles. This was before MICA [Multicultural Involvement Community Advocacy], this was before the restructure of OMESI, before Nyumburu getting bigger, College Success wasn't there. You know, so I feel like you all have different kinds of venues for some of this. But for us it was also a really good way for underclassmen to hear what juniors and seniors were doing because it just shapes like—I think that sometimes people get very much into going to class and going to the dorm and maybe there's a job in there. But if you're involved the other things that you develop, people that you can meet, careers that you might be exposed to. And it was done as a conference. So there were some alumni that were coming back and people just sharing experiences about navigating and speaking up for yourself, and trying to find your voice, and trying to filter out all the people who tell you no. So, I found it to be incredibly valuable and really powerful. I think that it might have folded into the black faculty and staff and then sort of went away, but I'm not really 100 percent—we could ask, Linda LeNoir might remember.

Rachelle: So, you did a lot while you were at UMD. We were literally so impressed. We were like, what? How were you able to manage—

Hansard: I was here for five years, so let's talk about that.

Rachelle: But a lot of people are here for five years and just do their major. How were you able to manage everything and like the pressure—

Hansard: Ah, in the beginning it was horrible!

Rachelle: And like keep everything?

Hansard: In the beginning it was horrible. Yes, yes, and yes. Girl, what are you doing? No. And you know nobody is gonna tell you to go to bed ever? I haven't seen a vegetable in weeks! It was a hot mess. So, yes, I think on paper it always looks like a lot and sometimes it really really was a lot. I like to look at a block of time like a semester or a year if I can do it and then to see where things are gonna be busy and where you're gonna lose time? Lose time. So, it's Thanksgiving, we all lie, it's Thanksgiving! I don't

have classes for two days so I'm going to eat, sleep, you just go through a whole bunch of—it ain't going to happen. [Rachelle laughs]

Shantel: Rachelle's laughing about this.

Hansard: So, your homework on Wednesday, do it now! And you know what? Working people, we do it too. It's not going to happen! So that's losing time. So, I was lucky that some of the things I had to do, like with *The Eclipse*, sometimes it counted—

[Disruption in interview from 1:11:04 to 1:11:44]

Hansard: I got academic credit for some of the things for like *The Eclipse*, *The Diamondback*. I don't remember if I got academic credit for *WMUC* [student led radio station] or not. So I always at least had one job while I was in school. This was a stretch, so even though I had some scholarship, there's just the stuff that you just don't know that you're going to need or just money runs out. So, I always had a job. I always picked up extra shifts if I could. I remained a volunteer at the food co-op. So, at the food co-op, if you work for an hour they can pay you in cash whatever the going rate is for minimum wage or you got it in food, better get it in food because at that time it went far. There was a lot of bagels, cans of soup, things that you can—so, there were a bunch of us that were just really kind of smart that way. Just tryna make sure that you're not always having to call home. Cause sometimes you call home and home doesn't have anything to send you back. So time management is something that I wish I'd done better. I wish I'd learned how to study a little better in the beginning, but I think my last three years I kinda hit a stride. I feel like you guys are so much more advanced, according to my research and I've done my—like you're prepared. Maybe I did that? [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] If I did it for my stories, I wasn't doing it in the classroom as good. Graduate school was amazing because I combined those things and, I don't know. I was also really fortunate because I tended to pull towards the people that seemed to be doing stuff. Like Sidney Parker, I don't know how much you know about her, she is amazing. She's focused on her job after college launching a project, you know, she has her own enterprise, she has a business. But she's very humble and she supports other people, so she looks for that sisterhood of support. And so, I actually wish that I had been Sidney Parker as an undergraduate, but there were Sidney things that I definitely see myself. I pulled towards the people that were committed to not failing out, so I studied with the engineers after my first semester was super, super bad. I was like, oh no, you're Brothers with Books? Yeah, I would like some of that please. How do you get that GPA, really, that many hours? All right. Anybody gonna walk me home? [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] And they were great. They were totally great and these are guys that I'm still friends with and some women too. But sometimes you

need to figure out who's doing it and just cut to the chase and just be right—I'd be very quiet. I'm not a singer. I would sit outside in that gospel choir hallway on Thursday nights and listen to them practice. It was soothing. I felt like I got more out of that than church because they're running through the same thing. They're running and you can hear it getting better. Or it's not getting better now we get somebody else to tweak. And something about that was a good backdrop for me to study. And so I had to figure out like, where do I need support? It might be quirky but that's okay. The choir people were really phenomenal because we would walk home together or we'd go get something to eat. It became a running joke, we gon' say a prayer for the girl outside in the hallway. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] Kecia, you on the floor? Yes, I'm on the floor! So, yeah that was cool, you know. That's an extra, choir's not on my resume, it's not one of my programs or projects. But sometimes you just need more in others and so yeah.

Rachelle: Actually, now that you mention studying, I actually noticed a lot of black students or poor white students have—at the beginning of their college career—has to figure out how to study and how to strategically, you know, take exams and everything and that's like a huge thing. Was that something you noticed when you were in college, like a lot of black students having trouble?

Hansard: I went to high school, that was easy but I was always able to get my extracurriculars and homework done. Standardized tests, not my strength. But like the classroom stuff, fine, like I was going to work hard, math was always a challenge, but everything else, even the sciences seemed to go. Whatever I was doing in high school just wasn't what I needed for college. I needed more, I needed to be more organized, and it just really took a lot to sort of get on track and I think that there were other people that, yes, fell into that same category. So one of the reasons I came to Maryland, my cousin Michael my same age he went to UDC and then was going to transfer to Maryland, but he was murdered in our first semester by October. So, I just had a lot of depressed lost time. And now like our plan is broken. And anger because he was killed by a Prince George's County cop, so just so many layers of sort of a complicated grief. But even if I stripped all that away prior to October my study skills were just kind of a mess. And I needed to go back to what felt good. So I thought I needed to study in my dorm room because that's what you see in the movies. No. No for a lot of reasons. It's sacking, then you fall asleep, all the reasons you're seeing and I couldn't see for myself. But I think that sometimes that whole level of time management—a student that graduated last year, I don't remember what school she graduated from, but she always talked so poorly about her high school. She's like, it's not in comparison, when I was a high flier in my high school in comparison to my classmates they were doing some stuff. So when she came there was an embarrassment—and

she's African American—because she felt like she wasn't as competitive. So she's already shootin' herself down, but she just didn't have the structure. And so while she did well, it also wasn't challenging and nobody ever wants to say high school was not challenging. It's one thing if you say it was easy cause it sounds like you're smart, but if you say it wasn't challenging that means that you're really not even performing like, you know, the others. And so, I think that sometimes people are coming from a space where they just haven't had as much challenge or as much structure. And it's usually, I think, structure to know how much time or how to even prepare for, I'm not getting this chapter two and I have to keep going back to it. And now I'm still not getting chapter two; more time. I've got to find somebody. This guy's not making it any easier now I gotta find the guy. And so that could be a lot of lost—you get freaked out because I'm not getting it. I'm not used to not understanding it and I don't even know how to get my head around—and now we're on chapter six because it goes so quickly. And so I think that a lot of us come from sort of spaces where we're not quite—sometimes it's structure, sometimes it's preparation.

Rachelle: So, going back to your comment on Black Unity, we actually were looking through yearbooks and there were a lot of articles on Black Unity like every single year which was interesting.

[Disruption from 1:19:19 to 1:19:28]

Rachelle: But then we saw something that was really interesting, the first female SGA president was a black woman, Kim Rice. It's was a small thing, just a picture, first black, one line. It didn't even say first black female, just first female president. And we were like, that's interesting they just gloss over that when they could've had a big thing where it was like, the first SGA president—and we wanna know if that was a common thing, if you knew her, what you thought about that?

Hansard: So, Kim Rice was friends of these big-girl college students that I knew like they were ahead of me in school. So they're like two or three years ahead. But they're still close. Andrea, Shiran, Kim Rice, there's a fourth one... So Kim Rice won the vote of a surprising number of white women. I think that there were folks who were hoping that the white women weren't going to show up. Sadly familiar, yes. [Rachelle and Shantel chuckle] And if you didn't see her picture, Kim Rice could be anything. So there's another guy Gaither. Ben Gaither. So if you have to go back to the archives and Google him. So Ben Gaither ran and was the first black SGA president and Phi Beta Sigma had an escort service. So this was in the 70s, so even before I was in college there was life here. The libraries would close at 11:00 except for the twenty-four-hour room. And a lot of black women would come downstairs between 10:30 and 11:00 and wait and the

Sigmas would walk them back to their dorms. Then it was black and white women. Safety in numbers and all those things. The Sigmas didn't mind and people seemed to be going to the dorms and you start to know the same people over and over. When Ben ran they had pictures on flyers. These were paper flyers! There was no 'gram, no Instagram, and he won. And that's how your shuttle bus system started. And that was part of his pledge. And now we have like the fourth largest shuttle bus system in the U.S. at a campus which is amazing. Black Power! But, you know, this was a time when there were beer trucks on campus. So, oh yes! You should shut your eyes cause that just sounds like not a good plan. [Rachelle laughs] So the drinking age was younger people could just go in the middle of the McKeldin Mall and get a beer on the way to class?

Rachelle: We were so shocked. We saw these in the yearbook and we were like what is going on?

Shantel: People drinking in the yearbook!

Rachelle: Crazy!

Hansard: I agree, I agree! But... I can't remember your question, sorry.

Rachelle: You said something about Ben, that first SGA president was black.

Hansard: Yeah. So, I don't remember who Kim ran against. And I voted in my freshman—that was my freshman year. Because she was not the president when I came in. But there was a debate and I didn't go. But there were black students telling me to vote for Kim. So she was in a predominately white sorority. So there was that. So I think she probably carried probably part of PHA. but definitely there were more women by early like polls apparently there were women that voted and whatever. Maybe they also didn't know if she was the first black president. So, I think we do a better job of capturing some of that. But we saw it as a big deal. And this sounds horrible, but when other people know the candidate and can vouch—so if somebody RA is like, oh no, that's my girl Kim we went to high school together. When you go to BSU meetings, all right. But she's in a white sorority! Eh, whatever it's like a one-off. She's still my girl from Baltimore. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] So she probably carried the Baltimore vote, I don't know, Columbia, wherever she was from.

Shantel: They had her picture in there.

Hansard: She looks the same. Google her in Facebook or look for her in Facebook. I swear to God. The same. Yeah. Little bit of gray, but the same face.

Shantel: So yeah that was just interesting that that was like a one liner versus the ten things on the pageant. So also—

Hansard: But probably *The Black Explosion* ran more on her. So she would have won in my freshman year, so it would have still been the original *Black Explosion*. Probably there was a bigger story there. There could have been a bigger follow-up story once they got to sit down with her, I don't know. *The Diamondback* was a daily at that time, so I don't know how much—because the following year the guy who ran after her was some guy named King Tom and ran on the to make campus safer we should build a moat. Google it. He also wore a crown. [Rachelle and Shantel chuckle] Jousting as an NCAA sport, it was a mockery of the whole system of democracy.

Rachelle: So, speaking of Unity and BSU like, that's my friend, vote for her. Also, BSU spoke up for having more of an umbrella group for black orgs. They wanted to have more unity for black orgs. I wanted to hear what you had on like if there was unity in different black orgs. like ASA and Caribbean Student Association and everything.

Hansard: Right. So... let's break this down. Most of CSA had dual memberships like CSA and BSU. And I think for a lot of reasons. So there were a lot of New Yorkers [Hansard chuckles] of Caribbean descent. Big surprise, right? So, the international piece didn't feel as sort of the leading identifier, if that makes any sense. And we were good about supporting their parties or whatever's going on. Their fundraisers. There was good synergy there. ASA I think was probably a little bit more complicated. My sister started in [19]88, so that was the first big wave of Ethiopian students. And prior to that the African students were coming if they were African American, so born overseas and then naturalized or... there were probably students who were of African descent but born here who were members of ASA as well, but mostly to me it felt very much like students who had definitely been overseas. They could have been born here and done a back and forth, but they were definitely living that duality of African American as opposed to, hey I'm from Boston I'm African-American. Like no! African American in my home. And those numbers really grew into the [19]90s. And so I love the stuff that you guys are doing now like the rep your class, and music comes on, and people are proud of the dances; they teach Americans the dances. It's not before where you felt like there was a stigma like you dance funny or, you know, people are making fun of any of that. I have heard people say disparaging remarks about African students when I was a student. But you know, then you're kinda like, really, you're gonna? You check that other person like, that is so inappropriate in so many levels. But like I was in school right before African medallions and so I think that things kind of come in sort of cycles. Like people were not relaxing their hair, then they relaxed their hair, and then they were cutting

their hair, and not cutting their hair. Jheri curls were in there somewhere, medallions. So, but like none of the guys had braids when I was in school and when I graduated people were starting to lock their hair again. So again, ebb and flow, ebb and flow. Are fraternities instrumental, are they not instrumental, you know? So that is always going to be divisive for some people. Maybe. The idea of unity is always interesting because sometimes I've seen people spew that but it's like, what are you really saying? Cause I personally don't think that there's going to be one definition that is just black. I've made a whole lot of sweeping generalizations in here, but we are three individuals, three different upbringings, three different whatever. Our takes on Thanksgiving can even be totally different. Important or not; not yummy or not, right? All those things. [Rachelle and Shantel chuckle] So, it's hard to make this sweeping—some of the unity things that we dealt with, you know, I think there were a number of students who called for unity because they didn't feel like this was much of a home. They were commuting students. You know, if you're coming in, taking classes, and leaving you don't feel like you belong to a thing. Which was why choir—gospel choir ended up being such a strong vehicle because choir didn't ask you to leave after you graduated. If you wanted to still come back you could stay in choir. So when Maryland gospel choir has their reunion shows or they do a CD or just a reunion concert, people were in choir for like ten years. We saw people get married and have kids and move away and come back, you know, like all of those things. That's a support system. And so, I think some of the people who were asking for unity sometimes just didn't feel like they had a place because they weren't involved in like commuting students, or even as an orientation person doing the tours and walking backwards and all that, when parents say, what do you recommend? Join one thing whether you commute, you live on campus, or whatever. If you join something you feel like you can make a difference and you belong to something. So it's not just your job and your class and you roll out. Because then you see the parking lot and you don't feel like you know people. So I think that sometimes looking back there were a number of people who were like that. I also know there were a lot of other people that had a much harder way to go because—those people went to the end of the hall and they're lost. They don't really need to be here.

Shantel: Yeah, this building is confusing.

Hansard: I know! You know, I think about the folks in engineering, now you're a fourth-year student and you're still pre. I have always had a problem with that because somebody should have flagged, you can't be pre for seven years, you've gotta get to a major and keep it moving, right? Who can afford that? Or just feeling like people weren't encouraging them. Well, if you want to go to office hours, come on in. But that doesn't even sound like you want to help me. You know, so was that a racial thing, a gender

thing, somebody who was just running through the motions? You know, it's hard to really interpret. I'm trying to think of other sort of unity things. I think there's always going to be a level of people saying, you know, who has the authority or the last word on black. Is it the patchouli smelling brother in the corner, is it somebody else who is relaxing her hair or not, like who gets to say who is and is not black? So sometimes you would feel that, well, we're going to bring a speaker, oh he should totally be a guy. Why does he have to be a guy? We have money for a speaker. Why does it have to be a man again? Right. So I don't know where—unity could have been any of those.

Rachelle: So, you speak a lot about like interpreting people. How were you able to interpret? Because you say you had a diverse range of friends. How were you able to interpret and like people to go between those two groups? Or different groups of people?

Hansard: I don't know that I could switch that much.

Shantel: That's what I was gonna say.

Hansard: I'm cognizant of when I'm not cursing. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] I have always said to my white girlfriends, girl, I got a story after class. Right? And it doesn't matter what she looks like whether she looks like me, but that's just me. That's how I've kind of always been. Yes, there probably was some code switching that goes on. Like there were friends I had in journalism, if we were all for a class covering a story, it wasn't being published but you had to turn in a story, right? So we had one class—so dumb and we were so stupid—you covered an event and it was due I think by like midnight. Really? Into a drop box. What's the difference between six in the morning and midnight? Cause that guy was not coming from Bethesda or Potomac or wherever you live to pick up that, whatever. But you would see us running in there; it wasn't stamped or anything. So it's not like now, you guys do it digitally. But you could cover a story, type it up—yes, on a typewriter—and go to coffee or pancakes or whatever, and so. Or if you were lucky to do the events that had like the VIP media room where there were snacks for the real grownups out there who were really doing this for a salary. We were like, leftovers, yay! I don't know. I guess you have those relationships. I don't know. I didn't do everything with everybody. I was not always going to say to my sorority sisters, Baltimore's having a Comic-Con, who's down? That's gonna be a whole lot of no. Right. That's not an interest area. Sometimes it might be, you want to try it? And, you should try new things Lisa! Right. So, I think that sometimes you just know that you're not doing everything with all people. High school was a lot like that for me. I think early on, also—this wasn't just from Black journalism students, this is from everybody—the idea that you build a network because the person the class ahead of you could be

the person that's able to speak up for you at a hiring decision time and a selection committee, could be then the person who's going to partner with you on something that's going to help you along. So you try to really have like a good reputation of being responsible and accountable and calling people back and being helpful and not just like the take the glory person because that gets out there really fast. So, I'm sure there was code switching. I'm sure. I think that also sometimes, and this could be me still now being naive, I had a student here, he was trying to make a decision if he was coming to Maryland for his MBA. I was working MBA admissions. And I'm talking to him on the phone, he can't see me, even though we did a Skype interview. Whatever. He says, well I don't want to live too much into college park because of the blacks, and the blacks, and it's going to be not safe, and I'm reading these police reports, and the blacks and the blacks and the blacks and the blacks. And I'm like, the blacks. And then he paused, um, Kecia, what are you? Well, right now I'm sitting waiting for you on the phone, but if this is an ethnic question, I'm one of the blacks. Let's just try to figure out some stuff here. What is it that you're nervous about? You know, so I said, this is what I would tell anybody, you know, don't take money out at two o'clock when you're drunk, don't walk into an alley. So, by the blacks, I don't know what you're reading. I don't know what you're seeing. I don't know if it's all based on movies, but if this is going to be too dangerous the other schools you've mentioned are all going to have the same problems. And it's not the blacks. It's people doing stupid stuff and putting themselves out there to be a victim. He came. And then told me he didn't realize I would be part of the blacks. We had a whole conversation about continuity, complexions, and whatever. He ended up being a very good friend. And while I was so frustrated at the very beginning, like this guy's gonna—I'm going to gray-hair myself into, like, just hell. As it turned out, I was the only person that was a black person—not in the beginning to him, but someone he can ask, why do people not respect the blacks? I'm gonna need you to stop calling us the blacks. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] So we got there too! I want you to know that he graduated. But he ended up being able to vote for Barack Obama, he ended up—so many things can happen because of exposure and things, it wasn't just me. But sometimes you end up being that one person that can help someone understand like, yeah, asking to touch my hair, it's offensive, you're treating me like an object, or a dog, or an object again. Dogs have feelings. Right. So, and they don't even know that they're being wrong. And so yeah, is that exhausting? Yeah. Have I been that girl? A lot. I don't know.

Rachelle: Were you used to that from high school? Being bussed to like a—

Hansard: Yeah, definitely... Because I think it just becomes very much a solo journey... The black kids also weren't that kind to me either. So, you sound like a white girl. Oh God, really? That was so last year.

Rachelle: Even at UMD?

Hansard: Not that sentiment. Not those words, but that sentiment. Like, oh you write for *The Diamondback*, all right, fight the power, Kecia. You know. Come on man, I'm trying to get a job. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] Right. Everybody can throw shade, and that's just not going to be—and I think one of the things that happens with grownups that people don't talk about is the editing, your social editing. You might have been letting people go on Facebook or just other ways where it's like, you are toxic, you are just not the uplift, you're not even side-lift. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] Debby-downer, you're just done. And so sometimes even from high school you're progressing at a rate that other people won't. Sometimes there is that arrested development and just like I was so fortunate and blessed to leave Boston and not get caught up in the drama of other people. It's not my baby, it's not my rent, it's not my somebody who's addicted to something. But somehow you get the distraction and I was at least able to be, you know, miles away and a payphone away because we didn't have phones, all of us, in our rooms. So if there was a Kecia out at library, I could be in that room. But that's what the white board said. So if you call me on the payphone, I can't even get sucked into your madness. And I know everybody local didn't have that advantage. But for me, I was able to sort of push things away. But yeah, the unity thing is always, you know, I hear even with folks now, we should be more unified. You're not all going to be defined by the same thing. Even your purpose of being here isn't the same. I'm glad that the Protect UMD with the sixty-four demands/requests, whichever, I think that's a really good exercise in allyship and also an examination that what is important to you might not be important to the next person. But still important. And can we help each other achieve that?

Shantel: Were there any political or any events that's memorable where there was unity?

Hansard: Everybody was happy when A Tribe Called Quest and De La Soul were on campus. Everybody was happy when Queen Latifah—

Interviewer: I don't even know what she did, but just the fact that she was here.

Hansard: I know! She was here, it was great! She was the intermission for our homecoming step show and so everyone was—I know, woo, Queen Latifah! That was before U-N-I-T-Y. Maybe the Lenny Bias death was unifying in another way because alumni and current students, we filled that whole amphitheater in Cole because the Xfinity Center—that was the biggest place we had. His favorite black English professor was on the dais to also speak. There's no air conditioning, and so you get a folded program and all you can see is a flutter. And if you didn't know you were at

a funeral it just looked like one of those crazy big sporting event choreographed things that's gonna turn into some other kind of dance or motion thing just because it's just people fluttering. And so... I think for a lot of us to just take it in, close an eye, if you didn't think of a funeral, it actually was beautiful. And the audience was diverse. But certainly, there were black classmates there to walk through the courtyard afterwards. All of the athletes were behind Washington Hall and whatever those dorms are when you're in South Hill and the first like quad that you would cut behind, they were just sitting out there, football players hugging each other and crying, and women's lacrosse.

[recording cuts out and changes at 1:42:18, the following is not included in the recording]

Hansard: In some ways, maybe for a bit, that was a unifying thing. Because it was a loss to everybody. So, I think that getting the University to divest felt unifying because we had other allies, certificate in AA studies. Another win was after Chancellor Slaughter left but one thing he helped other colleagues put in place were—

Hansard: —those athletes that did not graduate, but that we here for four years, let's bring them back and do some fundraising and try to help these guys get their degrees because the overwhelming number of students that were male, who didn't finish but played, their retention rates, their graduation rates weren't that high. So that was football, lacrosse, baseball. I mean, a little bit surprising because I think you're thinking like mostly white men, they would finish too; they would finish, they wouldn't have these problems too. I see that as another kind of unifier... Plenty of things that didn't help: blackface and skits or anything that would be horrible Halloween costumes for like Greek Week, or—more that must be Halloween then a Greek Week thing because I feel like DSFL has kind of been pretty good in the last ten to fifteen years about like, oh, that's blackface, let's not do that...

Rachelle: So, what was your favorite paper to write for? And why?

Hansard: Probably *The Eclipse* because I felt like we did it ourselves. Everybody got to shadow and learn how to edit. Everybody was supposed to learn how to do the count to figure out what the layout was going to be. [Hansard sighs dramatically] Math? Come on! Nobody told me this was gonna be math! Right? But then learning the process of this picture is too grainy. How do you give instructions to somebody else? How do you create a shot list? Everybody should understand how to do that. Coming up with themes. Like we had—because we were small, so it was like working for a startup I guess—you have the space where you can have an idea and you're not shot down. Really, a fashion issue? What is that going to look like? A

fashion issue? Good! Because the business students could also get ads, coupons, there was a whole way to bring other people in and make that a thing. We can highlight black businesses, you know, so we started to. So, it was a good exercise to look at a semester and then a year and then try to figure out what could be a special issue. What are things we can work on in the summer? So it was easy to do like the welcome back issue because like, tips freshman should know, highlighting all of the diversity career fairs as well as the other career fairs, so you're building like a calendar that we work on over the summer. But I think having that, the camaraderie. And because we were there every other weekend, our alumni would come back. And I know we were nerds, but we would often come to the paper, change our clothes, go to the party in Preinkert, wait for it, go back, and work on the paper. So you might not close down the party, but you got your dancing in a little bit.

Rachelle: So, as we're almost at the closing of this interview—wow that's crazy.

Shantel: Yeah, it went by really quick.

Rachelle: Is there anything you would go back and change and do differently?

Hansard: Like lots. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] Anything I would change and do differently. I was kinda hoping you weren't going to ask that. I did not do a global study trip. For a couple of reasons. I was a double major so you don't kind of have the electives you're hoping for to play with, kind of, but not really. And we were still definitely a year abroad, not like a semester abroad or like the shorter trips that you all can take in the January term. That would have been just magical. And I wish that I had done that. I have been very fortunate, I've been able to go abroad for work and for personal. But it just would have maybe changed some things for me. So that's one thing. Yeah, I could have done academically better. We can all agree on that. There were some risks that I wish I had taken. I wish that I, you know, golf is cheap here. And just because on campus it's a lot less expensive than it is if you go to like a big professional golf something someplace else because it's going to be a lot more costly. Everybody's not going to need golf to get ahead or to network but it would be interesting to do that with friends and just to sort of have that as a sweet spot. I haven't necessarily been in that kind of career where all the big decisions are being made out on the golf course. I'm not left out of something and I think that sometimes a lot of people get left out. I probably should have just pushed on and taken Spanish and just tried to have been better, better and just taking it for no credit and just audited it and hope my parents didn't notice that I was being billed for a class that I wasn't getting a grade for. I think also I could have used career services in a different kind of way. The clear thing is always going to be a little bit more unknown a little bit for me because I did want to work for a publication. My starting my

career got a little bumpy. I graduated on Thursday, Memorial Day Monday. My father died on Tuesday. So I was interviewing for jobs and I pretty much had to just take care of family, you know, family stuff and then start it all over again. So what was available—it was just a little messier. But, I mean, I still think I did okay. But I wish I had gone to some of the other career events to look at things that were outside of journalism because I never even looked at things like human resources that might have been interesting or things in marketing that could have been—felt very mainstream and like I'm not a mainstream person. I didn't even consider what other opportunities there were. There could've been other things in nonprofit. I just wasn't open to listen. So wish I had been a little bit more open.

Shantel: Would you still've made the decision to come to UMD instead of, I guess, Hampton was your other choice?

Hansard: Well Hampton wasn't giving me any money, so I took them off the table just for fiscal responsibility. And then the money was going to be about the same to go to Syracuse. I actually should have gone to that free UMass. My father was a professor at UMass. So, I wanted to get out into the world! No, I loved being here. You know it's interesting that you all have—there's so many things that are just different when I try to explain it to people, people are like, oh, you're so lucky! You're up at Maryland! I'm like, you're making it sound like I'm eating in the dining hall and that I live on the campus gameboying and whatever, no. I have a desk. There are so many things that you all have that we just didn't have. Like I love that there are all these Latina sororities. Multicultural—we just didn't have that. And so for those Dominicans and Puerto Ricans and sometimes they were Afro Latino and sometimes not, they were just like, it's white people, hip hop with y'all. And so, just come on in! [Rachelle and Shantel laugh] And we giggle about that, but these are still friends, we're still connected in time. But the options just weren't there. So, I was just before the bigger waves of like Nigerian, Kenyan, Ghanaian, Salvadorian. That civil war was still—so they weren't quite yet ready to come through high school and college or some of them were repeating years before they could get here. But I feel like you all have so many social opportunities that we didn't have. Yeah. I'm still glad that I came. Is it perfect? No. I think that sometimes the choice of school is so individual. Too small would not have been maybe a great fit for me. I still don't know if an HBCU would have been a good fit for me. And would I have been in a sorority? I don't know that that's a yes. So, I don't know that there is—interwoven obviously but that might not have even been—I didn't come to school like, yeah—

Interviewer: Sorority!

Hansard: Right. Yeah...

Interviewer: Do you have any last questions?

Hansard: And my sister came here as well.

Interviewer: How was that? Just real quick.

Hansard: [Sighs] Weird, weird, weird. So, we're four years apart in school, and the first year I paid for a plane ticket, or I half paid for a plane ticket for her to spend her spring break her February break here. And we had a great week. So that became our thing, every February she was with me. But then her Title IX wasn't in place and Rutgers took her volleyball scholarship back so that they could reallocate money, we think, probably to the football team or some male athlete, whatever. So she was April like, hey, I've got a situation here. What am I supposed to do? And so then she applied very late. We didn't know if she would—and it helped that they were two of us in school at the same time because her federal aid was gonna be whatever she'd gotten—because those were two out-of-state schools—was going to be about the same. And so she ended up getting some other kind of financial aid for her second semester. But people I always kind of, like, a lot of people knew her, so then when it was time for her to graduate people were like, damn, how old are you? And she's like, this is on time, I've just been coming since I was in high school. [Interviewer laughs] But it's kind of cool because we have friends in between us which then is like, are you in my class or her class, or no class, or the other class? All right, so. But it was good. Her, just being four years different, when our father died she was a freshman, I was a fifth-year senior. Some of the people that we knew treated his death very differently. He died of AIDS complications. Her friends were ready to support. I had people that were like, sorry for your loss, but your dad's going to hell. What is happening? But just different education, different—just that little bit of time, progress can be made, so. Social editing, just them people loose.

Interviewer: Did you hang out with your sister a lot?

Hansard: Because we were in Hampton within Maryland, kinda the same parties.

Interviewer: You can't avoid her.

Hansard: Right. Oh, why are freshman here? It's so wrong. I know, she was always like, hey, you've got a red solo cup. Park it over there freshman, you need to be over there. Yes, there are pluses and minuses because they were able to get rides and stuff like that. And like any of the guys in her class were like, we know upperclass women. Oh my God, here we go, right. Yeah.

Interviewer: So were there any memorable moments with other black women on campus either positive or negative?

Hansard: Oh! Yeah. Both. [Rachelle and Shantel laugh]

Interviewer: Okay, what do you want to share with us?

Hansard: I think positive, there are still people that I'm still in touch with. And they're not just—so, the sorority ends up being said. All the people that have come before you at this chapter and then up to whoever 2017, that's 300, I don't know, let's say it's 300 people. That could be a one network. So this is great. But I still have like friends who were in gospel choir. I am not a singer. Friends from journalism who were either anchors or are still in the profession wherever they are in the country. Other people that lived in my hall, you know, two of the women that lived in Centerville are home schooling and that's just so different from my life. Like what is happening? Right. But we have very funny good relationships. Homecoming is awesome because it just feels like we're all growing up and then we all look at y'all like, okay, we were never that naked. That girl need to put some clothes on! There's a whole lot of that. That's unity! [Everyone laughs loudly] You know I think some of them mean things, or the more negative things like, I remember this woman said, you light enough, you should've been AKA. No, like that's, what? [Disapproving noises from Rachelle and Shantel] I can't even start with you. Like why would you even—where would this say that is appropriate? Or watching somebody else say, how's her boyfriend Filipino? Okay, she's happy and making her choices, like right. Or something homophobic or, you know, so you see the span of sort of all of it. You can. I was never in like a physical fight, so there was never that. None of that I'm going to fight you for a man. Don't understand it. That's shade, that's honest. I don't get it and that's just not helping. Right. Yeah. So no big, over the top like, I saw your man and now there's a fight. Like I wasn't part of any of that. Oh, that was happening I'm sure. But that just was never like part of my life. That just seemed ridiculous. I think actually one of the things that was very beneficial is that I graduated with really good male friends and female friends. So I've been in the wedding party of two of my male friends. One a heterosexual guy; one guy who's gay. I am auntie to the children that are men and women. And we are starting to go to funerals. So for their parents, for a couple of their children, a couple of spouses, and some of our classmates. But, you know, when you see people and it brings people back together, or we started a scholarship fund and we're working towards something, I think it speaks to a lot of the things that go on here. Do you all go to homecoming? Like were you behind Nyumburu? For the tailgate? No, I didn't videotape it so it's not like I've got you're half naked.

Interviewer: I just sat there for some food and then I left.

Interviewer: I didn't really. You've actually inspired me to start going to more.

Hansard: So the nice thing about it, in my day the undergraduates weren't there. And so maybe that's a good and bad thing because then you don't have a sense of the fullness of your—and that's not all of your alumni. And now there's LinkedIn and so there's all of that. It's great that we can, you know I don't go every year, but to be able to reconnect, not see people. A guy I went to school with died and, okay it was October, maybe he died in late August beginning of September, so a lot of people came back because Barry died and that's not great. We should just do better on connecting and not wait until somebody dies and then connecting. Right. Don't get old ladies, don't get old.

Interviewer: So, definitely the good overshadow the bad then.

Hansard: The good overshadows the bad. I mean I always felt like I was connected cause I lived on campus and joined some clubs. I was in enough things, the one thing wasn't going to be my one identifier. I think that was the thing about the sorority that I didn't want to feel like a stereotype or a caricature. I had friends before, they should be my friends after. And that was good. When you have a major where you have to do practicum or co-op or a lot of news coverage or like I know the comm majors and PR folks have to make a lot of presentations, it changes the way you look at how you network and how you align yourself. It's fine if people graduate and all their friends are black. I also think it's really great if they're not because what if one of your closest friends is Japanese and you get to go home with that person and see Japan that's gonna be very personal.

Interviewer: Are there any questions you have for us or anything you want to share?

Hansard: Oh my God, does it sound like I'm a million years old? You all were making me think of things that I was like, oh no, I don't have an answer for that! No, so what ends up happening with all of this foolishness?

Interviewer: We're supposed to put together a, well, some sort of way to present this. What we've learned. So it can be any way from like a podcast, presentation, video, whatever we decide.

Hansard: I guess do you need anything else from me? Just let me know. Because I don't have to travel anymore so I'm back for a couple days.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for taking the time to sit down with us.

Hansard: I did have one question, so what clubs are you involved with or other things other like extracurriculars?

Interviewer: Here, let's stop this.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by:

Audit-edited by: Shelly Justement, August 31, 2022

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Note on transcription: The original transcript did not have interviewers clearly labeled, so it is difficult to know who is speaking when. When I could not be sure of the difference between the interviewers' voices, I used "interviewer" as the speaker.