

History of Black Women at the University of Maryland

Interviewee: Joy Fennell

Interviewer: Whitney Chapman

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Whitney: So, first Ms. Fennell we'd like to ask you about your background and we were just wondering what was life like before you came to UMD?

Joy Fennell: ... Um so I'm originally from Maryland by way of Georgia, and I was born in Alexandria, Virginia, um I spent eight years in Albany, Georgia, um which is pretty significant in the Civil Rights Movement... but we can get to that later, but anyway

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: [laughing] aha, so um but I grew up mainly in Prince George county, PG county and Landover to be exact, I went to high school there and also uh ya know college University of Maryland umm and my background, ya know what led me uh to this, just uh when I first was in school, oh I spent one month at in a, or two months in Silver Spring, Maryland and I was in a really diverse school there, but then my high school was basically ninety nine point nine percent African American and the other point zero one percent was other [laughing]

Whitney: Woww

Joy Fennell: Yea so um, yea... So I'm very grounded in my culture and just knowing who I am, ya know

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: So that's what brought me to the African American Studies program at Maryland as well

Whitney: Wow that's interesting because I'm actually almost the exact opposite, I grew up in the country of western Maryland and

Joy Fennell: Hm

Whitney: Um I was one of the

Joy Fennell: Oh okay

Whitney: the only Black students in my school, it was a very small town, and I was like...

Joy Fennell: Mhm

Whitney: like oh oh my gosh, so I was wondering

Joy Fennell: yea

Whitney: was wondering how um, diversity in your life before college influenced your decision to come to UMD

Joy Fennell: ... Well that's, that's a really interesting question because honestly when, even though I spent a really small bundle of time in Silver Spring, Maryland for middle school that really had an impact on me, because honestly I really love being around everyone, like all different cultures, and really, ya know, I just feel like I really enjoyed that setting um

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: I don't know if subconsciously it informed my decision to go to University of Maryland... what really informed my decision was that I started at Howard for one semester and then I went to Maryland because of money issues,

cause Howard was a bit more money and because I was an in-state student I could afford Maryland a lot better and it was a lot easier

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: So ya know, so that's really what informed my decision to go to Maryland, because it was cheaper

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: [laughing] But anyway once I uh went to Maryland and I got into the core of what Maryland was I really appreciated the experience because it allowed me to be around so many different cultures, and trust me I know Maryland has it's uh issues when it comes to diversity and racism and all this and that, but I do feel like ya know I was able to be in a culture with different people and I also, ya know, really start to understand like other people and how other people work outside of just Black culture.

Whitney: Yeah that's actually really interesting because I was always thinking, maybe I should of gone to an HBCU [laughing], while while here but it's interesting to hear that you actually went to and HBCU and um by way of life had to transfer here and actually really enjoyed it.

Joy Fennell:...Well the thing about it is, and I'm gonna be honest with you guys, when I first started at Maryland it was definitely a culture shock for me,

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: ya know and and I hear that from, not just myself, but from other African American students that go from being basically insulated to, ya know, to being around other cultures to where it's like, when we first start it's almost like it's culture shock and we go through, I know I went through like depression and like I don't know because I really wanted, ya know, I was very active in my BSU and my student government and those kind of things while in high school, and I just didn't know how to transfer and become part of um a bigger picture while I was on Maryland's campus but I think what happens is that while on campus you start to gravitate and find those those uh organizations that speak to you and speak to what you want in in in your college experience. I'm actually now looking back, and this is nothing against an HBCU or anything like that, looking back I'm actually really happy that I went to Maryland because I was able to then experience what I experienced at first when I went to school, meaning like the culture shock and the depression, ya know, the depression, or or just not being able to handle racism in a certain way, ya know

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: I was able to, I was able to understand and learn those things at Maryland where if I had gone straight into the workforce straight outta an HBCU I feel like that would have been a totally different experience, I would have experienced all those things while at work, and that would have messed with my money

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: ya know so I'm just like you know, so now looking back I totally appreciate it and I totally feel like now I can I can move in any type of room with anybody, ya know, and I don't know if people really understand like how significant that is... um in their, lives ya know

Whitney: Yea it's just crazy to me that your saying all these things its almost as if we had the same feelings about coming to UMD, but uh coming from different places, because being one of the only Black students at my high school and coming here I was actually having trouble making Black friends and it was like something that I really wanted and now that I'm a junior and older, I've actually come into having a really diverse group of friends, but before then I was like maybe I should have gone to an HBCU so that I could you know further connect to my people and get more involved in my culture

Joy Fennell: ... I mean like sometimes like looking back it's like I feel like people who spend their life in one set should maybe think about doing another set, ya know, to get a different experience

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: it might be that it's almost like opposite, ya now like

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: you probably could have gone to HBCU, I know ending up at Maryland was a good thing for me, ya know

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: so it's just like ya know, but at the same time we also have to realize that we gatta make the best of our, what is going on now and see what we want and then from there decide how we are gonna get what we want out of the experience, no matter what experience were in ya know

Whitney: Definitely

Joy Fennell: So, but the thing about Maryland though, even though its not ya know like and an HBCU it definitely has aspects of an HBCU campus, ya know, like the Black Student Union and the the Nyumburu Cultural Center, African American Studies you ya know it definitely got one of the bigger Black populations in a college versus some of the other colleges out here, so ya know um, and I feel like a lot of Maryland Black student take pride in the fact that they are on campus fighting for their, ya know, rights and justice, cause ya know when I was on campus we were really up in arms about the scholarship they wanted to take away, gosh uh, I just had uh for some reason forgot the name of the scholarship, but that was like the biggest thing on campus when we were there, and uh it affected a lot of people, ya know, and we had protests and and we really uh, wanted to take on the administration for that

Whitney: Yea was that part of the freedom school movement that you were part of?

Joy Fennell: ... Well the freedom school movement was different, um this was um oh gosh why can't I think of the name of this scholarship, this is totally different, um I can find out what the name of the scholarship, I can't think of it off the top of my head

Whitney: No worries

Joy Fennell: because I am getting old [laughing] ya know

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: So yea [laughing]

Whitney: Do you mind telling us a little bit about the freedom school movement and why you decided to become one of the first members on the UMD campus because

we were actually looking into it a little bit into the freedom school movement and we found we couldn't really find much about it at the university

Joy Fennell: Well the thing is um the freedom school movement was founded by Rockman Colver and it was just a Saturday school that we would do for young people around the area um so that they would come out and learn about their culture and, ya know, like get one on one tutoring from college students and and just really get nurtured by um, and and find out about things, ya know, cause my thing is if you're not exposed to things, then you are not gonna know about them

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: A lot of times the students and the kids around Maryland aren't actually informed about what Maryland, ya know like, college has to offer, ya know

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: even though they live right around the corner, ya know, it's almost like we have these mental barriers

Whitney: It's like a different world

Joy Fennell: in our mind... I'm sorry say that again

Whitney: Oh I was saying it's like a different world between considering what college has to offer for you where you are before college

Joy Fennell: Exactly, yea and and its not even that Maryland isn't a campus where you can't walk on it if your ya know, but locals, ya know, definitely had mental, there's a mental barriers that you you cant go there

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: So I think the thing like it's all about breaking down mental barriers cause right now I currently live in Harlem, Harlem in New York, and you can see where block by block... some block people don't come out of their block cause they don't think they're welcome on another block, ya know what I mean

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: It's just mental barriers definitely play a huge part in what we think about in our culture and what we think we're accepted in and and how we are accepted

Whitney:... Definitely it's like you guys were kind of opening the doors to UMD to the community around UMD

Joy Fennell:... Yea, we definitely had um students that really really took to the program and it's interesting that you guys haven't really been able to find anything about it cause I could've sworn that um... they had something recently for the freedom school because I I, and this is on me, I actually thought the program had ended, but not too long ago Rockman, we are facebook friends, I saw he mentioned the freedom schools on one of his posts and I was like oh my god, this is one of

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: me and my life taking me in another direction and ya know

Whitney: Yea, definitely, it's it's very nice to hear almost that you have a legacy

Joy Fennell: Yea

Whitney: cause you were one of the first – and

Joy Fennell: I know, I was like oh my gosh like what

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: that really made me so happy, it's not me sitting at the lunch counter for or anything like that

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: but oh my god something that we started is still there, I was, I was really happy about that

Whitney: Definitely, so I'm just gonna shift gears a bit and um

Joy Fennell: Mhm

Whitney: ask about more of your campus stay and whether you stayed on campus or not when you went to UMD

Joy Fennell: Yea I did stay on campus, um, I stayed on campus the majority of my time there and the last year or so I was off campus

Whitney: So

Joy Fennell: Yea, I'm sorry what you about to say

Whitney: Oh I was just going to ask were there any differences you saw between, so when you didn't stay on campus you commuted

Joy Fennell:... Um and difference?

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: um... I mean ya know living off campus you definitely have more freedom [laughing]

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: and you can really second guess whether you want to go to class

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: it's just like umm ya know, so but was there any big difference umm no I mean other than the fact I didn't live in a dorm experience any longer say no not really

Whitney: Maybe because it was

Joy Fennell: I mean, yea

Whitney: cause um, maybe because it was um your last couple years at UMD you had already been able to find your place

Joy Fennell: Mhm

Whitney: or make your own place within the campus

Joy Fennell: I'm definitely glad that I uh was able to utilize that and have a dorm experience

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: that to me is something if I had just lived off campus the whole time I would have felt disconnected to the uh whole college experience

Whitney:...

Joy Fennell: Um

Whitney: Which dorm did you happen to stay in?

Joy Fennell:...So I started in Towers and then I went um I think it was called Queen Ann, or um, over to the south side

Whitney: Uhuh

Joy Fennell: and actually my dorm was literally right down a hill from African American studies, so I could literally come right out and go right there

Whitney: Yea um I actually think that Queen Anne's is a writer's house now for people who are like in the creative writing program and everything

Joy Fennell: I can believe that

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: I can believe that, I can definitely believe that

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: it seemed like that kind of like space

Whitney: Really?

Joy Fennell: Yea

Whitney: Wow

Joy Fennell: Yea mhm

Whitney: And um we were wondering how you went about making friends at UMD especially because it was like you had started, I guess, at Howard and then here and start over

Joy Fennell: Well that was the depression

Whitney: Definitely

Joy Fennell: that I went through, I didn't know where to start, ya know I mean the thing about it is, luckily I have a, I don't know if Dr. Barkley Brown told you but I have a sister as well and I don't know if you guys set up anything with her, but um luckily she was already there so um, so I could kind of hangout with her, I think part of it um because I didn't know where to begin to make friends ya know um, I didn't know about the organizations and stuff

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: Let's be real a homecoming at Maryland is different than homecoming at an HBCU.

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: we ain't gonna act like it's not the case

Whitney: [laughing] definitely

Joy Fennell: Um yea

Whitney: That is crazy

Joy Fennell: so when I was there I was like I don't even know, I didn't know, that is why I think that I really appreciate the process because I didn't even know how to really maneuver in a room full of people not like me, ya know

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: and and of course ya know growing up with my own set of thoughts in my head it was like I constantly felt out of place

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: and so that was part of my thing, and I really really started trying to find ways to make friends, visit the Nyumburu Cultural Center, and I don't know if you guys still have Art Attack

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: Okay yea, go to Art Attack, is Art Attack the one where they have concerts

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: Oh okay yea so that was a lot of fun and that was when a lot of the students who weren't, who were Black would get together and have fun outside of myself and be like wellp I'm here so let me start making something out of this experience... the best, out of the situation and really refocus and really ya know like

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: ya know

Whitney: It's a lot

Joy Fennell: because I, I yea I also the whole I went to Howard and was like this is I'm longing for those homecomings and those days and I don't know were to start yet, ya know I look back now and I go yea ya know I was meant to be there and it was good it was a set

Whitney: It definitely seems like it was a learning experience and growing experience of learning to grow the courage to actually get out, put yourself out there and talk to people and make friends

Joy Fennell: Basically yea, it really was, it really was, uh yea, it totally was a growing experience ya know um I I don't know I would want to have it any other way

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: cause ya know I learned so much from other, ya know, just being around other, I think I loved the the just being around everyone now

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: But I was like okay I can do this, but it was definitely a learning experience [laughing]

Whitney: Yea [laughing]

Joy Fennell: I almost dropped out actually, Ima be honest with you

Whitney: Really??

Joy Fennell: Yea! Because I was always in my room I didn't want to come out, ya know I just, when I say depression is real, like my first semester at Maryland I got like a one point six seven or something like that

Whitney: Mmm

Joy Fennell: and that was like whoa, I've never made those kinds of grades before in my life, and that's when I knew something was, ya know, like really going, I I was just ya know, but sometimes once you see it and you going on if this is going on you gotta take the bull by the horns and go okay this is what happened

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: and you gotta move on, ya know

Whitney: Definitely, that's

Joy Fennell: And yea

Whitney: Oh yea I was just gonna say

Joy Fennell: Yea it was cool I was working on campus too I worked at the records office and I just had, Maryland I just have a special place in my heart for it, like I really do, like its gone through its time and everything, it does have its moments of racism ya know, we aren't gonna act like that doesn't exist, because it does, because I definitely remember a time with a friend and um we were uh looking for parking and my friend, whose a female, um was uh had tinted glass on her window or something like that and I remember we were going in the parking lot trying to look for parking going up and down or whatever and campus police pulled us over and the moment she let her window down you could clearly tell the shock that it was a woman

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: I was, they were, clearly shocked that it was a Black woman instead of a Black man in the car

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: so ya know I was like, I was like okay so immediately they were like okay you guys are fine, and I was just like I wonder how this situation would've gone if the situation was a Black man instead of a woman, so it's just like, so its just

Whitney: Yea definitely

Joy Fennell: so like there was always random and being in the *Diamondback* or random things sprawled on a window or wall or something like that ya know, so yea

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: I mean now that I know uh Maryland students are definitely, Black students have gone through a lot at Maryland, um but ya know hopefully its not as bad as it once, hopefully those situations are few and far between even though I did hear about the young man that got killed, was it last year?

Whitney: Yea in May

Joy Fennell: or the year before

Whitney: It was

Joy Fennell: it was highly disturbing to read about that

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: yea

Whitney: it was a young student from Bowie State who was actually here in May

Joy Fennell: Yea

Bridget: he was visiting friend

Joy Fennell: Yea I heard about that, so that was like oh my god I couldn't believe that, that really disturbed me to my core, I was like wow

Whitney: Definitely

Joy Fennell: so it's it's sad to see things are still happening now, but the great thing is that hopefully ya know we've been able to pave the way for younger generations so that don't have to put up with as much stuff

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: Ya know

Whitney: It's interesting that you say all these things just so similar to my experience here already [laughing]

Joy Fennell:

Whitney: My sister, yea my older sister was here when I started and I was like

Joy Fennell: Oh my gosh are you serious!?

Whitney: Yea [laughing]

Joy Fennell: Woww

Whitney: She was in her last year

Joy Fennell: How far apart are you guys

Whitney: We're four and a half years a part, she had to take a fifth year

Joy Fennell: Uhuh

Whitney: started and I remember my sister and I driving to college, I mean driving here and I was leaving my mom like waving on the porch on the porch

Joy Fennell: Oh my god

Whitney: and I was like I don't want to go

Joy Fennell: Oh my gosh me and my sister actually shared a room one semester, or two semester, I forgot, we almost killed each other so we had to stop that

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: Yea

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: oh my gosh so crazy, I mean the great thin, okay so I'm not even gonna lie I see where my tuition money went, yall are living the life on Maryland campus now

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: like I look back and I m like oh my god I see the student union now and I'm like I'm so jealous

Whitney: Really? What was the BSU like when you started?

Joy Fennell: Updated and like fancy free, I'm like technology, yall got a new stadium I'm like oh my god,

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: I'm jealous, I want to go to Maryland now

Whitney: [laughing] Oh my gosh... um also one thing that you said really stood out to me was being stopped by campus police because I was stopped by campus police for I guess jay walking

Joy Fennell: Yea

Whitney: I didn't even realize I was jay walking; I was just like its time for me to cross the street [laughing]

Joy Fennell: Mhm

Whitney: And they stopped us and I was thinking to myself I happened to be walking with a white guy and I was thinking what if it had been me and a Black guy

Joy Fennell: Yea

Whitney: or just me alone

Joy Fennell: You you do start to think about that stuff though

Whitney: and its so like

Joy Fennell: your like so, sorry what

Whitney: how those small micro aggressions could have progressed

Joy Fennell:... Yea, yea it it does make you it's almost like it take you back and remind you okay even though there has been advancements

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: this one act will make you revert back to where you've been in your mind

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: With things going on, ya know its like you could, those type of moments can be scary

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: you don't know where those moments can go

Whitney:... Definitely

Joy Fennell: and its just ya know its just its sad that one act can just ya know totally ruin everything else that's been positive

Whitney: Because it's just what you think about

Joy Fennell: Yea exactly, exactly, and its like all the things that have happened on Maryland campus that's amazing that is the one that sticks out and it ya know replace all that amazing stuff with getting stopped by the police ya know

Whitney: ...Definitely

Joy Fennell: Yea

Whitney: So you also said that you worked at the records office what's that

Joy Fennell: So, back when there was a bunch of paper

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: we had to like

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: I know, we had to like file, yea like student everything we had to put, they used to have record on every student with grades and we had to file everything and like uh if someone needed time off from school they had to fill out paper work and go in their file, and it was a lot

Whitney: I know I have to ask um did it, because, I actually had a similar job like that in high school and I read peoples transcripts and stuff did it make you

Joy Fennell: Yea

Whitney: How did you feel when you got to see everyone else's grades [laughing]

Joy Fennell:... well I mean, I mean some peoples grades are a lot better than other, for the most part it made me feel good

Whitney: Me too!

Joy Fennell: cause I was like

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: I was like whoa, ain't as bad as them

Whitney: [laughing] Definitely

Joy Fennell: of course I could like I think I had to sign confidentiality or something like that

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: so I couldn't go running my mouth or something like that grades or something

Whitney: but it's just something you see

Joy Fennell: but uh, yea

Whitney: and you're like okay so I'm not the only one struggling here

Joy Fennell: Yaaa exactly I was like I feel real good

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: Yes, I was really happy about that, yea

Whitney: So, where you an African American studies major when you started at Howard or did you decide that when you came here?

Joy Fennell: So I was actually in TV and film at Howard... I was um like in the school of communications

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: at Howard... um but when I first started at Maryland I transf, I changed my major to... speech language pathology, and I don't know what I was thinking with that, I was juts like

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: from the moment I got in I was like oh okay this is not, no [laughing], and then I changed it, I think I changed my major, I might have changed it to one more thing, and then I wound up changing it to African American studies, cause I just felt at home, yea I felt at home, um and I loved my classes that I took because I'm a history girl I love history so I can sit and listen to history all day long and once I took African American studies I felt like I was in history class and it was just very intriguing to me and it's so crazy how many people when I tell them when at the time what my major was, how many people will be like oh so you just going to learn how to be Black and I was like uh no. That's not what I'm learning, people don't realize how like involved that major is its socio, economics, its its, history its policy it's everything wrapped into one. Just learn how every single policy every single law that had every been introduced in this country is based on racism

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: and everything, every single thing in your life and how it dis-informs all your decision-making

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: So it's just really ya know, it was a really intense major, I had to do a thesis at the end, um, I would have to say I loved being an Afro Am major, so it was really really um life changing basically

Whitney: Yea that actually, that makes me think about what I'm doing cause I'm actually a Government major and History major, like I'm a double major, but I wanna go into civil rights law when I graduate

Joy Fennell: Oh really nice mhm

Whitney: So maybe I should look into African American studies, because like you said I'm a history girl as well [laughing] that's something that really drew me to the class that this interview is for the History of Black Women in America.

Joy Fennell: ... Mmm, yea and Dr. Elsa Barkley Brown yea she is a, she is the right stuff

Whitney: Yea [laughing]

Joy Fennell: her classes are amazing

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: so I actually um did a senior scholars program where my thesis, well she was my thesis advisor because at first it was Dr. Ronda Williams but Dr. Williams passed

Whitney: Oh

Joy Fennell: and so then I had to find another thesis advisor and soon became Dr. Brown and my thesis was basically on women in the civil rights movement and wanting to know like how were the plaintiffs in civil rights cases picked...um because it was, um and that in itself was really eye opening cause with Dr. Brown she was like, uh, it was just, I don't know it was so much I don't know how to

Whitney: Yea she's very knowledgeable

Joy Fennell: say every single things on the phone, but um just just to give you a quick run down, I decided to focus in on um... this lady named, um Esther McCready, and she was based in Baltimore and she went to nursing school and she actually was the plaintiff in a case against the University of Maryland Baltimore County, I think that's what it was, I have to look at my records again, um I might actually be saying some

wrong things, I gotta read my thesis, but um we just wanted talk bout how women were picked and how plaintiffs in general were picked

Whitney: MH

Joy Fennell: in the Civil Rights Movement, because and then also looking at um the cases involved at they started at the college level was using w=cause it was easier so discrimination in college

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: than other, ya know, other uh school systems

Whitney: Mmm Yeah

Joy Fennell: the disparity was so big in college that it was easy to be like oh you say separate but equal but we have a Black man and their in a class and he's in a closet

Whitney: Definitely

Joy Fennell: and and their like that's and like what

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: it was really interesting and uh I won a Senior Summer Scholars um, uh, scholarship for my work on that thesis

Whitney:

Joy Fennell: So that was pretty cool

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: that's pretty cool

Whitney:... that's definitely that's so gratifying and it sounds like it was a very informative thesis in the way that not that many people have researched or really delved into

Joy Fennell: Yea, yea, and that's the thing people don't realize just how much, like, things were different and how much people had to fight

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: to get one little thing and and I think that frustrates me because people just kind of take that for granted

Whitney: Yea... So um... as a whole what was the African American studies department like when you were here?

Joy Fennell: ...ummm I mean I think it was just it was very uh it was tough but it was it was family though

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: we could just go in the office and sit in there and talk and ya know after a while I think they wanted it to become a little bit more professional when it came out everybody hanging out in the office

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: but it was like family it was like, people we had a great time we learned a lot we wert ought though

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: we knew what we were doing and when it came to going after the university we were we would gather put together a plan or action and do what we need to do, ya know

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: now see that's another thing I kind makes me wonder some of these things going on now I don't know if there is a true plan for all of them like were is the plan

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: overly emotion and not really well thought out

Whitney: Mhm ya know honestly even though they might have wanted to make it more professional I think that what really helped the people and the students in the department was it being so close and a a family because I personally feel like you're better able to thrive and do well when you are around people

Joy Fennell: Mhm

Whitney: and who you're comfortable with so then you don't have to feel ashamed,

Joy Fennell: Mhm

Whitney: like oh I got a D on this assignment, ya know?

Joy Fennell: Mhm, yea, I remember when my best friend Karen she had her daughter like three or four and she could bring her to class

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: and she was just like... an she... and everybody knew and everybody knew ya know and it wasn't anything that was, a problem ya know

Whitney: Yea it's

Joy Fennell: It's just really like up our major even more

Whitney: Yea it's that atmosphere that makes you do well

Joy Fennell: Mhm Yea yea

Whitney: and then it's a mutual like respect and support

Joy Fennell: mhm yup

Whitney: that's very cool to hear about, um

Joy Fennell: thanks

Whitney: So what were your professors like, did you feel like you were represented in the classes that you took? Even outside of your major?

Joy Fennell: Umm the crazy part is the classes outside of my major, those classes didn't really have an impact on me as much

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: as my major they were, I guess it was like, I was saying earlier my favorite is history and unless I was taking a history class or something ya know

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: But I just loved Afro American Studies so much that ya know everything else was an after thought

Whitney: Yea, I just ask because like personally I took a women's studies class when I was a freshman and I was like what is this

Joy Fennell: Mhm

Whitney: because it wasn't representative of my experience in feminism

Joy Fennell: Mhm, well okay so, okay this is an interview right?

Whitney: Yes

Joy Fennell: I was gonna say feminism in general isn't really inclusive of ya know Black women

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: and what we go through and and I think sometimes we don't really understand it

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: and I don't want to assume, well first of all I shouldn't assume you are Black to begin with

Whitney: Oh no I am [laughing]

Joy Fennell: So

Whitney: I thought I said I was, but yea

Joy Fennell: Ah yea I didn't want to assume, cause I was like

Whitney: [laughing] Yea sorry

Joy Fennell: So anyways women's studies classes as well and that's actually how I met Dr. Barkley Brown

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: I've taken um doctor never shatermare?, um she taught women and sex worker class

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: and that was a really good, that class was amazing I was like wow that class is good, but um yea um yea I think um just when it comes to women's studies they they don't really include all women

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: in this discussion and that, that in itself can be frustrating

Whitney: Yea, so do you feel that faculty representation influenced your learning experience in your classes?

Joy Fennell: Oh yea definitely, definitely cause I ya know I'm I'm the type of person if yours not engaging basically if you're boring I'm not in it.

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: you gotta keep my attention, that's why I felt so connected at the African American studies major and in some cases some of the women's studies because I felt this really spoke to me and is important to me in my life

Whitney: Yea, so what about the like the student representation, even outside of your major did you feel like I'm the only Black person here, or I'm the only women in this class, or did you feel like represented in your classes

Joy Fennell: We are talking about the University of Maryland right?

Whitney: Yea [laughing]

Joy Fennell: I mean like yea

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: yea it's a lot I left out in a lot of African American studies, I was the only Black person in a lot of African American studies classes that I was in

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: So yea

Whitney: Do you think that affected your learning experience?

Joy Fennell: ... um sometimes I think consciously and subconsoiuly I don't know if uh you might not realize it affects you until afterwards

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: and sometimes you might not ever realize it affects you, but it has had an affect on you

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: Ya know

Whitney: Yea definitely

Joy Fennell: I just think that is in general, that is racism though, ya know

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: that that is the definition to me of what racism can do to a people ya know it affects you consciously and subconsciously

Whitney: Mhm... yea ... honestly interviewing you has already been a pleasure because I feel like it was a perfect match honestly

Joy Fennell: Aww thank you, I appreciate it, I was so nervous I was like

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: I've never really ya know I I never really done this in such a long time

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: and ya know now I'm a makeup artist oh you went to college and I'm like ya don't get it twisted

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: I'm still involved even in fashion, uh hello

Whitney: Yea I'm still here

Joy Fennell: oh sounded like you got cut off

even in fashion representation in in print and media and stuff and just ya know having people of color representing and being represented and down to they can just go down to the store and find something that matches

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: so it it African American studies university of Maryland have informed who and I am where my elegancies lie.

Whitney: Mhm, definitely... So I guess one of the last things I wanted to ask you about I know you were part of the freedom school movement and you participated in the BSU

Joy Fennell: Mhm

Whitney: and I was just wondering what roles you had in them, did you have an administrative student role within the group or did you go to participate and make friends like you said

Joy Fennell: Yea I wouldn't have formal roles

Whitney: yea

Joy Fennell: Uh in the freedom school I probably had something I just don't

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: remember what it technically was, but I mean like yea I was participated it was never like I got elected or something like that

Whitney: yea, but you were still an active ember which

Joy Fennell: Mhm

Whitney: means just as much

Joy Fennell: Mhm I definitely was an active member

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: Yea...yea

Whitney:... So umm now that you're a makeup artist and you said your still fighting the good fight and I was just thinking well she's a makeup artist and an African

American studies major she probably, before you even said that, she probably find inclusive brands for things and just makeup in general

Joy Fennell: Mhm, Yea I mean not only am I just trying to find inclusive makeup for clients I'm also trying to find inclusion for me

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: in this industry, because when I first started it wasn't even, it was a handful of Black people in the in the high fashion industry, I'm not talking about oh I did makeup on a college fashion show, just be in the pages of major magazines

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: with you name in there ya know

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: I was also experience racism on my end as well

Whitney: Yea

Joy Fennell: so its just trying to kinda change that narrative for the people now I'm seeing like a big shift of people every where and like they can do fashion or can be in that world when before it wasn't

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: we were relegated to certain kind of magazines and that was it ya know

Whitney: Yea, um how did you become a makeup after you um, came to UMD, was it something you decide after college or something you'd always wanted to do?

Joy Fennell: nah honestly I was still in college

Whitney: Really

Joy Fennell: and I was just like I can not write another paper

Whitney: [laughing]

Joy Fennell: I can't read another book, I just cant and I decided to take a semester off

Whitney: Uhuh

Joy Fennell: from Maryland and that's how I fell into makeup because I was like how am I gonna explain this to my mother she is not gonna be happy, cause I only had one semester to go

Whitney: Oh wow

Joy Fennell: and I was just like I'm sitting here and leaving school I was just like mmm

Whitney: [laughter]

Joy Fennell: I was just like well maybe if I have a job shell feel better about it

Whitney: Mhm

Joy Fennell: and won't be so ya know like upset

Whitney: Uhuh

Joy Fennell: so I always used to do my makeup and I always used to have friends talk about how they like did and I used t o walk past the mac counter

Whitney: [laughter]

Joy Fennell: and I thought well maybe I can get a job there and I did

Whitney: Wow, that's honestly everything just fell into place, that's so nice to hear

Joy Fennell: Yea, I mean I could go into more of the story but that's a long story so ill do that another time

Whitney: [laughing]... Alright...well honestly it has been just a great pleasure to interview you, and um

Joy Fennell: Thank you, thank you

Whitney: and I just feel like it was a perfect match it defiantly increased my optimism about being at UMD despite everything that's been going on and happening

Joy Fennell: Mhm

Whitney: and still happening

Joy Fennell: Mhm

Whitney: It was very nice and I'm really glad you gave us your time to talk with us

Joy Fennell: well thank you guys so much it was a pleasure talking to you all I appreciate it and good luck with your project