

Dr. Ronald Copeland '73
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Black Lives
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Transcribed by Jelinda Metelus '22

METELUS: All right, well, my name is Jelinda Metelus. I'm currently in the Maxwell apartments [Maxwell Hall] at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. And I am doing a Zoom interview with Dr. Ronald Copeland, who is a member of the class of 1973 and is currently in Oakland, California. Today is Saturday, October 30, 2021 and it is a little bit past 11am Eastern. This interview is for the Dartmouth Black Lives Oral History Project. So, hello, Dr. Copeland, thank you so much for joining me today. How are you?

COPELAND: I'm fine, good morning to you.

METELUS: Great! Thank you. So, first I'd just like to learn a little bit more about your childhood. So, first, can you please state when and where you were born?

COPELAND: Yes, I was born in Rochester, New York. I'm one of eight children, so I have seven siblings. My formative years were all growing up in Rochester, New York. My parents grew up in Atlanta, Georgia during their formative years and were part of the migrations of many Black people after the war to come North to escape the impact of Jim Crow's racial segregation and to try to find better opportunities for themselves and a future for the children.

METELUS: And when were you born?

COPELAND: 1951. July 5th.

METELUS: Great! And do you mind telling me quickly the full names of your parents?

COPELAND: The full names are Claude and Sarah Copeland.

METELUS: Great, and what did your parents do for a living? I know you said

that they left Atlanta, was it, in order to escape Jim Crow? So, when exactly did they move? What did they move for? Obviously, to escape Jim Crow, but more for like work as well? Was that move helpful in any way?

COPELAND: Well, of course, you know, when they, I'm the fourth in the birth order of eight children, so you know when they moved and the particular challenges they faced up north. I don't have a lot of details about that in terms of real time, but probably what is most informative to your question is neither one of my parents had the opportunity in the South to complete formal high school education. Well, let me, let me correct that. My mother finished high school. My father had to drop out of school in the ninth grade to take care of the family. So, when they came North, my father was a construction worker and my mother was a medical records clerk at the University of Rochester Medical Center.

METELUS: That's so interesting! And what would you say your family dynamic was? I know you said you're one of eight [laughs] so how is that? Growing up in such a large family?

COPELAND: Well, it was a lot of fun, because you had a built in team. When we were, you know, playing games in a neighborhood we had a wide range of generations. And the split was four boys and four girls. And one of the things it taught me is really around team dynamics, finding your own identity in a large group so that you're still a unique individual, but yet also recognize you're part of something bigger than yourself. And the issue of collaboration to get things done. We split up family chores and worked on things together, and when it came to holidays or birthdays, those types of things, we had a ready-made congregation, if you will, because of the size of the family.

METELUS: So, would you say that this idea of finding who you are in the midst of a group is something that your parents really implemented? Were they very keen on making sure that you guys felt like you had your individual attention and time, or is that just something that happened pretty naturally because you were one of multiple siblings?

COPELAND: Well, it certainly happened, and my parents, you know, certainly cultivated that. Whether they were doing it as a formal strategy or not I was too young to appreciate.

METELUS: That's true. [laughs] That would make sense. So, what was it like growing up in Rochester, New York? I know you said that you guys would play a lot together, but what was it like growing up in that neighborhood during the time you did?

COPELAND: Well, what I remember is, early on in our life, where we lived was a neighborhood that had been predominantly occupied by white Italian families and there was a slow integration into those communities. And I remember, in some cases, our neighbors being receptive to us arriving there and living there, and in other cases of people being very hostile. You know, in terms of, "this is our neighborhood." "Why are you coming here?" "Your customs and your approach to life, and so on, is different than ours." So, it was probably some of my first encounters with some of the challenges that now I look back, understanding history of migration and neighborhood segregation and all those dynamics that's really what I was experiencing and getting observation of, but really didn't have a full understanding of it. It was just, in some cases, why are people behaving this way? What are the issues and understanding that.

And I would say, probably the thing that crystallized that in my mind, that there was something different, was one of my classmates in school, because all of us living in the neighborhood went to the local elementary school, and there we, we were all colleagues and friends and classmates and we just acted accordingly. And this individual would come to my house, he was a white student, he would come over to my house, we are like a couple of blocks away from each other, where we live, he would come to my house and play, and so on. And we became really pretty good friends just you know playing marbles, throwing baseballs at each other and all that kind of stuff, but one time, he said, "Why don't you come over my house and play today" and I said "fine" and I came over his house, we were out in his backyard playing, and his mother happened to look out the window and saw that we were playing. And I saw this very anxious look on her face and she came out of the house and grabbed him by the arm and said, "you can't play with him" and took

him into the house. And I was, again, kind of startled by that. Wasn't clear why that was happening, what the rationale was. And so from that moment on, then our relationship, which had been pretty friendly before then kind of got a little distant. So, when I characterize the living circumstance, in terms of neighborhood, I was getting glimpses of the dynamics of society around the issue of race, without it being called out or named as such, but I remembered all those incidents and then later in life, certainly began to understand that.

METELUS: Wow, so when the two of you would play at your house was his mother not aware?

COPELAND: Apparently, apparently not. Unbeknownst to me because I don't know what kind of conversation he had with his mother when he went home and when she asked him "what have you been doing today?" or something. He may have just said "playing with a friend." But it was clear that to me during the encounter I just described that she had no idea that one of his best friends and playmates was Black.

METELUS: That's so interesting because, it seems like you grew up in this neighborhood where you were around more white people, so you had that experience so even, we'll get into this more, but even this idea of moving from Rochester, New York then to Dartmouth. Like having that experience is something that I think is pretty unique when it comes to a Black student coming to Dartmouth like just the fact that they have had more encounters with white people understand that, like they're going to be a lot of challenges.

Yeah great so I'm kind of wondering how you ended up then getting to Dartmouth? So, the schools you attended, how they helped propel you to end up actually applying and then attending Dartmouth?

COPELAND: Well, I went to James Madison High School, which was a local high school in our neighborhood and that was a pretty integrated school. And I remember some of the transition that occurred when my oldest sister was attending high school at that same school and I was in elementary school. I would, because I had a keen interest in

sports, I would go to some of the sporting events, the football games that were going on and so forth. [coughs] Excuse me, and what I noticed was, at during her time as a junior and senior the predominant presence of athletes on the team, football and so on, were again white Italians, for the most part, because that was the neighborhood that we were living in and there were a sprinkling of Black students who were athletes as well. But, as she went through and then my two older sisters went through and then I've mentioned went from grammar school or elementary school rather to, to junior high school at the school, I noticed the composition of the class started to shift. That there were more Black students and fewer white students. And I also noticed that in the neighborhoods in terms of people moving in and people moving out. So, there certainly was a correlation there, but I was an active athlete. Played sports every season. Played football, played basketball, baseball in the spring, and excelled at playing football, and so my high school football coach happened to know of, and be associated, with Coach Blackman [Bob Blackman] who was the varsity football coach at Dartmouth during my senior year, and so this was you know 1969 kind of a timeframe.

He came to me, one day, because I was an outstanding student and athlete and was acknowledged for that, he thought it would be a great idea for me to consider going to Dartmouth to play football. And he came to me, one day, after practice and said, "I know a coach at a college, and I think you'd be a great candidate to go there and have a great chance of succeeding both because your academic performance, and your athletic performance, and is that you might be interested in?" And I was, like most seniors at that time, trying to determine about going to school and where to go to school and how to afford it, and so forth. And so, he set up and arranged for me to apply to Dartmouth, based on his understanding and conversation with that particular coach. And I went through the application process, applying to several schools, including Dartmouth, but really didn't know much about Dartmouth. I had no insight at that time about quote unquote the Ivy League and the distinction that schools that are part of that group have for their brand and reputation for education and so forth. So, I was thinking strictly of the opportunity to go to college. My parents were very clear that education is something that no matter what the

circumstances are, people can't take that away from you so go as far as you can, aim high and so forth. And of my siblings I was the first one to actually go to and complete a four-year college education. Two of my older sisters went to junior colleges, community colleges, and got their two-year associate degrees, but at that time did not go all the way to complete the four-year degrees.

So, I got word that I had been accepted at Dartmouth, and everybody around me— the coach, people in the neighborhoods— seem to be pretty excited about. I even saw a small article in our local newspaper that James Madison High School student, Ron Copeland going to Dartmouth— kind of a promotion thing. So, everybody was making a big deal of it, but it was kind of mystery to me what the case was because I'd never heard of Dartmouth, I probably heard of Harvard a few times so when I began to make the association and do a little education, then I understood some of the prestige that's associated with that. But the other side of it was where it was located in Hanover, New Hampshire. So, I had some concerns about what that environment would be like, but I was up for the adventure, so I went there. Now the ironic thing is what I learned at that time I believe policy is that athletic scholarships are not given out. If you play sports it's because you love the sports and you want to have those extra curricular activities, but athletic scholarships were not given out to make it dependent on playing in order to go to school and achieve your education. So, during the break between the end of my senior year and the late summer, fall when school is going to start, or even practice was going to start for football, I broke my ankle at a class picnic. We were having to celebrate achieving graduate from high school— broke my ankle in two places and was on crutches with a cast all summer. So, obviously, wasn't going to be able to play football during that freshman year. And, when I got to the school for summer program, it was clear that the football opportunity was probably not going to be realized on a formal basis. So, as much as I love the game and wanted to have that, as part of my educational experience, it ended up that I never tried out for the football team because of that injury. Because once my freshman year was done and I had missed that first year—talking with some of my friends and fellow students who were playing on the football team, it was pretty clear that would be

a pretty tough catch up game. And so I never did play football for Dartmouth.

METELUS: Interesting! Okay, so, just to go back for a second, Coach Blackman? Would you happen to know his first name?

COPELAND: Wow, I'm not sure I remember his name. He's the legendary coach at Dartmouth, so that would be pretty easy to research. 1969 [laughs] there's only one Coach Blackman at Dartmouth College. I'm thinking Jim Blackman, but I couldn't attest to that.

METELUS: No worries, no worries at all! And then, I'm not sure if you said this, what number in your—that's an odd way of putting it—in your siblings are you? Are you the middle child?

COPELAND: Yeah, kinda, I'm the fourth in the birth order, but I'm the first son.

METELUS: Ah okay, okay. That must have been, you know, a nice change for your parents.

COPELAND: Oh yeah, my mother has stories and stories to tell about the celebration that occurred because my father was insistent, "I want a son. I want a son." He had had three daughters, who he loved dearly, but he wanted that first son, and so, when I came along, it was quite a celebration.

METELUS: Yeah, I'll bet. And then the other thing I wanted to delve into a little bit more is that idea of the scholarship. So, you were you [pause] Dartmouth didn't offer sports scholarships, so you were able to get a scholarship through academics, correct?

COPELAND: Well, yeah, I mean I financed my undergraduate education through grants or scholarship in some part, the other part, the other part was working. So, I worked in the cafeteria as part of paying for my meals and books and so on. And then each summer, when we were on break, I obviously was working and saving my money to bring that back as well. Because my parents, as excited as they were about me being accepted to college— and then learning more about being accepted to an Ivy league College and the potential opportunities that provide it— we clearly could not afford it. My

parents were a working class family with eight children to care for so there was no investment, no savings or anything of that nature to finance and so grants, loans, and work study was really the way I navigated the financial management through school.

METELUS: Okay, that makes sense. And where you're—so did your younger siblings, so you're younger brothers, then, were they able to go to four year institutions as well, afterwards?

COPELAND: Ah, no. They had opportunities, but the brother who was two years younger than me, he went into a program. He, during high school, he left the neighborhood high school that we all went to and he went to a new technology school. It was called Edison Technology School in Rochester and he learned technical trades and wanted to go that direction. And so, he had skills that were marketable at that time and went right into an industrial organization, where he could apply those skills and move up in his career that way. And so he never went and got a four-year degree, but leveraged that and then advanced forward in his community. My younger brother, after him, he completed high school and he decided that he was going to gain his education through military service. So, he enlisted in the United States air force after high school and wanted to travel the world, see the world, gain the skill, but he stayed for 25 years and retired from the air force at a fairly young age. But while there, he obtained his bachelor degree and two masters degrees. So, he leveraged the educational opportunities, the air force had to achieve his education and then came out into civilian life and is a Master of Science technology researcher at a library in Seattle Washington, that's what he's been doing kind of for his second career. And then my youngest brother, he did complete high school, got an associate degree, and worked at Kodak for many years, in their technology field as well.

METELUS: Okay. Alright, great, so I kind of now want to jump— because I know you started touching on it anyway— so I kind of want to start getting into that because I think it'll be so interesting. About your transition from New York to Hanover I know you said you had a couple of concerns just knowing geographically, the location, given the time. So, how did you feel stepping onto Dartmouth's campus for the first time and did you visit it all before your freshman fall?

COPELAND: No, no, I didn't visit. My first entry on the campus was as part of a summer program called The Bridge Program. The College had organized that the current Black students attending Dartmouth at that time to form a bridge program that took sophomores, juniors, seniors to organize an experience to get us oriented to the campus, the geography, the College atmosphere, and to use their experience, as upperclassmen on how to navigate that school. And my class happened to have a 90, as I recall, of us as part of that freshman class coming in and '69 and graduated in '73. And the summer we went into residence [we were] there for— I'm vaguely remembering if it was about four weeks or even two weeks, something of that nature—where we were on campus every day we had specific programs, lectures, experience that they brought us together, conversations with upperclassmen about navigating academics and so on. And we also had the ability to take some classes to get oriented to what some of the classes were like and for those that were interested if you wanted to. Take tests and opt out some of the basic classes, have them under your belt and get credit for it, you had the opportunity to do that. So, it was really an orientation, onboarding, socialization to the environment. And part of the messaging in context was navigating the campus and then the other parts were helping us appreciate, given all the different areas— geographic areas— that are class represented, how to navigate New Hampshire and just understand the environment. And they were pretty clear that life and experience on the campus was one thing, but to the degree that you leave campus and go in different directions, be aware that you're in kind of a foreign land and people may have different reactions to your presence.

METELUS: So, it wasn't even necessarily like—or I'm sure this was an aspect, maybe, but— it's not like how to navigate Hanover. As in, this is the direction you go to get to this coffee shop, it was how to navigate Hanover so you are safe?

COPELAND: Yeah, yeah it was both. It was the actual navigation of the campus and the classrooms and all that business. Be familiar with that, so you don't have— the real spirit of this was to accommodate and accustomize you to that experience, knowing that it was probably very different than where any or each of us came from, so that we'd

have fewer barriers to overcome when school actually started live and everyone was on campus. And, therefore, disproportionate focus and energy could be on academic achievement and not getting lost in adapting to the environment that a lot of our peers might have already been accustomed to, because they may have gone to prep schools or other things that they were aware of the system and how it navigated and work. And the fraternity systems and all those things, for a lot of us, those are all foreign ideas and concepts. That we have no experiential background on so just understanding context, roles and so forth, just to minimize barriers that would potentially disrupt focus on the educational aspects.

METELUS: And did it make you feel—how did that make you feel? I imagine it might be, there might be two sides to it. So, did you feel more “othered” and get more nervous about starting the new year or were you more just grateful that somebody was telling you all this, so you could have the heads up?

COPELAND: Oh, it was greatly appreciated it. We felt very connected and, when the program was over, and people went home and then came back to start school in earnest, it was good to come back to the campus with familiarity of it, even though not at the same level as some of our peers, but to know people, to know names, to know faces, and to have some of the navigation out of the way gave us, I think, a good head start and moving forward. And knowing who was available, what resources were available and that kind of thing. So, I thought it was well run, and some of those relationships that were cultivated during that summer program with some of the upperclassmen as mentors and so forth really pay dividends during our time there, and some of those have been lifelong professional and personal relationships.

METELUS: That's amazing. I know that you were President of the Afro-American Society, and I'm super excited to get into that, but I was just wondering, were you involved in any other organizations on campus once you realized that football was not going to be an option anymore? Did you get involved in anything else?

COPELAND: Well, we got a lot of encouragement from some of the upperclassmen and some of the counselors that were available to

explore the campus and don't be just enclosed in your own world, explore and connect. And a lot of my peers took advantage of that. I was pretty focused on my work and the only thing I ventured out into was— and again—it's a long time ago, but there was—one of the upperclassmen at that time, Willie— what was Willie's last name [William (Willie) Bogan]? He was an outstanding football player there and a Rhodes Scholar. And I'm for some reason I'm blanking on his last name right now but-

METELUS: No worries.

COPELAND: He was acknowledged and became part of a fraternity [pause] And, it wasn't a routine fraternity. It was one that was identified around people being athletic and sports or single minded, in addition to their academic achievement. And he was a member of that, and then I guess through his presence or perhaps through his recommendations, a handful of my peers, my Black peers, were asked to consider to become part of that group. It was an honor society or some type and I was selected and asked to participate in that and did so and became a member of that group— that honor society. But that was really the only outreach that I had or did during my time there. Most of my time was focused on academic and then, when I got more familiar with the work of the Afro-American Society and got active in that and started to spend more time with that work and the leaders of the group, and some of the social activities engagements with that— and that, subsequently, he was asked to serve as a president— that's where my extra time went. Because I had decided to be a Biology major with a minor in psychology and was thinking about medical school. So, I had pretty rigorous coursework and that's where most of my time and energy was going.

METELUS: Ah okay, and just confirming that you don't remember the name of that society that you're a part of.

COPELAND: Yeah I mean, I can kind of see it, but it again, it was something— even though I was honored by being asked to join it and be recognized and agreed to go through the process and be a formal member— it was nothing that I really embraced and became active

in. And so it was kind of like, okay, I appreciate the recognition but I didn't invest a lot of time and energy in it.

METELUS: That's fair. That's definitely fair. Kind of going back a little bit, you said you were a Bio major with a minor in psych, so I was kind of wondering, given those two areas take a lot of coursework, as you were saying, what the relationship was like with professors at this time. Because I imagine that, I mean professors are people too, and I'm sure they had their own thoughts about there being more Black people on campus. What was your experience like interacting with the professors in these departments? Did you find them to be helpful? Not? Either way.

COPELAND: Well, I mean it's hard to talk about them as if they were a monolith. You meet one professor, you meet one professor. I mean I think they all took their courses and their professionalism very seriously. As I can recall, they all reached out to all students and offered if you need additional help with studies — or counseling or mentoring and so on certain constructs they provided pretty good availability. And when we were doing some of the research projects, the folks who were assigned for us to work with were very helpful, very instructive and so forth. So, from an educational standpoint, and teacher professor standpoint, I think they did a great job at least the ones I had.

The thing that was obvious and noticeable was when you looked at who the professors were at Dartmouth at that time, particularly in the sciences and chemistry and so on. I didn't see many professors on campus who looked like me. And so I think it was either in my sophomore year or junior year one of the organic chemistry professors was a Black professor, had just come on board as kind of a new hire, and that was something that felt very good, very engaging, and even more so because he outreach to us to make sure that anything you can do to help us and be successful and in the coursework and as a career mentor and so on, that he made himself available. And, again, I'm sure the natural question would be do you remember the name of that professor [laughs] And again, this is, you know we're talking, you know almost what 40, 45 years ago somewhere in that time frame so there are people I remember, I see their faces, but in terms of names, because

they've not been reinforced, they've not been in ongoing communications that connects with folks, just not, not at the tip of my tongue.

METELUS: No, there's no problem with that at all. There's that saying that's like people might not remember what you said and, in this case, people not might not remember your name, if it's been a lot of years, but they remember how you made them feel.

COPELAND: Yeah, yeah

METELUS: And that's important because he made you feel more welcomed.

COPELAND: Yeah I mean what comes to mind is a Professor Williams for this Black chemistry Professor but I'm not, I couldn't swear to that's his last name.

METELUS: No worries at all! Great, so kind of now that we touched on academics, a bit I kind of want to go into the social peace, because I know you were very heavily involved, obviously, in the Afro-American Society. And you came to campus as a freshman in 1969 and that's the time when the Parkhurst Takeover happened, correct? And were you on campus at that time already?

COPELAND: In '69?

METELUS: I know you were a freshman in '69, but during the Parkhurst Takeover, specifically. So, when that protest happened to protest, the ROTC Program.

COPELAND: I don't have a strong memory of that event, so that may have occurred before we actually came on campus we know we started campus late summer, early fall is when we actually showed up and what I recall is just a stream during my whole four years there, because of the Vietnam War and a protest against that, because of the evolving revolution around discrimination against Black people, the Civil Rights Movement, and then the different elements of the of the Black movement for freedom and justice. All of that was just kind of integrated and ongoing on a continuous basis. And some of that was very evident on the campus and certain events or just on a

day-to-day basis and the culture and other things were going on outside of our door around the country, around the globe. And people heard about those things, of course, we didn't have social media at that time so we hear about events, and then there might be conversations or speakers coming to the campus to talk about certain of these issues and students discussing them. And again, a microcosm of the country people having different political views, social, political views, and sometimes those things clash. There were a lot of protests on campus around different events and so forth, and certain groups decided to partner and collaborate together as allies on certain events. So, I remember all of that kind of dynamic and action going on on a pretty regular basis.

METELUS: So, kind of to break that down because there was so much going on, I kind of want to start off by going through maybe like Vietnam and the effect that had on the campus and then going more into Black people on campus fighting for equality fighting for just general real freedom

COPELAND: Yeah.

METELUS: But, starting with Vietnam, kind of interested in how that affected dynamics of race, on campus. So, were there integrated protests? Were there ever times where, if there were integrated protests, where there was some tension, because, obviously, I mean, like Black people being on campus and in this capacity was new to probably many of the white students on campus. So, anything about that.

COPELAND: Well, yeah, I mean certainly the presence of larger numbers of Black students on the campus was an adaption just like at the end of my four years when the board for Dartmouth made the decision that that the campus would now be coed for the first time in a formal sense. We would always be a small number of women students have begged me to be there for special projects, but it turns up being admitted and graduated from Dartmouth, you know that was something that didn't even get approved until my senior year and then most of the changes that occurred with that were after I had left the College. But as relates to the Vietnam war because, as I said, because these things were all going on

simultaneously, how they impacted the race conversation was a bit mixed because, for example, with Vietnam War, the polarization was around, are you for the war or against the war. And so there were Black and brown people on each side of that equation, for their own or for different reasons. But the focus was: are you for the war or not, and how that showed up on the campus and debates and protesting and different ways people tried to express themselves, and then, of course, a lot of concern during my time there was around the changes in the draft laws that now created the lottery and people had to get assigned numbers and some people's careers and so on were disrupted because of that. And a lot of concerned people who were really anti-war and anti-draft left and moved to Canada and all other ways of trying to deal with that. And the only question that came up that in that conversation that I recall, that was prevalent around race was that Black students faced with those same issues have the same options of getting around that if they didn't believe in the war that some of our white colleagues had in terms of the finances, connections with politicians, or ways of getting around the draft, if you will, in some form or fashion. So, those conversations where we're certainly part of it, but it was really all focused around the war, anti-war, and protesting and who became allies, based on their political beliefs, more so than the color of their skin or their gender.

METELUS: Great, and just to clarify that means that for Black and brown people, are you saying that they did not have those connections to be able to get out of the draft in the same way that their white colleagues did?

COPELAND: Well, it was certainly our understanding and appreciation, you know, when you talk among your peers about some of these issues that conversations. Those types of issues and topics came up because we know that, while we're all students at Dartmouth in our real life situations, and how our people were positioned in the country, Some of those options were not available at the same scale or prevalence. And so those were part of the conversations as well.

METELUS: And, did you ever have cause for concern of actually being drafted?

COPELAND: Yes, I mean, again you're going to school with plans to complete college, education and train for your profession and the whole deal and the thought that that might be disrupted now because of a sudden change in the draft laws. So, there was the concern and fear about having your college education totally disrupted. And then the other part, was how you felt about the war and going forward. And I, you know I think I was probably, you know, I was not unique in the sense that as I, even though I was now a student at Dartmouth, I have contact and lots of high school friends that I grew up with who had been drafted into the war and communicating with them and their families in the neighborhood and what's going on was concerned about some of the stories I was hearing about you know the loss of life and then those that when they came back and had drug addictions, and so on, so we were looking at all of that, as part of is this worth it. And the concerns about the disruption of our personal plans for education and achieving some of the goals and aspirations that we had and that our families have for us.

METELUS: Okay wow.

COPELAND: Because a lot of the students in my class— we were the class that had the largest number of Black and brown students in the freshman class. I think there were 90 in our class and that was unprecedented up to that point. And so there was kind of this wave of students on campus for the first time that the Dartmouth community, the Hanover community had never experienced at that level and prevalence. So, that was a visual, as well as an experiential, change for that whole environment.

METELUS: Right. What would you say was the feeling, as a Black student on campus at that time, what could you feel was in the air? Was there any tension in the air given that— and I don't even mean just for students on campus but for the larger Hanover area, given we are situated in a place where we do take up a majority of the town.

COPELAND: Yeah, I mean, given how small Hanover is and how tight, you know long standing traditions and pre-existing relationships there were between people on the College and the community it served. It was a disruption, because the county, the campus but the community of Hanover was not accustomed to having the high percentages of

Black and brown people around at that time. So, that was a big cultural shift for the region, and not everybody was receptive to that. Some people felt like we were being invaded, and what we know or have heard of or our belief systems or our myths about Black students Black people from city environments and urban environments. Because the 90 students that were there, while we had in common our ethnicity and gender, if you will, we were from very diverse segments of the country and very diverse elements of the cities within where we came in terms of our backgrounds our lived experiences, and how we dress how we thought how we communicate it wasn't a monolithic, but it was it might have been viewed by the Hanover natives as monolithic, but it was highly diverse. And I think it took a long while for folks to get used to that. Honoring the relationship with Dartmouth as a big institution there and an anchor for jobs and other things. But at the same time, a big cultural shift and adjustment. Sometimes when folks are operating from fear or anxiety because of newness sparks fly and events can happen that can create you know more traumatic situations in terms of misunderstandings or arguments or accusations, or whatever the case might be. And didn't see a lot of that, but certainly some of that did occur.

METELUS: And would you say you felt safe, while you're on campus? In relation to what you've just said, did you—

COPELAND: Yeah I think we felt safe in Hanover and on campus but you know lots of upperclassmen had warned us as part of our orientation and so on, "you're going to be fine in within these boundaries, but if you leave these areas and go off into you know across the border into Vermont or other areas, just understand that people are not accustomed to seeing people like us in these areas and may be alarmed. That's always a potential risk in some form or fashion." And there were a few incidents, not prevalent, by any stretch of imagination, where individuals off campus, going into other towns and so on, really came back and said that they encountered some folks who were really negative and threatening and be very careful about that. So, that was part of it. Fortunately it didn't appear to be a big problem, and I think part of that was because, with those warnings and understandings many of us conducted ourselves as doing most of what we had to do either on campus and that's

relative safety or going to Boston or other areas, as opposed to some of the more rural areas that were surrounding the campus.

METELUS: No, that makes sense. So, when it came to feeling safe on campus I know you said off campus, going to Boston, was a better situation. When it came to being on campus, where did you live throughout your time at Dartmouth dorm wise?

COPELAND: Oh yeah I lived right on campus in the dorms. You know we all got assigned dorm assignments when we first came on board as freshmen and if I recall I think I might have been in Lord Hall, if I remember correctly. But I was in one of the dorm halls and we all had our different assignments. Some had roommates, some were singles etc. And then later on when the Afro-American Society, I had one of the dorms transformed to the El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple, if you will, that's how we referred to it, a number of us were moved into that dorm to actually live there. So, my first two years I lived I think in Lord Hall, and then my junior and senior year I was staying at the temple.

METELUS: Ah okay and so you lived in Shabazz junior and senior year and you were President also your junior year into your senior year?

COPELAND: Yeah, yeah

METELUS: Okay, great. And, actually, in Rauner [Special Collections Library] there are executive meeting notes from one of your Afro-American Society meetings. And I saw that part of that meeting, you spoke about how you would go about choosing who would have priority to live in Shabazz. So, obviously I'm a Black student at Dartmouth and Shabazz is obviously an option for me, and there was an application process and everything like that. There is now, was there an application process back then, or was it kind of more just like people would apply and then the society would choose.

COPELAND: Well, when we first created that there was no real formalized process per se, that I can recall. I mean, of course, if you were going to move your residency that had to be worked through the Dartmouth process because they had to have obviously a close documentation of where students were living in their occupancy

and so on, so those had to be achieved. But in turns of selections, you know many of the students had selected fellow Black roommates when they came in as freshmen, and so they were fine in their current situations and had no desire or need to move. And so we, as I recall, I think we did— there was only a limited number of rooms available in that space because the way we were going to use that particular dorm as more of a cultural center than actual living scenario. And so for the handful that were there, I think it was a number of people were asked if they were interested to volunteer and some folks volunteered and then selections are made. But I don't remember it ever being really controversial or a lot of people, you know jockeying for a handful of rooms to stay there. I can't even remember if you were an officer of the Afro-American Society if those individuals in that group were given preference or not, when we first launched it. And how it evolved or or created over time, and what it looks like now, I couldn't tell. It was a long, long time ago.

METELUS: Yeah, in those notes actually you guys were still considering whether or not to give people in the Afro-American Society preference. I don't fully remember the order, but there was an order that you guys were considering. So, it's very interesting to just speak to you about that, because you were in the room talking about the notes that I was looking at. And then also in those notes, thinking about the idea of Shabazz and what you wanted it to be. You specifically, as the President, but also as the society as a whole. I know that one of the things that you were fighting for, at the time were the runoff elections for the College Committee on Standing and Conduct. I'm not sure if that rings a bell. Let me know.

COPELAND: Not at all [laughs]

METELUS: Well, I don't know if this will help refresh, but what it seemed like was there was a runoff election for this committee on Standing and Conduct and the issue was that there never was usually a runoff, so a second election, it was just an election and people were voted for. But they decided to do this runoff election and the concern was that doing said runoff election would make it harder for Black students to be elected. Because the runoff election would cut out some students and it would be a smaller group. So, that was your concern, and so there was a discussion going on how that would be

protested, or if a protest would happen, and the decision that was explained at the end of the notes was that, no matter how the runoff election went there was going to be like a meeting with Dean Brewster, if that rings a bell, in order to in order to speak to him about it because it was unfair.

COPELAND:

The way that, you know again, in those early formative years the Afro-American Society kind of formed, it was really to make sure that, as we were now becoming a more sizable part of the student community and there were certain things that we felt were very important topics or issues to meet with the administration about into now that we're here and in numbers, we want to shape this environment so that currently and future generations of Black Dartmouth students will have appropriate and culturally responsive success factors built into the fabric of the of the environment in the experience to make it easier for them to be here. Because it's one thing when you had the pressure to assimilate because of the Ivy League and Dartmouth and some people had the attitude, "you should be grateful you're even here., and so the best thing you should do is to assimilate to what we do and that will give you your best chance of being successful." And there were some folks who came with that mindset that was their orientation some had older siblings who had already gone to Dartmouth in past times, and so they had that kind of connection, but the most, the majority of us, we were first generations going to four year schools, we were in kind of a foreign environment and we felt that we we wanted to, in collaboration with the institution, since it was committed to this this effort to integrate their campus, that we wanted to make it culturally responsive and relevant and that we were the experts on what we needed, so our job was to formulate and identify barriers in whatever form they came, create solutions that we felt would be scalable and impactful and then meet with administration to bring those to their attention, and then to lobby and to support to help those things get adopted and then implemented over time. And so I think that was the framework and kind of the spirit of why the Afro-AAM was created in a formal sense. Because a lot of folks felt like the mainstream students have these fraternities and the different societies and they lobby and have influence and legacy and so on, and we were the pioneers in the space for our communities. We didn't have a lot of those things to leverage, so we had to begin,

creating a framework to go forward and to brand it in a way that was aligned with change and dignity and our principles, and those are the kinds of things that contribute to even to what we were going to call it from a name standpoint.

And, as I mentioned earlier, there was a rich diversity of students coming from different parts of the country. We had a fairly significant contingent of Black students who were from Chicago and the group that was from Chicago was not just individual students who also were selected and applied and got accepted and chose to come to Dartmouth, but there was a specific program that later, I know, maybe about eight or nine or 10 years ago, they did the Dartmouth alumni magazine, they did a big story on these individuals. A select group of individuals that were part of like a special study. These are individuals who, in many instances had been part of gangs in Chicago and so forth, and the notion was, “if we bring these individuals to a different environment, away from the inner city challenges and issues, given how intelligent and smart these individuals were, how could they take their own experience and leverage that and their own education and be a force for help us shape our campus. And these were, for the most part, older individuals. So, these were not individuals who were my age, who were just starting college. A lot of these were individuals who were in kind of a special program on campus and, didn't know all the details of it at the time, but I know these individuals were older, they were very influential, and they served, in many cases, as mentors and advisors. So, when we got to this framework of how we're going to represent ourselves and speak to the broader community, and then negotiated for having this dorm as a cultural center— and that's who was going to live there wasn't so much the big deal, the focus was we need a place that we could call home. Our community home on this campus. A structure that everybody can come and get away from the challenges and the issues and and be themselves within the walls of this structure. And the naming of it, the El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Center was because a large percentage of the individuals there from the North, and certainly from the Chicago group, had a strong affiliation with the philosophy of Malcolm X and El Hajj Malik El Shabazz and those principles whether it was around Black respect, Black dignity, the importance of education and being intentionally part of a vanguard and a force

to drive change. And so we wanted to spirit of that to be captured in the name and the way we framed it so it was named the El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple, in that framework, and also, Malcolm's image was provided through murals in a lot of areas in that building as part of that. I think that choice was really a reflection of a lot of different elements, but primarily by the influence level that that group from Chicago had. Because the Black Muslim movement was headquartered in Chicago, and so I think they had an orientation to that and used their influence and familiarity with that to say that's the framework we ought to create here.

METELUS: And the Black students who came from Chicago who were from a particular gang, was that gang the Lords?

COPELAND: I think a large number of them were, but I don't know if they all were from that group, but I know that adaption and everybody recognizing, past and current, the role and influence of gangs in the city of Chicago, as kind of a way of life and people understanding that and understanding, all the implications of that. They had that in common so they're vernacular, their framework, that orientation from a diversity within the Black community standpoint. was pretty impactful. And, again, the fact that those individuals were also older, they were really young adults, if you will, and so they had a lot more impact and were seen, not only as peers and colleagues, but also as mentors.

METELUS: That's amazing. That really is. Something I'm interested in about you specifically is how you got involved in activism. I know you said you were more focused on your studies until you got more into the Afro-American Society. But I'm kind of just wondering, was this something you've been passionate about since you were back home in New York or was this something that really came to fruition, when you got to Dartmouth and saw what was going on?

COPELAND: Well, no, I was always pretty active and even in high school. So, this was just a continuation of the stream of activism, for me. In part, because my parents have their background in history coming up from the south. The Civil Rights Movement that occurred during my formative years. As a matter of fact, it was on the night of our junior prom that Dr Martin Luther King [Jr.], was assassinated. So, a

lot of really impactful events occurred during my formative years in high school and the activism that was occurring in the 60s, with the riots and all those things that were going on across the country, those were in my city, as well. So, all of that was going on— the ascension of the Black Muslim movement and the Malcolm X influence, Dr King's influence, and so forth. I was class president for in my high school during my senior year and the Black Panther Movement was evolving as well, so those things were not really in our city of Rochester, but we were aware they were going on across the country. On the west coast, in Chicago, these other areas and so those things spoke to a lot of us. Not everybody heard those things and got activated by them, but they certainly spoke to me in terms of people who I saw really were invested in being change agents, even to the point of putting their lives in jeopardy, and so on, as part of that. And so that cascaded into Rochester New York, where we were growing up, and we had our version of the riots and activation and those issues and I paid a lot of attention to those items and became active in my my speech, and in my engagement with peers and other fellow students long before Dartmouth was even on my radar screen and the way it came about. So, that was really for me a continuation and when I got there, I got oriented, and then you got a part of this broader brain trust of individuals from some of the areas of the country where I'd been reading about and watching on the news and so forth. And it gave me a chance to learn even more about some of those constructs and those ideas, and then, how does that relate to our day to day experience on the campus and how it informed my work and my orientation and framework going forward. So, activism and looking at every opportunity to be a difference maker, big or small, has been with me for most of my adult life, even today.

METELUS: Yes and we're very, very lucky to have had you, and people like you, because Dartmouth, I'm just very grateful. So, yes, thank you.

COPELAND: But one of my curiosities is with all of that as background and what happened on our watch during the time there was really, what did you all inherit?

METELUS: Yeah.

COPELAND: You know, even this far out, you know a lot of foundational stuff was done, but then, a lot of time has passed. And I know some of my colleagues and peers have been more active on the alumni circuit and being active and coming back than others, but the opportunity to have this discussion with someone who's there currently and about to graduate, I'm just curious as you're hearing some of the things that I'm talking about or other interviewees have brought up. How are you connecting the dots between that and what you inherited when you came on as a freshman a few years ago, and what you see going on now. Can you see connections to the past and what has evolved? Those seeds we planted? I'm always curious about what have they grown to become. And I've not physically been back to the campus in many, many years, even though I've been in communication with a fair number of alumni who have been more active as alumni and given us updates on some of the issues and things going on, so that's just my own personal curiosity.

METELUS: Yeah, I mean, I can definitely answer briefly. I definitely want to learn more about you, but I can definitely answer briefly. I think, through the research we've done in Rauner and looking at the primary resources of actual documents that were created by people in your class year and other alumni as well. A lot, I think, a lot has come to fruition. I definitely think nothing that you guys did was in vain. I'm incredibly grateful because it helps me to be more appreciative of where we are now. Having said that, I do think that there are things that do need a bit more love [laughs] and there will always be things that need more love.

COPELAND: Right.

METELUS: But even things like feeling like you have a space here, I would say that in '73 because we have also listened to an interview from another '73. Listening to that, Shabazz was the place that Black students were able to go to to feel like they could have a Community, and now I feel like, while there is still Shabazz there's also like my dance group. Which is Ujima, which was founded Black women and a Black woman, and realizing that that is more my home and that's where I'm, I found my diverse friend group to feel welcome and not "othered" in. There are white students who

are in that dance group as well, but it's a nice collaborative place. And I think too that Shabazz is a place now, where the people who are in Shabazz and live there, even though I've never lived there, especially my year, so the '22s are very close. And a lot of them have now gone on to Black sororities and Black fraternities and are now like in a legitimate sisterhood now together because of having been in that space together. They knew each other, even before that sisterhood so they're even closer. So, I think that everything that you guys did was genuinely so impactful. I don't think there's any way you could fully know how impactful it was.

COPELAND: That's good to hear. I remember as that evolved time I was there, at least for the Black student community, it was kind of three, I would say subsets, if you will, that composed the community. There was the Leadership Vanguard Group that I think I referenced as a group and segment of our community that was activated and wanted to make change, build institutions, build approaches that would make it livable to gain the benefits there, and do so without necessarily feel like you have to compromise your values your dignity of who you are and be true to yourself. That authenticity requirement that you can achieve academics and be yourself at the same time. That when one doesn't have to be sacrificed for the other. So, it was really I would describe that group as the anti-assimilation group. That "we're not going to assimilate and we still going to be successful." There was another segment that said, "I want to have that." And I'm glad we got a segment of our group who's willing to put their careers, their time, their energy on the line to create that on our behalf. And we will support them and reap the benefits of those things and value and treasure that. Then there was another component that said, "no assimilation makes perfect sense to me, this is a highly successful institution, we don't really need to try to change it. We need to adapt and assimilate to this and be good neighbors. So, that diversity within our own community that was part of the journey as well, so, the El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple, when that was announced and actually supported by the College and support and implemented, not all of our Black students on campus were enthralled with that and were regular attendees of events and so on. So, we made a change based on what a majority of students felt was adding value and helping them be successful, maintaining who they are their values, their dignity and respect,

their responsiveness to fill the need to respond to the challenges of the times, from a social, political standpoint and at the same time condone and emphasize the importance of academic achievement and success.

METELUS: Yes, and I also just wanted to take a moment to go back to a phrase you said. You said, one of the goals of the Afro-American Society was to make all this change “in collaboration with the institution.” Something I was interested in with that is this idea of, at this time, based off my research, there were a lot of colleges, who had Black students who were being a bit more, to actually quote *Upending the Ivory Tower* [Stefan Bradley, *Upending the Ivory Tower: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Ivy Leagues*], a bit more extreme in their forms of protest. And Dartmouth was more of this national, “see this is how you can do it where you're being effective, but you also don't have to be extreme necessarily.” So, I kind of just want to hear more about your thoughts on that. Given you were someone who was very visible in this fight in your time there, what the thought process was behind that? Why it was felt that that would be the most effective way to go about it, given it was effective, and any debates that might have happened in order to even get to that resolution.

COPELAND: Well, I think that there were debates, as I said, the Dartmouth instructors, professors, administration, and the campus attendees and large is not a monolith. So, people have different views and perspectives and, at the end of the day, what it boiled down to was leadership and leadership that can create followership. And I think the reason why, at least at Dartmouth, specifically in the time that I was there, you might consider some of the more radical levels of protest, taking over buildings or other things, were not deemed necessary or even required is because the platform, the things that we prioritize and said, these are non negotiable and they're really important to us, and so on, we found great alignment and agreement with the administration leaders at that time at the president level the deans level that said, “in our estimation, these are reasonable request,” and so the key wasn't “no you can't do this,” it's, “how can we support this and make it work.” It was collaborating and partnering with those things. if they had said, “absolutely not you're not going to have a dorm to yourself, and if

you do you're absolutely not going to name it after El Hajj Malik El Shabazz and bring the Black, Muslim orientation to this and upset our community and so on." They could have said all those things, but they didn't. I think when you look at the differences and how quote unquote, radical tactics, people may have used to try to drive points or make social, political statements I think in part it was a matter of what you propose and how receptive or not the administration was to those things, and then the leverage you decided to pull to make more difference and and how radical work were some of the proposals that generated the need for those types of protest versus not. I think that wasn't just true on Dartmouth's campus, I think that was true across the country.

METELUS: That totally makes sense and then going back as well, I want to just go back to Shabazz and the building itself and the art that can be seen when you walk into Shabazz. I just wanted to touch on it a bit, because I think art has a large impact on social change. And so I was wondering the thought process behind the different murals and I believe that you were a model for one of the murals as well. So, if you could talk a bit about that and that whole process I'd be greatly interested.

COPELAND: Yes, I think once we got the green light on the El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple and we wanted to have Malcolm present in spirit and in mindset and what he represented as a change agent and an activist, a lot of folks when they come to Dartmouth, for the first time and they're taking a tour when you go to the Baker Library and you see the amazing murals there, they just kind of grab your mind, heart, and soul and, at the same time, how impressive they are, how large they are, how captivating they are. So, we thought about that being something that Dartmouth was famous for and people always talked about when they came to the campus and experienced that, not only for the first time, but on a recurring basis we wanted, when people walked into the El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Temple, we wanted them to have images around that show different aspects of the person known previously as Malcolm X and later as El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, that people would see him as a family person as a thinker and scholar, as a activist and change agent, and so on and so when we combined the desire for that kind of impact and shape to the environment as a constant reminder of

those different aspects of him and his contributions, that's where the idea kind of came from. Then it was how are we going to find somebody who can do this and if we come up with a plan and an idea around the name and the imaging is the College going to support that? And, and they agreed to support it, we identified because of, again, the geography represented in our class when we were looking for an artist who might be able to take this on a couple of our students identified a well known Black artist in Orange, New Jersey, Florian Jenkins and said, "I think he can do it." So, they reached out to him, he came and walked around the facility, identified some areas said, "I'll go back and work on some drafts and then come back to you" and we put an agreement together, for I think four or five murals, a couple on each level, that would be done. And so, he came to do those murals when that building was first being transformed to its new identity. And because of my role at that time, as the President of Afro American Society, I would come by from time to time, and also because I was living in the dorm and just to watch him work.

For me, just as a side, there was also a personal connection, because in my formative years as a young person before I really thought about science and biology and medicine and so forth, my younger years was captivated by art. Early in my career, my fourth grade teacher saw us doing art in the classroom and said, "you have some amazing talent, did you know that?" and I said, "no not really. I'm just painting like everybody else's painting but I enjoy it." She said, "well, I think you have talent and I want to send you to a scholarship program at our art gallery. I'm on the board of directors and I'm going to give you a note to take to your mother." And so she arranged for me to take some lessons during one of our summer times off from school and then I came back and got more engaged in the art work and people started giving me positive feedback. In fact, during one of the summers when I think I was in either in seventh or eighth grade something— sixth grade or somewhere in there, I sold my first four paintings as an artist and thought that was going to be my career, that I was going to be painting art. Then in ninth grade when I took biology, for the first time and did the frog dissection that that awakened this notion about life science and exploration of that and I went off in a total different direction. But I share that anecdote just to say art was meaningful to me on a

personal basis. I really enjoyed art expression, did it myself, still paint and sketch and draw today. So, I was interested in what the artist Jenkins was doing and I was talking to him, as he was doing the murals and he said, there's one area here I want to do a portrait for, an image of Malcolm laying out on the field in contemplation and reading a book or something of that nature, to show that side of him. That he was a scholar, and he thought learning was really critical and a big force in his life. And he said, "but I need a model for this, and are you willing to model? I'll have you lay on this table, put a book in your hand, pose and I'll sketch that out, and then I'll make that mural and I said, "yeah, fine." So, when people are talking about those murals in my presence, it always hits me in a special way, one because of my love of art in general and then specifically because, for that particular mural, that, I believe, is still there today, I was the person who modeled for that and most folks have no idea about that. It's only a handful of people that probably even know that.

METELUS: And so they just painted Malcolm X's his face where your face would have been.

COPELAND: Yeah he used my posing to do the framework for the model posing and the book holding, then created a background, but then he actually imposed Malcolm's face on that model, so after that was all done and whenever I would look at that and when I remember, we did the formal dedication of the of the temple, I always smiled and got a big kick out of that. It was like this little secret that people will probably never know.

METELUS: Yeah, [laughs] I love that. I'm so excited to go back to Shabazz and look at that. I know we don't have too much time left and there's so many things I want to ask you, so I am going to just choose the things I think will probably be the most impactful in this time. But two things I really wanted to quickly clarify: growing up were the schools you went to relatively integrated because your neighborhood was relatively integrated? So, when it comes to drawing district lines, did that work out for schooling?

COPELAND: Yeah, they were. The schools or public school or grammar school, I went to, and then junior high and high school, the composition of

those schools were always reflective of what our neighborhoods would look like. Early on, they were predominantly white and most of the folks there, because these were Italian neighborhoods that's where most of the folks went, public grammar and high school. But between the time that I was in grammar school and then went to junior high and graduated the composition had dramatically shifted to be predominantly African American because a lot of Italian families started moving out. This was during the period when a lot of people in urban areas were now creating opportunities to move to the suburbs. There was a lot of flight from the urban areas and people that had the means and opportunities were all heading out and that left vacancies in the urban areas. Then the people who came in to buy those homes and set their families up predominantly were Black people in my neighborhood. So, grammar school to senior year in high school, dramatic shift in the composition, but always still integrated. But on a percentage basis, it was less presence of white students and more Black students.

METELUS: And so, your coach at the end of your high school career, were they Black or of a different race.

COPELAND: No, my football coaches were white. All my sports coaches, with the exception of in my junior varsity year basketball, I think it was in my sophomore year. That was the first Black coach I had had in sports at my particular school, but all the other coaches there were white coaches.

METELUS: Okay, and so, for Dartmouth as well, coach Blackman was white.

COPELAND: Yes.

METELUS: Great, and then the other thing I just quickly wanted to ask and know about was because we've discussed Black students on campus not being a monolith and there being different ideologies, who would you say were the Black students that you felt most comfortable around. Because, obviously, just because you're of the same race as somebody does not mean you're going to feel comfortable, or mesh as well with every one of that race. Personalities impact these things. So, who did you find yourself becoming the closest with? The type of students.

COPELAND: Well, I think again, from the Chicago group that I mentioned there was an individual by name of a Cleve Webber [Cleveland Siddha Webber, Jr.] who was very prominent [coughs] excuse me. He was very prominent and active. [pause] There was Bob Carter [Robert Carter], who was a few years ahead of me and Bill McCurine [William McCurine] who was one of the Rhode Scholars that occurred during my time. He was Black and became a very successful lawyer and judge. In my class. there was Tyrone Burd, Wesley [C.] Pugh. Those were individuals who are part of my alumni class and also were active football players and active in the work we were doing.

METELUS: And so—

COPELAND: I'm sorry?

METELUS: Also, I was just wondering, when it came to the white students on campus did you feel like it was pretty easy to become friends with a couple of them or was that more of a difficult situation, given the times?

COPELAND: I mean, this is an issue, I think, of intersectionality. If I happen to have them in my biology class, or we are working on a class project together, or those types of things, if you had other things that you connected on and common interest, then those things occurred and those became affiliations, as well. But as I said, given my focus as somebody who, like some of the people I just named were really excellent football players at Dartmouth, so they were athletes and scholars. And, again, because my initial connection to Dartmouth was potentially as somebody playing football, but never got a chance to do it, I still gravitated toward the individuals who are doing that. So, that was the bond and relationship there. And then, it was some of the academic affiliations that people who had expressed a desire to have medicine as their career, so if we bonded and we all were planning on being physicians there was another subset there. But most of it was really around the activism. The folks that you shared a common view from an activist standpoint and spent a lot of time together on planning and engagement and those type of things. So, you had different folks

who had a meaningful relationship with them, based on things you had in common. And then, some of these older individuals were really the folks who stood out to me became for that freshman year bridge program, onboarding program, the folks who were identified and seem to be leading that effort. And the role models and the philosophers and in the folks we went to for console when we were having any kind of struggle. Those folks were kind of mentors and so forth, so they stood out for that purpose, and many of these individuals, because of the interactions we had became really you know lifelong friends in one way or another. So, the names I gave you are just a handful from those different categories that stand out immediately, but I could write a much longer list if I had to do it about the folks that really I connected with and were critical enablers of my journey.

METELUS: Yes, of course. And then also, I just want to shed some light on you being a part of the first Black Alumni Conference in '72. Given that you were the President of the Afro-American Society at this time, did you spearhead that on the student level what was kind of the idea behind it? I personally know the idea behind it, but I think it would be really interesting to just have that for the record.

COPELAND: Well, certainly that development and execution started really during the time I happen to be the President of Afro-American Society, but it was a broader brain trust of folks that were saying that if we're going to now—because what Dartmouth, at least the leaders at that time we're interested in is, this is not going to be just a temporary thing with increasing Black presence both in faculty and students on our campus, this is now our part of our future in who we are. And so we're going to have to think about all the different elements that make Dartmouth successful as an educational institution both our academic achievement, the environment of our campus and culture, faculty and so on. Of course, another big part of any college life is the role with alumni.

As this was cultivating the question came up is well while we've never had the number on campus that we have now, there are a number of very proud, prominent, and prevalent African Americans who've been through this school that have gone out on their own and their careers and done great things. So, there are alumni out there, but they're not

activated, they're not really connected to the school and maybe they had negative experiences going through, they got through, achieved their degrees and then went on, with their careers, and they haven't really felt a strong need to come back to the school because it's kind of like, "I got through but it wasn't really all pleasant, so why would I want to go back and encourage that?" But now that we have more students on board, that was the impetus to say we need to reevaluate how we can activate Black alumni now and form something that would keep them engaged on a regular basis. That was kind of the motivation, the idea around that is to reconnect. So, they identified a handful of Black alumni who were prominent, who had some interest in this potential development and it became one of the areas that we in Afro-American Society were interested in doing. And there was some meetings called, organizing discussions, and then we had this kind of big event on campus where leadership from the alumni side and from our organization talked about the future, created a vision and then launched this new association. And then helped it grow, continue meetings, be thought partners to the administration of the school on campus issues on other issues and then of course the school, we had, obviously, an interest in cultivating more relationships with Black alumni, so that the roles that alumni play in general in terms of serving on governing boards and donations and fundraising campaigns and so on, as all of us went through with that orientation and framework and became alumni we will somehow still stay activated. I think it was a momentous time and that I happen to be there when it was going on and created and played a very small role, and it was lots of people driving and making that happen and then sustaining it to get it really lifted. Now, in more recent years, my understanding, and some of the connections I've had it has been a very active group of alumni over time that are partnered with the school and done a lot of great work to take some of these foundational things, institutionalize them, and cultivate them and allow them to expand for further influence so people of your vintage would have the opportunity to benefit from those and create this virtuous cycle of giving back and supporting, not just the experiences of the Black students there, but for the broader community of Dartmouth College.

METELUS: Yes, that's really, really amazing. I do quickly just want to talk about what you're doing currently now that you're obviously not at Dartmouth anymore. I know you went to grad school, med school, went on to become a general surgeon. So, I was wondering, with this connection to what you're doing currently, I know that you are part of the A Better Chance Program in the sense that you were a mentor for this program— kind of wondering if that had any impact on how you chose to take your medical career and what you're doing now, given that you are the Senior Vice President for National Equity Inclusion Diversity Strategy and Policy for Kaiser Permanente Foundation. So, anything regarding that.

COPELAND: As I said, I think the activation and experiences I had at Dartmouth in my individual career and like minded colleagues that have similar things, we're all now in our professional years and are winding down our professional careers and look back at what we've accomplished, and what we've learned and how can we give back and how can we still be a force for change. And all of us, that I still affiliate with, there's a group of maybe 40 or 50 of us that communicate and stay connected on regular basis talking about this experience and how that applies to what each of us is doing individually and how we can still be individual and collective forces for change. And since those things activated me in my career I had early adoption of experience and leadership so I've done lots of leadership things informally as part of not for profit boards, mentoring programs, academics, and also in my formal job now, as a Senior Executive and Strategic Leader for our health system Kaiser Permanente is for a strategy on equity inclusion and diversity. But I do a lot of mentoring for medical students, pre-med, cultivating the next generation to understand the importance of life science and a career as a physician in science and that's influenced a lot of what I do in my professional and personal time with not for profit organizations. I'm on several not for profit boards in that space. And the work that I now, from my professional career going from a practicing surgeon, for 30 plus years, and as part of that time, being an executive medical director role running day-to-day operations in the business side, etc. And then these last nine years leading equity, inclusion, diversity strategy throughout all of those roles, it's still been a focus and most of that manifests now about being an agent for change and health equity agenda and

strategy around the disparities that we see in healthcare that breakout along racial and ethnic lines. And what are the drivers and root causes of those, and how do you disrupt those strategic and enduring ways through actions, healthcare transformation of system, performance, and policy influence. So, all of that is still just kind of the battle I'm engaged in today at an institutional level, supporting on a personal level, and then taking all the powerful lessons I've learned about leading people and mentoring and supporting people that I do now, with students pursuing medicine and in a variety of ways and at different ages along the career path. So, that's how I'm staying activated, that's how I'm still trying to contribute today and, again, it's a joy to still have a collection of Black Dartmouth alumni that I collaborate and communicate with on a regular basis. And we all stay connected so in one sense it's like I'm still in the Afro-AAm on a virtual basis and and looking at what we're doing, and as the alumni of left that campus and gone out into the world it's how are we still being agents of change based on the shared experience we have with being a change agent and transformation for Dartmouth College and the direction that they wanted to go in.

METELUS: Yeah. It's just really inspiring to see that this isn't even something that came to you at Dartmouth. This is something you've been passionate about, it seems, even though it might not have been in medicine specifically since you were incredibly young and you've just continue to develop your skills in it, and your passion for it, to do something incredibly large now. Your career has been incredibly successful and it's insane to see, inspiring to see. And I know we're basically at time I just really wanted to ask, now that you are where you are now, what do you feel is the role of Dartmouth alumni now, specifically Black Dartmouth alumni—like their involvement with current Black students— and where do you see that relationship going maybe in the next five years given you are still in contact with some people who are involved in campus and understand what's going and are kind of updating you on what's happening?

COPELAND: Well, I think the short answer is for all of us to look for every opportunity to be a positive force for change. Using our profession, our standing, our leadership, our resources in one form or another. One of the things that I've always been really cognizant of and

cognizant of and somewhat conflicted about is how much of my energy, time is directed specifically at Dartmouth. And the students going there and Dartmouth's mission and so forth versus how I use my time and energy in the non academic world. When I look at the disproportionality of inequities and disparities, particularly in healthcare, as just one one framework, around the globe and around our country, it seems to me at this stage of my career, as grateful as I am for the educational experience that was provided me at Dartmouth College, my primary focus is on the broader playing field and less on the specifics of the Dartmouth campus. But I understand there's a value and a purpose there because I've benefited from it and others are benefiting as we speak. So, it's a both and trying to figure out from a practical standpoint, how you stay connected, how do you contribute wherever you can— even my decision to be part of these interviews is again recognizing this is important documentation for a journey that I was a participant in and trying to help the organization and the College continue its motivation and inspiration to do this work in earnest and improve results for each succeeding generation. But the real accomplishment of the education is to put it to work to be a difference maker on a broader playing field. And so I think that's where I've chosen to be impactful, disproportionately, bring my energy and time and attention to other arenas to benefit that. So, that's how I've made sense of it and how it's influenced my actions accordingly.

METELUS: And I think that's completely fair. I would definitely say you're making a large impact. Just really quickly, the last thing I wanted to ask is, is there anything you would want to tell current Black students at Dartmouth, based on your experience at Dartmouth? Honestly anything, I won't even necessarily give parameters. And so—sorry, let me just rephrase or reiterate— is there anything you want to tell current Black students at Dartmouth and the Black students who are to come, based on your experience at Dartmouth and like your feelings towards the institution and what they can offer but also maybe where they lack?

COPELAND: Well, I would just say you know the years you spent in your undergraduate education are really, pivotal formative years. And they are formative, as we're attesting to through this discussion,

and others, the lessons you learn, the experiences you have and in those four years that you spend there, or more, are really going to be foundational for the way you see life in significant ways throughout your professional career. My point is, the world's in great need for leaders on all dimensions and so practice and look for every opportunity to experience leading and learn as much about leading and effective leading, inclusive leading while you're on campus and you're building those foundational muscles and your habits for the future. And if you do it well you'll find real opportunity to contribute, even in the limited time you have as an undergraduate. Cultivate that framework, that orientation, and that mindset will stay with you for most of your career. So, it starts there, whether you're doing big things or small things, recognizing the need and adapting to that need and taking that on as part of your professional and personal identity to be a leader for change. I think that's the sweet spot and no matter what your academic focus is, and your degree pursuit, as a professional, skilled person in that area, cultivate yourself as a leader and a change agent, because there are many problems to solve, they're big and complex and you need an increasing brain trust to do that. And given that Dartmouth has invested in making the campus experience diverse as possible in many dimensions, leverage that as much as you can and understand how to work and collaborate with people who are different but may share a similar vision and aspiration, and understand how to do that in a collective way because that's what the world will offer you as opportunity, and in the real world that's how you actually get things done.

METELUS: Wow. Thank you, thank you so much for that. For me that's just about it. I mean I could continue talking. There is so much to talk about, but I realized [laughs] that we are at time and you are a very busy person. So, I just want to say thank you so so much for doing this interview for the Dartmouth Black Lives project. I know that your insights will be so incredibly helpful and informative for, genuinely, so many years to come. And I'm very honored to have been the one to interview you. Thank you so so much, I really appreciate it.

COPELAND: Well, thank you for the opportunity for being part of this project. I hope it fulfills an important need that it is intended to serve and look

forward to continuing to learn about the great work that you and others are doing in this space. It's a pleasure to be part of this, and I hope my memory and my statements serve the organization and its agenda well, so thank you very much.

METELUS: Yes, I know that it will, so thank you.

COPELAND: Alrighty, have a great weekend.