

Judith B. (J.B.) Redding '76
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Black Lives
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Transcribed by Hosaena Tilahun '25

TILAHUN: Hello, my name is Hosaena Tilahun, and I am at Baker-Berry Library on the campus of Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. I'm doing a Zoom interview with Judy Redding, class of '76, and today is Sunday, October 24th, 2021. This is an interview for the Dartmouth Black Lives, oral history project. Hello, JB. Thank you so much for joining me today.

REDDING: Hi, how are you? And I go by J.B., not Judy.

TILAHUN: That's good. Thank you, J.B. First, I'd like to learn about your upbringing. So can you please state when and where you were born?

REDDING: I was born in New Jersey but raised in Pennsylvania. I was born in 1955.

TILAHUN Thank you. Can you also tell me the full names of your parents?

REDDING: My father's name was Louis Redding — Louis L. Redding. My mother's name was Ruth Cook Redding.

TILAHUN: Right, how do you spell Louis?

REDDING: The French way. L O U I S.

TILAHUN: Alright, thank you. What was it like growing up in New Jersey?

REDDING: I grew up in Pennsylvania — I was born in New Jersey. I grew up in a part of Pennsylvania that when we moved — and my father and mother got the house the year I was born, but when we moved in, he moved in, had a white man buy the house because he felt pretty sure that, I mean, he did the purchasing, but he sent a white lawyer friend of his to act as a representative, feeling that they probably wouldn't get the property otherwise. It was, we'll say for the first three years of school, I was the only person of color in my classes. And by sixth grade there were three of us. Well, four of color, my best friend was Japanese American. And who knows if we would have been best friends, if the racial dynamic was not what it was,

um, because there are many of the kids that we couldn't play with, but there also was a significant Quaker and liberal white contingent in the area. We also did have some friends that — and homes where we were welcomed and, friends that, that were in our classes that were not people of color, but there were definitely many who were not allowed. They might be our friends at school, but they would tell us that they were not allowed to play with us. It couldn't be known that we were friends. That was an aspect of life that — you're a kid and things are as they are. It was somewhat painful, but not dominantly so. It just sort of was how things were. I think only when you'd have a harsh encounter from somebody's parents or somebody would invite you over and you wouldn't be allowed in the house, those times would be sort of difficult, but that wasn't frequent. And so, day to day, you didn't think about it a lot.

My parents, my mother was a physician who became a teacher. My father was an attorney, the first Black attorney in Delaware and the only Black attorney in Delaware for over 25 years. They had very high expectations in terms of education. Probably I wouldn't have been at Dartmouth except that I knew that I was going to be in trouble at home if I didn't go to an Ivy league school. My father went to Brown [University]. One of my sisters went to Brown. My other sister went to Swarthmore. Brown is really our legacy school. We've got a whole lot of folks who went to Brown. And so, um, when I was looking for colleges, I would tell Daddy I was going to Cheney [University of Pennsylvania] or Howard [University], just because he would snarl, because he had the expectation that we all went to Ivy league schools.

TILAHUN: Interesting... by doing my research, I realized that your father Louis Redding was one of the lawyers that actually argued the Brown vs Board of education before the U.S. Supreme Court. How did that influence your decision to choose Dartmouth and even influence education in the household and how you thought of education?

REDDING: Well, um, it didn't, it didn't affect Dartmouth per se. You know, the Brown vs the Board of Education [case]. You know, we lived in Pennsylvania because my father's law practice was in Delaware, and it was then a segregated state. He did not want his kids to grow up in a segregated state. Um, you know, it's not far from Delaware, but he commuted to Delaware so that, you know, we would grow up in a place where we could go into any restaurant or any store without the bar of, of being black. So, it didn't really affect choosing Dartmouth. I think, that, that excellence of education was just a bottom line and I bring it up because Daddy had more fame, but he was quick to note that my mother was his superior in intelligence.

And my mother was in the first class of Fulbright Scholars. She was [a part of the] Phi Beta Kappa [Society] at Hunter College and she was a doctor of osteopathy. She became a doctor so young; she could not sit for the board. She had to wait a year because she had not reached the minimum age to sit for the boards. So, had there been a little more gender equity, my mother would be perhaps even more well-known. For a bit, Daddy apparently won the competition, but she almost married [Kwame] Nkrumah, the first Ghanaian president, so, after independence. So, I liked to — more and more I've started doing something in ancestry and just really, I like to sing the female song because they often go unsung, and their opportunities were so different. Even in articles I see written about my mother and, she's got quite a lot of press, in her young womanhood, it will be about one of her accomplishments, but very quickly they start talking about my uncle and my father and the men in her life. Rather than call her Dr. Redding, they call her Mrs. Redding. And so I, I've pointed out- she also had an expectation, but hers was less. With my father, I felt as if we didn't achieve certain things, that he would be gravely disappointed in us, whereas my mother wanted us to achieve, but she also wanted us to have joy and full lives and a balance between work and life and that kind of thing.

TILAHUN: Okay, you speak of the expectation of excellence that your family held for you and your siblings. How did that impact applying to college and ultimately deciding on Dartmouth?

REDDING: I applied to Dartmouth really on the recommendation of a high school guidance counselor. He had seen something about the first class of women and knew me and knew of me and thought that it might be, might be a good fit. And I think the summer [pause], I think the summer before applications had to be completed, I drove up to Dartmouth and liked the feel of it. I'd visited Cornell as well. I had an uncle who was a professor there and I knew he would've completely cramped my style. So Cornell, [laughter] Cornell didn't — plus he didn't like Black people hanging with Black people. He said, "You will not be part of that Black Student Union." [Laughter] So I was thinking, *Wow, this will be a drag.* But Dartmouth — I just talked to a number of students and I felt like this is a place where I might be able to thrive. I had not, in any way though, accounted for the climate issues, the hostility of many people to female presence, and the rape culture. As to that, there's no way — I was pretty young and naïve in many ways, thought that I knew more than I did. Um, but I was completely unequipped for the, the violence of Dartmouth. And, there were just certain things in that culture where, many young, innocent women in my class were harmed. Yes.

- TILAHUN: Yes, we could definitely talk more about that, but in the context of 1972, you were a part of the first co-ed class that would come into Dartmouth. There was also building awareness about civil rights abuses, overseas and at home. Black Power was also very prevalent on campus. What was it like coming of age at this time?
- REDDING: Well, I think you just said Black Power was very prevalent on campus. I don't know that I would say that, um, you know, we, um, a couple of friends of mine and I did some things in order to highlight our perception of racism at this school, and there was the [Afro-American Society] and the Afro-Am meetings, but, and I believe it was during the years I was there that it was, renamed the [El Hajj Malik] El Shabazz [Center for Intellectual Inquiry], I think they call it Temple at that point in time. So there certainly was that discussion and there was a pocket of kids who were trying to gain their knowledge in that area. That's what I'd say. I think most of us were naïve. I think many of us were Black for the first time at Dartmouth; that people — you'd see it at parties. So many people didn't know how to dance. And I was the worst, so I won't talk about this. Many could dance well, but there were a lot of us who were coming out of environments where we had not been cutting edge black power at all. And certainly among us, there were those who weren't even slightly interested in that. That they were coming to college to be serious students, and not get what some parents would say sidetracked with all of that. But then there were those among us that that was very central to what, for me, I wouldn't say it was Black Power, but I would say that it was Black identity, and equity, and respect. Yes.
- TILAHUN: Thank you for making that clarification, too. You spoke about being Black for the first time. So, can you talk a little bit more about that and what that symbolized for you and a lot of other students?
- REDDING: Well, it's probably a little too strong a statement, but I know for myself, we had a black student union in high school and I was, I was involved in that. I also was part of an African dance troupe and that kind of thing. But I think that for, both the politicization and also the social effort, [pause] I think both the politics and the social effort for some of us, we had been sheltered in such a way. I mean, a lot of the girls were raised, not to go out much, not to have much social life. I can't say that I dated much at all in high school. And so we were coming, and everybody, and a lot of the socialization, or a good bit, a good number of black students was Black social life. But that didn't mean that any of us knew how to do that. Or many of us. I won't say any. There certainly ones who knew it well, but there were quite a number of us are trying to figure out what that was, but

not be known as to try to figure out what it was. You're too young to get this, but I remember in high school, a friend asked me to go to see Kool & the Gang. And I thought I was going to meet a friend of hers named Cool, and that Cool had a gang. I had no idea that they were a group [laughter] and that we were going, and we lived out in the country. And so, when I saw us nearing Philadelphia, I was so frightened, because I thought my parents were going to [unintelligible] 'cause we had to get home really late if we were going to Philadelphia. And then I saw them on the marquee and I said, "Oh my goodness, I'm glad I didn't say anything." [laughter]. They already don't think I'm really with it. So that's it. But I don't think I was the only one who was out of it in that regard. And we're trying to figure out what do we think about Black Power and, and at that point in time, there were several really radical political movements going on for black folks in the United States. And, actually there were, I don't know where they came from, I think Boston, but about once a month, some, Black Muslims would come to the campus to try recruit people to come to their mosque, and that kind of thing. And I think for a lot of us, we were trying to say, "Now, what will this look like for me? How will I express it? What will be important to me?"

TILAHUN: Right. It's also worth mentioning that the black community, just in Hanover or upper New Hampshire, there wasn't many black people up there. How did you guys build community on campus and really sustain it for students that would come in the future?

REDDING: I think most, there were few, very few, handful of, Black staff and professors. And some very purposefully served as role models and almost almost like, a certain type of familial presence. Some I think were not as protective as they should have been. I think some were a little bit of vultures. I will definitely not name names, but I think somethings happened with some of the young co-eds with some of the staff that just should not have happened. That we were so small, but I think I know that I have a body of close friends that I've formed at Dartmouth. Many of whom are Black. They're not all Black, but many of whom, the majority of them are Black that have been lifelong bonds of friendship, and also a kind of network. And even for, alums who were there in my season who I wasn't close to, we can interact and there's a way in which we will be there for each other just because we were on campus at the same time. So there is, you know, sort of, foundation and a closeness and that you see it, you see it in many of the alums that have spent a lot of their time. I'm surprised at how much of, some of the alums' social life is all Dartmouth. Mine, I can't say that's true, but certainly I've stayed in close touch with a number of folks from Dartmouth.

- TILAHUN: What would you say brought most kids together- most Black students together? Did you participate in any sorority events or the Afro-Am society, which would be the Afro-American society here. I also know that you were involved in the Black Caucus. So how early did you start getting into advocacy and what kind of activities were you involved in on campus?
- REDDING: I don't know what the Black Caucus is. So just say that I, if I was involved in it, I didn't know that that was what I was involved in. I definitely worked on the Afro-Am. I did work on the newsletter pretty regularly. I may have at some point been an officer. I really don't remember. I was very vocal, and it was after I took a class at Dartmouth on institutional racism, I was the initiator and two friends joined with me, and we wrote a report on institutional racism. Now that of course was very foundational in my community building at Dartmouth in that we researched the report for a number of months, we interviewed a number of students. We interviewed professors, we interviewed people in the various athletic departments, and did our best to summarize the information that we've gotten and wrote a report that was, I think well-received [pause] certainly well received in the Black community and the Black community was grateful. I think well-received in the student body as a whole, but not well-received by the administration. And it colored the rest of my life at Dartmouth. To the degree that all three of us who wrote it determined that we would get out of-, graduate from Dartmouth, or at least do the things that made us eligible for graduation as soon as possible. Because we felt a certain jeopardy continuing on campus after we wrote that.
- TILAHUN: To go back to the report: Institutional Racism and Student Life at Dartmouth — your classmates that co-authored it would be Ms. [Monica] Hargrove ['76] and Eileen Cave ['76], correct?
- REDDING: Yes.
- TILAHUN: How did you all meet?
- REDDING: We all three lived in the Choates [dorm]. Are the Choates still called the Choates?
- TILAHUN: Yes, they are.
- REDDING: Yes. We all three lived in the Choates. They were pretty new dorms at the time. Monica lived one floor down, and in a wing that I had to pass by just to go down the stairs. Eileen lived in one building over, and another very close friend of ours was Karen Turner ['76]. Karen

and Eileen and I very early on at Dartmouth, I have no idea what it really meant, but we were trying to form a little friendship when we called ourselves the SSS. And so we were a little, a little mini social group that had formed. We were just close friends, and then once I took the class, I came back with the key points and we just started talking about, "Well, that seems to be present." And for me, institutional racism, not racism as a personal animosity, but racism in terms of the structures and the full systemic problem within an institution, that concept was new to me. So obviously we were in a particular institution, there was a dearth of people of color, there were issues with Native Americans. There were tiny in number, very, very, very few Native Americans at a time for an institution that was founded to educate Native Americans. And so we just thought, well, let's look at the numbers, let's look at positions, let's look at seniority, let's look at that across the college framework and see what happens, because we were already very close friends. We already regularly had deep discussions. We already, just had great trust for one another. And there were two guys who worked with us throughout the process, but they chose not to, they didn't write it at all, but they definitely — basically they were our sounding board. And if they thought there were flaws in our positions or some of the logic could be refined, they would work that through and talk that through with us. They chose not to be signatories. I think they were not unwise in that choice. As I said, it did come with somewhat of a cost, yes.

TILAHUN: Why do you think the institution had a general apathy towards the report?

REDDING: It wasn't apathy, I don't think. I think apathy is definitely — it was not a non-feeling, a lack of passion. One of the people who I interviewed, one of the deans, and I did that interview by myself, had, uh, talked with me about how Dartmouth was very happy that when other of the Ivies that had sit-ins and walk-outs, unrest in and around race, Dartmouth never had. That they did not want any light shown if there were problems in that area. I believe that he felt some substantial [pause] I'll use the word ire. He was not thrilled by this having not only there was the report, there was also an occasion, totally peaceful, actually totally silent. We just all gathered on Baker [Berry Library's] steps, and just stood together. I believe we had a certain number of minutes of silence, thanked everybody for coming. So it wasn't, but that showing of solidarity, that was visual and there was not huge press, but some press and, and a write-up in the Dartmouth and that kind of thing. And I think that my personal opinion is it's true to today that Dartmouth prefers a face of great diversity, openness to, Black Lives Matter. All of that

— that's the face, but oftentimes the reality, the openness to Black intellectual thought. A sufficient prevalence of people of color and Black, because oftentimes Dartmouth will talk about diversity, but diversity, sometimes it's at the cost of Black presence, people of African descent. As diversity has increased, the Black presence on the faculty has dwindled.

Oftentimes the people teaching, and bringing thought are not themselves of African descent or African-American, and that's a different lens. I'm not saying those other lenses should not be on campus — absolutely they should, but you should not reduce the presence of African-Americans in order to increase the presence of Asians, let's say, let's do both, not either/or, but both. I think they did not want a direct focus on race at Dartmouth. It was not apathy, it was animosity. And another point, just because if I had wanted to do anything to focus on these people, I would have done it at the time, but I will say that I received a direct threat to my wellbeing that was related to the Redding Report. And it was called the Redding Report at the time that we were on campus. Someone administrative came, set an appointment with me. I know it was just me and that person made a verbal, direct threat that I, as a young innocent person, it nearly broke my spirit. So I know that it was not apathy. It was animosity and it was a hostility that I never would have imagined. I'm at an institution — of what part of your job is to protect me, and instead you threaten me. And also intellectual curiosity should be applauded at an institution like Dartmouth, and in many ways is. I loved my education at Dartmouth. I love the library, I'm a library geek. And I used to love my hours in the library going to study one thing, and then just getting lost in another section and filling out books, and wandering around in different areas of thought that I hadn't even been exposed to. And many of my classes were wonderful, but I did not feel a welcoming in terms of that particular area of exploration.

TILAHUN: I see. Thank you so much for sharing, but I wanted to go back to an event you described where there was a silent protest on the steps of Baker [Berry Library] was it? Do you remember the date or the year?

REDDING: The [Redding] Report came out, I believe in November 1974, actually, I found it, I found an original, I mean, I've had it in digital form for years and years, but I found an original just today when I was looking at stuff, trying to refresh my memory. And I know that was '74 and I know all those things happened in a relatively compact period of time. So I would imagine that it is sometime late in '74 or very early '75, but my guess would be late in '74.

TILAHUN: Experiencing that hostility from this report and from this administrative member, how did that shape your Dartmouth experience moving on?

REDDING: It made me finish in three years [laughter]. That's the biggest way. And it made me do a lot of my last semesters off-campus. Because, when we decided to write and publish the report, the first thing we did was make sure that all three of us were academically sound, so that if an attack came — because frequently, the attrition of black male students during our time at Dartmouth was horrendous. I mean, the percentage of those who matriculated that graduated was fractional, you know, fractional. I can't quote numbers, but I sing this just phrased — it's not an answer to your question — but all of us who stayed at Dartmouth who matriculated in our class who were black females, I think all of us graduated or all but one, something like that. I mean, we made it through and we were under a different kind of psychological attack, but there was a certain kind of, I think they looked for a certain kind of female. I do believe that our class had some strengths that were not coincidental, but also we just, we just moved on through. We moved on through. The attack initially affected me gravely. I felt in jeopardy. Um, it definitely affected my mental health. But there was a professor who saw the effect, after the person came to the Choates and made the threat. And afterwards I was so frightened that I just didn't know what to do, so I was just walking back and forth on the sidewalk between the two parts of the Choates just back and forth, back and forth. And a professor who lived at the Choates pulled me in, talked over what had happened, said basically all that you've done will be lost if they break you, and you will not have people who follow behind you and stand if they break you; but did it in such a supportive way and pretty much looked out for me.

REDDING: I can't say therefore, it didn't have an effect. I was deeply frightened. I was deeply frightened straight through, and the same person who issued the threat was the person who handed me my diploma when I graduated. My father and mother paid for my tuition. It was very important to them that we were not scholarship, but my father got a lot of his pay for his work in chicken dinners and pumpkin pies. At no point was, Daddy wealthy and Mom was a school teacher, and they had three kids in college, a good bit of the time I was in college. So it was not an easy thing. So instead, everybody else had a diploma, I just had a piece of cardboard with a little note saying, when you have finished your requirements, we will give you a diploma. Now I had finished my requirements nine months prior to that and everything was fully paid for. I just today found a letter- I'd never seen it before — that my father wrote to

Dartmouth, about basically the punishment that they wreaked on him and on me by giving me cardboard instead of a diploma; because I just walked to another building and they said, "Oh, oops." But the man who gave it to me, handed to me, he winked. He was the same one who issued the threat. And when he handed me that, he winked, and I knew he didn't like me. And so I was wondering if the wink, but then when I pulled it out and it was just, I really believed that that was my final penalty for us writing that report.

TILAHUN: It seems as though by publishing [The Redding Report], you and your classmates had to deal with all of this unnecessary violence and hostility from administration. But did you have a professor or besides your classmates Monica Hargrove, and Eileen Cave besides your friend group, did you have a professor that you talked to through this? Who did you reach out to during this time?

REDDING: I didn't reach out to any professor. There was that professor that reached out to me [pause]. There was another student at Dartmouth in each situation, even for the good, I salute you and I say a peace and grace, if you ever see this, you'll know it's you, but there was a student who was very much sort of my knight, and would see when I was in any kind of trouble, and would come and encourage and talk through. And we are close friends to this day. That was very, very useful, but there was a professor who had stood for me before. I think she was gone by that point. Her name was Joan Smith.

But I was sexually harassed my first, I believe it was my first semester. Apparently this professor who sexually harassed me was a serial harasser. The first day of class, he called me and there were two other black women in the class. It was a sociology class. He called us, asked us to stay after class and told us that he knew that we could not compete with the other students on a normal level, but if we were willing to work with him, we would make it through the class. I responded to him, you know, I'm highly offended by that. You don't know me, my capacity, and if you're going to assume I'm incapable 'cause I'm Brown — that's highly offensive, and I won't do that. After that he started regularly saying that I needed to meet with him after class, and when we'd meet, he would talk about he'd seen me walking in my clothes... how nice such-and-such looked and dah-dah-dah-dah-dah. Never about course material at all. Well, it came to a head when at some point he called me in and said, "Your work is an A, but in order for you to get that grade..." basically he was asking for a sexual favor. "... but otherwise you may not pass the class." And I remember just feeling just so, like, *What do I do with this?* Obviously I'm not going to have

sex with the professor to get an A, he just told me I'd earned. And so the other sociology professor, Joan Smith, was in her office at the time. I took a number of classes with her that were really, really good for my future because I've done deinstitutionalization pretty much all my life. And she really laid the groundwork in terms of my being aware of how institutions have affected certain populations.

But in any event, I just told her the story. I was weeping. She somehow solved it, but I don't know how she solved it, but she somehow solved it. I remember her saying — and this is just, this is so, so racialized — she said to me, "Oh, Judy, don't cry. If you cry, how will I be strong?" And it was just like — this myth of the strong — I'm a teenager still, you know? I'm a teenager. You're a woman, and given what I just told you, crying is an appropriate response. I didn't say all this, and I just remember thinking, *Well, I appreciate your help, but that's sort of messed up!* Of course — you know, that I've got to be strong for you? No, no [laughter], but she really did. I don't know how she did it, but she solved that problem for me.

She was not there at the time. And to be quite honest with race [pause] there wasn't really a professor I felt I could trust, because the message from the Dean was sent by way of a Black faculty member. That threat, and it was a threat against my physical wellbeing. So I didn't know who, you know, once you have a threat from a faculty member to go to a faculty member, up to that point, I admired and trusted that individual. Most of us really trusted and admired that individual. I don't know what it cost him. You know, I can't imagine that was a conversation he was truly comfortable with, but there was no apology or even a look of shame when he brought this to me. So I wasn't trying to go to any faculty 'cause I had no, no one that I, I just didn't feel safe at all. And I thank God for the professor who brought me in, because I don't know if I would've made it, what I would've done that afternoon if I'd made it through the afternoon because that threat chilled me. But in the end, it strengthened me. By the end of Dartmouth, having been through all of that, some of the eventualities of life, life sometimes gets to be extremely full of attack, that forces will come against you. Sometimes it's some wrongdoing you do, but oftentimes it's just you and your personage. They do not accept you're at the table, they do not accept that you have a business. They do not accept you. You're in a place that they have not decided you should be in. And so that early experience at Dartmouth said, one can survive that one can strategize to answer that. And so, although it was horrendous and should not have happened, it did give me some muscles that have helped me over the course of life.

TILAHUN: Well, I apologize you had to experience all of this, especially during that time. Earlier you spoke of a culture of violence, was it in any way perpetuated by the student body?

REDDING: It was the student body. I mean, you know, I had two professors — a professor and my own assigned Dean to help us navigate Dartmouth. My Dean and that professor sexually harassed me, both of them. Other than that — and neither of them laid hands on me in any way. It was verbal, but whatever Joan Smith did for me with the one guy, I don't know if it would have escalated, 'cause it was escalating at that point in time, because first it was verbal stuff, but then a favor or a grade that's like get out! So I don't know what that next step would have been. But the other one was just verbal, but I'm going in there trying to get counsel and he's talking about what he'd like to do. Those were the only two with faculty, all the rest were students.

I don't think I want to record here any of the particulars of the rapes. It was not one, it was not two, it was not three. It would go off the fingers of one hand for sure. I believe would get real close to the fingers of both hands. I know that it didn't happen to every woman by any means. I've talked to a number of women from my class who it didn't happen to, but, there is a woman who recently retired from the New Hampshire legislature who was in my class who posted about her rape. When she posted, the number of women who posted, "No Occom Pond is where it happened to me," "Oh, it happened to me in that frat, too," "Oh, no, mine was such-and-such, leaned up against the tree at such-and-such." The number of women who responded. So, I know that although they felt like such isolating experiences [pause]. Two were gang — for me, two were gang rapes in frats. All the others were individually. One, I was drugged. A second time, I was drugged but got away.

And to be quite honest, I have not yet — just really gotten to an age and this place of health where I can begin remembering fully. I took a trip to Dartmouth and that began the season of, "Oh!" I would pass corners and say, "Oh my goodness." It was, it was like flashback city. Um, and [pause], but for me, not only am I — okay, I don't know if you know, I'm a preacher — but it has allowed me to be a different kind of prophetic, in that I know being able, now I can tell my story. I can sit down, one-on-one break it down if it's needed or just, I can talk about this. I can't say there's still, there's no pain, because of course that's costly. It's costly to your intimacy in relationships you choose, it's costly to your, your, your sense of value. It's costly to just how you move through the world and trust and all of those things. But, I'm okay. But, having seen when she

reported, and then there was another woman, but I think she was a class behind us, who also posted. I think she was in the *Washington Post* and she told her rape story. It was, and I believe, is a prevalent issue at Dartmouth that Dartmouth has not, they had a big commission on rape, but they haven't, they want to sit down and say, "We're fixed" too early, you know? But we still have the highest stats in the Ivy league. I volunteered to be part of that rape culture, discussion and commission, but they would not let me participate. I mean, they kept acting like they couldn't see my emails and whatever that was. And then by the time they didn't respond, they said, "Oh, we're all finished. We've taken care of it, and the reason we have higher numbers than anybody else's because people feel so safe to report it at Dartmouth." I said, "Oh my goodness!" You know, that's not what that means [laughter]. That's not what that means! And if it does, but you've got the highest numbers, you got to do something about those numbers! 'Cause those are lives. Those are young — young lives impacted harshly at a point when they're just forming, they're polishing off their, their new sense of adult ego, sexuality, self-concept. It's gotta be, it's gotta be solved. Yeah, so.

TILAHUN: Right. I mean, sexual violence prevention at Dartmouth is still a big thing. And, thank you for sharing your story and being so vocal about it, because it definitely contextualizes our history here and the work that they're trying to do at this campus, for [the current student body].

I really resonated with how you said, visually Dartmouth likes to show how everyone is doing okay, is working harmoniously, but it's really important to bring up these instances where they didn't and kind of uncover this culture of harassment or this culture of just being ignorant to other people's struggles. I wanted to ask you what were some ways that you found safety or in what activities did you partake in that you felt joy after[wards]?

REDDING: Hmm, well to be quite honest, I'm sort of, I'm a vagabond girl. I mean, to this day even to this day, in my sixties, I'm a vagabond. You know, I roll here, roll there; check on this, check on that. I'm an adventurer and all the rest. And so I can't say that I had all these experiences, and I know people for whom they say, [pause] abuse, rape, attack stops their show for years. But with me, it was like, okay, this is horrible. You know, I'm in this. Oh my goodness. What! 'Cause in a couple of minutes it's like, I don't know what happened, but I knew something happened, I knew it was sexual. You know, as I say, I woke up one morning and couldn't remember the night before, but was sticky. Just covered in sticky. Naked and sticky,

and had lost the whole night before. And I wasn't doing drugs. I'm sure I was slipped some drugs, but I was not doing drugs. So it was horrible, and certainly for a day or two, I never told anybody the whole time I was at Dartmouth about that night. It was way after Dartmouth I ever told about that, because [pause] I couldn't tell you anything anyway. I mean, clearly I'd been raped, but who, or whatever, 'cause I lost the night, like an hour into a party that I'd thrown with two of my friends. That night ended in my mind. And then I woke up sticky. I didn't move around. It didn't then change. First of all, I had to get my books. I had to get my papers in. I had to do my thing. And so sort of like you had to okay, get it together, you've got work to do! And I didn't then wander around always afraid. That was not who I was at all. I was, I was rolling, you know, I was doing what I did and checking this out and hanging out with my friends and that kind of thing. And these events happen — certainly they weren't happening every day, certainly they weren't happening every month — but they're so impactful. They're both impactful and secret [pause] not because they're private, but I don't know. I still haven't gotten to the point where I know how to integrate them. I know I shouldn't feel shame, [pause] but that doesn't mean I don't feel shame. Um, and rape victims will tell you — and I can say, it's certainly my testimony — that at least half of the time, if you dare to tell, somebody says, "What did you have on? Well, where were you? What do you think you could have given a signal?" And it's like, yeah, I said, 'please rip off my clothes, leave bruises on my body, and take something I told you, you couldn't have.' Yes, that was, I gave that. I gave that indication. But, I didn't feel unsafe as I moved through Dartmouth. The only time I felt unsafe was after that threat from the administration. Yeah, then I felt unsafe for the rest of my time there. Someplace, I was always like, it was sort of like this: wasn't like I thought someone's going to jump me, it was more like, did they really feel, they could say that to me? Wow! Who are these — where am I? That's really how I felt that kind of unsafety. The Knight in Shining Armor told me, "Just don't ever go on frat row." You are not safe there, you know? Just that kind of thing, but the both frat rows, um, I was drugged and taken to frat row both times. So, it wasn't as if I said, "Oh, let me party on frat row." So, I felt safe most of the time I felt safe, and I had friends and I enjoyed them and, you know, I pretty much did what I wanted to do. And I think that might have made me more vulnerable in that I went, where I wanted to go. And I've never been one to run with the pack. I run with myself a lot of times. I'd have friends with me, but I don't need to gather three girls to move. That's just [laughter] not who I am. You know, I just go, what do I want to do? Let me go do that. So I think that may have given me a

little jeopardy, 'cause I might have been accessible in ways that some of my friends were not.

TILAHUN: I also want to ask, did it take you a lot of time to open up about the verbal attack from the higher ups? 'Cause I do remember you spoke of a letter that your father wrote to the institution.

REDDING: But my father did not, in the letter or in any conversation we had, [pause] although we didn't have much conversation. I've seen my father cry twice in life. Once was when his brother died. He didn't break down at my graduation, but his eyes surely filled with tears when he heard that I didn't have a diploma. And surely it was financial, but you know, my father went to Brown [University] and a good bit of the time he was the only Black person on campus.

They put a ring of chairs around his desk, so nobody would have to sit beside somebody Black. You know, it was the early 1900s [when] he was at Brown. He still was a commencement speaker. He was a man who had a kind of, I guess both of my parents did, but the stories told more about my father's side. [I] know his struggles more. He was still a commencement speaker. He was dogged in getting, in achieving, in focus [laughter], you know, that's just who he was. But it cost him quite a bit, you know, and then he went on to Harvard Law School and again, he wasn't among plenty [of Black students], but I didn't hear it being quite so brutal in terms of his study situations. He couldn't live in the dorms because Blacks couldn't live in the dorms at Brown. So he had lived an isolated life, and then wanted his children to go to Ivy league schools. And I never asked him why that was so important to him, but it was of great importance to him. It took all they had financially.

I don't want to tell the story wrong; nobody went into the poor house, nobody went into great debt, but it was everything to get their kids through school. And with all of us, they did not want us an undergraduate — because at that point, everybody was saying we were inferior, there was special treatment. So, he wanted us to get in by our grades and go through on his pocket, you know? Those tears — but I don't know that he associated it with the Redding Report. When he knew I'd done the Redding Report, I didn't tell my father about the threat. You know, I knew how much it was for me to be there and what extent, and all of that. And I didn't want him to have to have the fear. I told him [pause] he had a completely sanitized version of my time. He didn't know ever that I got raped at Dartmouth. I did manage to get a car out of him when I first went up there because I said, you know, you can't have to have me depending on a man to get in his car each time, but I did manage to

get a car out of him, but he didn't know what did happen to me. I don't know that he associated the two, but I strongly associated the man giving me the wink, and then I pulled out cardboard when everybody else was showing their diploma.

One thing I did learn though, and this wasn't, this wasn't race, this was just, human interaction. Now I call it, people will do anything. But at that point it's like: Pollyanna has to get some wisdom. You know, in my faith we say, wise as a serpent, gentle as a dove. I don't much like snakes, but there comes a time when you have to face that they may use snakes on you, and you've got to be prepared. And that was that threat, and then that wink, and the diploma and all that. I was still a child, even when they handed me the diploma. And that at that point, that you're going to take out that, or I don't think there was much in the report that was damning, other than truth. There was no acidity in that report. But that you would attack a teenager [laughter] on the basis of a class that you offer. And a lot of us doing it was our nerdishness. They say, well, let's work this out — let's apply this to the institution where we are, you know, and then [pause] I surely wasn't expecting a threat. I just, I had never considered that.

I'm sure my father wouldn't have been surprised by it. He had more death threats when he was, the only attorney and only Black attorney doing things for civil rights issues, and people who had never had a defense of their contract and not letting people steal their land and all of that. I know my father knew there were consequences, but I just, I didn't want to frighten, you know, I didn't want to frighten him. So neither of my parents ever heard about the rapes, neither of my parents ever heard about the threat to my life. In fact, I didn't tell anybody, including the two sisters who wrote the report until maybe two years ago. It was the first [time] I told them.

TILAHUN: Well, again, I'd like to say, thank you for sharing this. I mean, this is the time to do it. Um, earlier you spoke of the naivety that a lot of co-ed students, or a lot of the women that are part of the co-ed class had, do you feel like collectively you were able to mature after knowing of these experiences, like these harassment experiences on campus, or was it more of an individual change or realization that Dartmouth wasn't as perfect as they liked to advertise?

REDDING: Well, you know, and I don't think it's all really just Dartmouth. I mean, you know, I've said some specific things. I think the one thing that I think is Dartmouth that we need to continue to contend with is that rape culture. I really think, and yeah, and I think that there are groups that are working hard on racism. I think this course

is a by-product of it, quite honestly. And so, I hope that there's a genuine effort that continues on race as well, but I think the naivety is what age we were, you know? And then an age where we were crossing a continental divide. This had been a male school, and when you have single sex schools, there are certain things that can be part of the culture that are, we'll say "on the DL" [down low]. That by women coming [to Dartmouth], they fractured the [unintelligible] is admitting that that's part of the culture, that it gets fractured without repair. There were no rainbows at that time, the word gay did not exist. Gay meant "I'm happy and free" — that's what gay meant at that point in time. For people who were attracted to a single-sex school, so they could explore the possibility of their homosexuality or the knowledge of their homosexuality in a place — and then it's remote, it's Dartmouth all up in the woods, you know, New Hampshire.

We also, we cracked into some stuff with no knowledge of what we were cracking, even when we were in the midst of the cracking going on. Some of the things we experienced were also a by-product of being the first class of women. They often called us "co-hogs" that was black and white, not co-eds but co-hogs. They would tell us that we were relief stations. They just said women so they could have access to a little this and that. A lot of that was just they were immature, too. And some of them naïve, too. But in a culture where you have naïve males and they say, "boys will be boys," so they're allowed to break and destroy things and just carry on because "boys will be boys," but if you're some of the breakage — we mature. Because it was the years of life when you're mature and trying to figure out how you'll use your sexuality, what consent looks like in a year before "no means no." All of us had to mature, but the things each of us encountered was a little different. Those of us who hadn't been exposed to homosexuality at all, and find out that your boyfriend is also sleeping with your best friend's boyfriend. Well that's — causes you to mature! [Laughter] and causes you to think, "Huh," you know? And causes you probably to shed a few tears, too [laughter]. So there was a lot going on, but some of that was just age and life, and being the first-class of women.

TILAHUN:

I see, I'd also like to talk about the open letter to the black community that you also authored with your classmates. I noticed you quoted the song "Stand!" by Sly & the Family Stone to give thanks to the black solidarity on campus. So, how important was music to campus life?

REDDING:

I think this continues to this day. You'll have a campus gathering place, or a place where everyone eats, and a lot of Black students

sit together. They'll be, "Why do you always sit together?" The kinds of things that was definitely an issue or at least, uh, I don't think it really was a problem. I think the Black students sat together not just by Black students. I think everybody was really cool with it, but when racism would come up, people say, "Well, you guys always sit together," but I think both the islands in the cafeteria and the parties periodically at the [Afro-]Am, um, those were like [unintelligible].

There was a situation where, because you're very right to be in a class and often got questions. You took a slot from — I took a slot from my slot. What do you have that I don't have? Compete with me directly and let's figure out what I took. But, I came from a background where I could just, I knew that to be true of [unintelligible], stop your nonsense. But for many folks you might be first-generation in college. You don't have that same assuredness. I think for a lot, those parties and music, and all the rest, especially songs like "Stand!", allowed you to have the strength to go back out in what was geographically a very white environment [laughter]. And oftentimes, it was just kick-back just for you being you. Just trying to walk in your own reality, you're not really trying to be anything, and then people are trying to push back on your right to even exist. And the presumption of stupidity? Oh, you know! So, you can be — and for me, oh my goodness! I love Dartmouth, both white and black communities, but it was a different thing being able to brush it up against that, almost everybody in your class, you can sharpen yourself by their minds. I loved that about Dartmouth. It was a nice place to be the smart kid in the class. That's a nice little island to be in high school, but it is sweet when you can think together, and when you can reason together, and it's like, whoa, I can't keep up with him. Wow. I didn't know that! That was very sweet. But in the Black community, you'd also run into people who were thinking thoughts you never heard in terms of Black community, in terms of politics, in terms of the diaspora that you just hadn't been exposed to. It would stretch you out and make you say, "Hmm, you know, that's a possibility." We had, I think two — we had no women — but I think we had two men from Africa in one was I think, a class above, and one was in, our class. Kwame Ofori Kwage I think his name was. I'm pretty sure he was Ghanaian. And Bimmas Paul, I didn't know as well, but just that exposure and thinking- just broadens your thinking. Some of was music, and some of it was just that, that showing up of your sense of self for being in a community that did not deny your intelligence and even right to be at Dartmouth, just because of how you look.

TILAHUN: Right. So continuing on that [topic of] diversity, were you involved in any off-campus programs like trips to Sierra Leone or Jersey City [NJ]?

REDDING: I went to D.C. [pause] government program. Did I go someplace else? I'm thinking I did, but I have, that might be confusing it with seminary many years later. Let me think. I really think I did two semesters off campus, but the only one that's coming to me is D.C. so maybe that was it. I did not go overseas when I was starting most of my friends did, but I didn't.

TILAHUN: For the government program. What kind of things were you involved in?

REDDING: I worked, in the office of criminal justice [pause] I can't remember the last, the last word in the title of that, but they gathered stats on criminal justice issues from age of offenders, recidivism, what communities were most affected, which crimes that kind of thing, and analyzed them. They also just gave me a real good exposure to all the interlocking criminal justice agencies 'cause in D.C. you've got the national government and all those different branches of criminal justice as well as the metropolitan area. So that's what I did there.

TILAHUN: You talked about being interested in institutional change during your time at Dartmouth. So, what kind of classes were you attracted to and did you do any research at your time here?

REDDING: Well, um, the, the class that I was, I was referring to, I don't know, sociology, something, something, something. This is a long time ago remembering the specifics of this class. But I know that it talked about institutionalization and then looked at it in terms of sectors of the society. That included institutions — at that point, I called them barns of humanity. I don't think anyone else calls them, but that's what I encountered. But at that point, if you had mental illness, mental retardation, or your family decided to put you away — everybody went to the same place. And then if you were a kid, with what now is called a status offender, but a kid who maybe missed too much school, or maybe just couldn't get along at home — minor delinquency as they call it. They might end up in there too. So, they just throw all these people in the same place, inadequate staff and that kind of thing. But she, she had a study who was there. Who was there? And then who was in prison?

That was my first exposure to the percentage of America that gets put away and is not free to go. The percentage that gets put away

that have done nothing wrong and the percentage that are Brown and Black. That was my first exposure to that. And I didn't know that it would impact my future so much, but, as a preacher, I've pretty much done most of my work outside of the church. Until coronavirus, I regularly preached in a prison in Maryland, ministered there, and I've done a lot of my ministry in Uganda. But then my life's work is caring for folks with disabilities. So in three different states, I've been involved with the institutionalization and caring for people who then are living in the community. [Joan Smith] gave me a fabric for it. And right now I'm doing volunteer work in one community. I've done in a couple, but in terms of police justice. But that fabric, when you look at that fabric, the lack of fairness, and it sort of colored the way I looked at a lot of things because [pause] those demographics say there is no justice. The demographics when you study that, and that was my first exposure to those stark demographics, which have gotten considerably worse in the decades since I studied at Dartmouth.

TILAHUN: Right. Just going off of that lack of fairness. I do remember you speaking about the housing discrimination that your family faced when you were younger. So I wanted to ask, whenever you imagined your college experience, specifically the academic part of it, did you know that you would go towards what you're working now?

REDDING: Absolutely not. I was probably ten/eleven when I decided I wanted to be a lawyer. I think that was largely because I knew Daddy did good things for people. He impacted lives, and he helped people who couldn't afford his help regularly. That's what attracted me, you know, long before I identified it as God, long before I thought about it in terms of justice, or helping I was crafted to — that really my goal in life is to be a blessing. As I've aged and put my hands to things, I've tried to figure out given my own capacity, which I'm very, very, very aware of my limitations; but given my own capacity, how can I be a blessing multiplier, how can I be a fulcrum of blessings? If people can be blessed by what my hands can do, well, that's just a scattering. So is there a way in which I can, scatter to scatterers? That I can focus in that way? And, I've got a small mission project by which I do the prison ministry, but in the Africa ministry is, most of it is called Today's Seed Tomorrow's Hope. And that's that same multiplication principle that we raise a bunch of babies, but we make the babies promise that they'll bless a bunch of babies that are not out of their own wombs or out of their own seed. So that the seeds will continue to multiply. I think that's all been a by-product of that. You have a social problem, but you don't bring people in and lock them up and kill their spirits and

make them more violent. No, that's not the process [laughter]. That's not, that's not the way. And you don't decide that certain people in your society will be locked up so that they can make other people wealthy by locking them up. People shouldn't be getting — becoming billionaires off the bodies you've locked up. Now we've switched it from these weren't reflected in [Joan Smith's] demographics at all, but now we switched it to the immigrant population, and people are getting rich off the institutionalization. But the scars of insti- when you get too many people in any one building horrors will happen. The people who run the buildings lose their humanity. When people become numbers, danger ensues and you crack open souls. And sometimes when you institutionalize people for too long, it's almost impossible to put Humpty Dumpty together again. They just get too broken.

TILAHUN: Yeah, those are great points. I do recall in the 70s, Dartmouth was getting a lot of backlash for recruiting military or ROTC on campus. Were you aware of any of the protests that happened at that time relating to the military and divesting from the military?

REDDING: Only to one degree, not real specifically. So when the Redding report was disseminated, we had that little protest on, on Baker[Baker-Berry Library], odd groups of people would come to my dorm room and try and get me to be a speaker for their project. Maybe because my name was attached to the report. For Dartmouth in our era, that was a really big thing, because people hadn't cried out publicly for quite some time. And [laughter] so, they tamped those words down. They just didn't let those go public. They wanted to use me, and it happened, I think there are three different — one individual and two different groups. One individual tried to convince me to be, I don't know if you'll know this name, but I think her name was Tawana Brawley. Basically say somebody did something to you that didn't, so that we can get notoriety for our cause, and then an organization, communist organization wanted me to be their front person. And that was the one that had to do with the divesting and the communist party wanted to do something. So, that's where I got exposed to it. But it's just like, yeah, but I'm not a communist and that's not what I was trying to do [laughter]. I'm thinking not — they already want to kill me [laughter].

TILAHUN: Well, after Institutional Racism and Student Life at Dartmouth was disseminated, your name was obviously attached to it since it was called the Redding Report. Were students very aware of your work and what you stood for on campus because your name was attached to it?

REDDING: To be quite honest, I can't remember exactly. I think I may have been the most vocal, and the more — yeah, I think I may have been the most vocal, and I went to the Class, [of '76] so they were, like, collaterally inspired. They definitely did at least as much work certainly as, as their, their thinking and contribution and interviewing was not less than mine by any means. I'm not quite sure how, but I think that I was more vocal. I was definitely probably more strident. Monica to this day, Monica has got such a fine mind. I love Monica's mind. And she's passionate, but she is never strident. I am often strident. And, I don't cloak what I have to say at all. [Laughter] I just, I don't have that gear, [laughter]. I wish I had after I've said it. I thought that three or four times in this interview, like, "J.B., that was too much!" [Laughter].

REDDING: But Monica is, is almost a veil, but she lays it out, she's bold, but she's never strident. And, Cave was more interacting person to person. Cave was going — Eileen Cave, I call her Cave — she was going person to person and advocating and telling the story. And so, somehow that happened. I, but you know, you, you are yourself. I remember being surprised when people kept knocking on my dorm room, so I don't know whether it was 'cause of the Redding Report, or because I was out there in a way, that the others weren't, I don't really know. I think I was pretty well known on campus anyway. I was on a number of committees that had nothing to do at all with political justice. Committee on Student Life and da-da-da. I was involved in campus life in ways where I thought I could be effective. And I had a lot of friends in a lot of different places.

TILAHUN: Right, in what ways did you contribute to campus life? Were you organizing events for the student body? In what ways were you involved?

REDDING: It wasn't so much that it was just, I can't remember. I think at the point when I was on the most committees, I think at some point I was on three different committees. I remember the Committee on Student Life. I don't remember much fifty years ago exactly what we did, but I know was not organizing events, 'cause that was not one of my skillsets [laughter], so I don't think I was doing that. But I know that we looked at — we didn't call it that — but, the campus atmosphere. Does everybody had the room to live well and freely? We also looked at campus discipline, because there was an iniquity then- bad enough to know that there's iniquity now in terms of who is prosecuted for what kinds of things on campus. As we looked at that kind of thing — the compensation of the committees that would be triers, if you will, of the people who came up for campus discipline. I remember those, those things, but I'm only sure there

was another committee that wasn't like that at all. I was on the marching band, but I had no skills. I had a girlfriend, Karen [M.] Turner, ['76] I will call out your name, Karen Marie Turner! She was in the same class, and it was her impetus that got me [to do] three things that I would, very unlikely to have been on otherwise, definitely all gave me joy. We were managers of the boys' basketball team. We were just the first class of women, and they couldn't figure out how to say no to us. They really wanted to, [laughter] but Karen would talk very quickly about freedom and "We should be given opportunities." Next thing, you know, we were managers of the boys' basketball team. We were the first Dartmouth cheer-leaders, and we turned out to be an all-black squad. The first time [laughter] we were in the marching band, and neither of could play an instrument, so she played the [pause], and I played the maracas. Oh, tambourine! But it got us to all the football games. So, she managed to get us to all of the football games and all the basketball games, [laughter] with her creative self. So that was another way as well.

TILAHUN: How would you say these extracurriculars shaped your Dartmouth experience for the better or worse? Was there just, this story sounds very joyous as well. Was that a highlight of your Dartmouth experience?

REDDING: It was definitely fun. It was definitely fun. My mother never would allow us to be cheerleaders. She felt very strongly that we were never to be side [unintelligible], that we were always to be part of the main event. So she went — just no — you can't even get the word "cheer" out of your mouth before she would prohibit anything like that. I got exposure to both manager of the basketball team and [pause] following the teams around. I got exposure to athletic life in a way I wouldn't have otherwise, which was new to me. That was sort of fun. They really have not done much of anything at shaping my life going forward.

TILAHUN: Did your proximity to the athletic team help when you guys were researching for The Report on Institutional Racism and Student Life at Dartmouth?

REDDING: Absolutely. Absolutely. Now, Cave, Eileen Cave, did most of the interviewing for the athletic part. She had her own reason to have exposure to the football team. She started, she heard a lot of the discussions that the guys were having about fairness and what positions Black guys weren't allowed to play. So, she volunteered to do that. Certainly, by being manager of the basketball team, we also had been exposed to some stuff, and we kept all the stats and

that kind of thing. So, we had some idea of some of those decisions. Then you rode on the bus, so you heard what seemed to be fair or unfair, that kind of thing. I wouldn't have been equipped to even think about those things had we not had those, those experiences.

TILAHUN: Right, right. After earning your bachelor's at Dartmouth, why initially did you want to go into law and how did that shape your interest in pursuing divinity too?

REDDING: Well, law school, okay. I finished in three years at Dartmouth. I just had to get out of there. I had a year at home before I started law school, because I graduated with my class, um, sorta [laughter]. When I went home, I was aware that I had a hole in the middle of me that needed to be filled. And I figured it was God, I just didn't know what God that would be. And so I spent a lot of that year getting an answer to that question. By the time I graduated, I had come to a belief in Jesus Christ. I've been raised in the church, and I've certainly interacted with [unintelligible] by God all my life, but I would not have said that [pause] God and Jesus Christ was the light and the power and the function of my life prior to that point in time.

So that happened, and I spent a whole lot of that year in church, came back, but I had wanted to be a lawyer just because I wanted- but I think I just wanted to be like my Daddy. My Daddy wanted a boy real bad. I was the last one, so I tried my best to be my father's boy [laughter]. But I didn't like law school, like at all. I liked some of the thinking, but I didn't like law school. I didn't like the process. It seemed to be unnecessarily harsh and I just didn't like law school. Before I finished law school, I wrote to my father and said, "I'm not going to practice law — that's, that's not gonna happen." But I, I, it was years of an angst, because I really believe he kept his law practice open for some years waiting for me to change my mind. I didn't go to seminary till [unintelligible], so I had just finished my first year of seminary on September 11th. I was well into mature womanhood by the time I went to seminary. As a believer, I was very active. I was not yet a missionary, but I was quite content with being what I was: The person who went to church and sometimes taught Sunday school. That was, that was plenty, and I gave a little money here, gave a little money there da-da-da-da. Thought I was doing my thing, good enough, you know? It was very central to my life, but I wasn't even slightly interested in a position in the church, which is probably good because I still don't have a position in the church [laughter].

But, at some point I experienced a call on my life, so I went to seminary [pause] after a little, after a little resistance to it. One old lady in my life whose the mother of a Dartmouth friend, basically read me the riot act and chased me to seminary. That was my best educational experience of all, seminary. It was just sweet. So that's that, but most of what I've done with it, as I told you, is [pause] trying to bring a few different kinds of [unintelligible] in Africa. I have an international Christian community that I'm a part of, because in seminary I went to Japan to a missionary community [unintelligible] the whole world.

TILAHUN: At Dartmouth, were you involved in religious life?

REDDING: A little bit. We had a preacher named — I don't remember, I think his first name was Lloyd. I don't remember his last name. Nearly every Sunday, he would say, "I'm not interested in pie in the sky, I want meat in the streets." So that was his primary theology, that he wanted justice now, forget about heaven. I think that's pretty much what his "pie in the sky" means. We had a little gospel choir. I was in it, so was Monica, so was Kate. Frankly, I'll say that for me, I spent most of my life in an Episcopalian church that for many, many years we were the only Black family in it. That's a big part of my Christian roots. It's not a "you are what you were" to a certain degree, but I've been A.M.E [African Methodist Episcopal Church] since I was a teenager. I didn't come from any great preaching profession, that's my point there. I can't say I sat under any great preachers in my whole childhood. That just wasn't true. They were ok. They were nice people, but there was no like, *Oh, that changed my life!* kind of preaching going on, what I experienced.

The preaching at Dartmouth, for me, just didn't do it. It didn't call me to action. It didn't call me to God. I don't mind political in the midst, but I want to hear [pause] What's God got to do with this politics, you know? I didn't experience that. I liked being in the choir. I enjoyed that, but it wasn't really so religious and that might be why I went seeking as soon as I left Dartmouth because I had this, I mean, it was concrete. It was part of what I was gonna do with this year. A big part of it. I was going to figure out — I knew it was God. Who is God? So I did a lot of reading and studying different religions, and then just sort of laid open and said, show up God. I'm ready show up. That was more participation. I don't know that I was there every Sunday, all the years, but I know most of the time I was at Dartmouth, I think I participated in chapel.

TILAHUN: It also sounds like you grew your religion after Dartmouth. So once you graduated, was it kind of a progression towards that state or

did you always know that you wanted to take a break from Dartmouth and focus on kind of giving yourself the time to discover Christ on your own?

REDDING:

Well, I don't think they, I don't think they had so, so much to do with each other. Yes, I used that year to find God for myself, but I only, I don't know that I would have finished Dartmouth in three years had I not been part of The Redding Report and been threatened [laughter]. Well, once I was threatened. I mean, we would talk about it. We just need to get out of here as soon as possible. We need to be safe, and we need them not to come after us. We need them — we want to end up with a good college degree. We've done all this. We did that little report for a couple of months, but this is getting dicey. Since I had the year, that's where it fell now, would it have fallen that year if I'd spent at Dartmouth? God knoweth. I don't know. Long before I thought about, and wasn't even considering, I think very young, I probably did get a call on my life to preach, but I was more interested in playing. And I remember thinking about it, like, I don't think I can do both. I want to play, but it wasn't something that nagged me through my adulthood, but I think there was a point in which there was sort of that tug. And I didn't answer, but a lot of my adult life, by the time I came back from Japan, I lived in Japan for three years. By the time I came back from Japan, the hunger to know God's word, that just, there was a new seriousness on me where I just would sit down and start reading and then studying and trying to find out the meaning and, you know, be digging in three or four different things.

My sister, for many years, was an Episcopalian priest. She can read, I think she's fluent in Hebrew, Greek and Arabic. If I got stuck, I'd call, "Holmes, Holmes, what does this really say? What's it say in the original language?" And seminary was a great tool to, I'll never touch her I don't think in her fluency, but I have the ability to do some of that digging myself now. It's grown, but I think also it has more integrity. In other words, my faith and what I believe about justice, what I believe about God, how I plant my garden, they all relate more as I get older. That's what integrity really means to me at this stage in life is that my life is integrated in a way that it's all a whole cloth.

TILAHUN:

Okay. So earlier you spoke of an urgency to graduate after the report was published, was that difficult to accomplish?

REDDING:

No, because Dartmouth right then had, I don't remember. They had this, the semester program where you could sort of smash them all together. Do very little summer, you smash them all together and

get out of there. It was very easy to get out in three years and one semester.

TILAHUN: Was it also easier because you had classmates that were also interested in getting out too?

REDDING: I don't think so. I don't think so. Some of girlfriends, when they left Dartmouth, they moved to the same city and dah-dah-dah-dah, just sort of rolled together for awhile. And something was very clear to me that I needed to not do that, that I needed to face the fact that it was time for me to figure out what my life was supposed to look like. I didn't yet have this language, this is what I call it now – what God would have for me to do. Even by that point, it was, I don't just make decisions, they're decisions that are made that I need to walk into. And that if I go to the city where my girlfriends are, we'll be playing all the time. And that it's time for me to be purposeful, that I was created for a purpose. I need to comprehend what that is and walk in that purpose. Now, I certainly can't say to you that I stopped playing. That would be a gross and horrible lie and lightning would fly from the sky and knock me out. I played for a long time in life, still play a little bit, [laughter] but I have been very goal-oriented, but not so much on what I will achieve as doing that, which I was sent to do.

TILAHUN: [Pause] Well, I just wanted to say thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today and for participating in this interview. So yeah, we can end it right here if you're, if you have nothing else to say,

REDDING: No. I think I want to say one thing. It happens certainly currently in our national politic, but I think it happens often when someone like me is free to speak a critique that people will then call us haters. But Dartmouth [pause] working with CBAD [Concerned Black Alumni of Dartmouth] made me realize that I do have a strong love of Dartmouth and that there is a framework that Dartmouth gave me for intellectual thought, for study, [pause] and for being willing to stand when you have not been invited to stand. But [pause] that you need to stand because something needs to be said, but you also need to stand to give others the courage to stand. And my Dartmouth experience began that for me, but [pause] I don't say that it's Dartmouth that threatened me — a particular person thought that they would, and I would say, abuse their power in a way to threaten me. To deny me my timely diploma. To punish me for free speech and intellectual inquiry. It was a place that offered the Institutional Racism course.

I think Dartmouth has a, at least the years I've known Dartmouth, it has this struggle. It's the struggle where it really wants to include the whole world and hear from the whole world. But then when it hears from the world that used to serve the table, that used to be colonial subjects, [laughter] used to be the darker continent, used to be all of that. And that world, in its brilliance, shines a light that Dartmouth is uncomfortable with, then for a while they want to kick all [laughter] of those voices out for awhile. And then they struggle because there is a genuine intellectual curiosity and academic rigor at Dartmouth, and so then the people are back. So I see that struggle at Dartmouth. I am trying to get my strength up once I finish wrapping up my business to continue to encourage Dartmouth and its better angels to continue to hear all the voices, even those that challenged them, that they are not so used to having as equals at the table. I have critique, but I think if your family has got issues, you got to critique them so you can improve. And a lot of this critique is out of a love. The only part of it that's beyond love, it's just, just common decency is we have got to stop the violence towards one another and the turning of the head up towards it in certain instances. We just, it can't be, it can't be okay for certain people to be violent because they're stars of this, or important to that. The violence has to stop. And in that area, it's beyond critique. It's just an absolute need that Dartmouth face that. We've got to end that violence. We just have to end that violence, or greatly reduce it. We're human beings, there will always be some violence, but we really can't have a quiet tolerance to certain violence.

TILAHUN: That is really important to address, and I'm happy that you were able to amplify your message during this interview. Once more, thank you so much for your participation and have a good rest of your day, J.B.

REDDING: All right, good meeting you.

REDDING: Good meeting you as well.