

#26 INTERVIEW OF BLACK STUDENTS ENROLLED AT WASHINGTON AND LEE

1. *Have you decided upon a college major?*

If yes, what?

Yeah. English.

2. *(If the answer to do question 1 is no, skip #7.) What is your grade point average (GPA) in your major field?*

Do you have any idea what your GPA is in that so far?

In my major so far? No.

3. *What type of degree are you working toward at Washington and Lee?*

BA

4. *What is the occupation or profession you want to do enter upon finishing your education?*

I want to go to law school and then go into family law.

5. *Do you plan on working toward an advanced degree at some time after finishing your undergraduate program?*

yes

6. *While growing up, did you attend or were you personally active in church? Yes / No*

If yes, please give the denomination, and the type of church activities in which you participated.

Yes. Well, it was Baptist, London Bridge Baptist, the name of the church. And then I worked with the kids, in the basement. While the grownups were upstairs having service I was down there with the kids. And also we were in this youth program where we went out and volunteered our services.

How would you characterize your church involvement in Lexington?

I'm not quite as involved as I was back home. The church here, there's a lot of older people in there, and they don't have many activities for the youth. I would love to start something, but it's - but I can't find any youth. I'm sure there are youth who go there, cause I see them walking around, but. I [] so at Easter, but I can't get anything started, but I want to do.

7. *How would you compare your level of participation in extra-curricular activities in high school and at Washington and Lee?*

In high school I was very active, but here at W&L I kinda want to do get a good standing with my grades before I start with activities.

8. *How did you learn about Washington and Lee University?*

W&L literature

W&L admissions counselor

Relative

Adult friend

Peer

Other

I interviewed a lawyer back home, and he attended W&L. And he told me how much he loved it and it was like a family away from home, and I said "I have to do go there if he had this"..., and he still talks to his friends back in college. So I said "I have to go here if he has that relationship still."

What were you interviewing him for?

We had this project for English where we had to do interview someone from our profession that we were pursuing, so that's what I did.

9. *To what extent were you assisted during the admissions process by an alumnus of Washington and Lee?*

Well, he didn't assist me very much. After I heard about him I went ahead and called the school to do get more information about it.

10. *Did you visit the campus before you matriculated as a student?
If yes, under what circumstances?*

Visited on your own

Participated in the Summer Scholar's Program

Visited during a Prospective Student Weekend

Other:

Yes. Prospective weekend.

Was it the minority students' weekend, or general.

General

Would you describe the visit?

I loved it. The person I stayed with was really nice and she introduced me to everyone and everyone was like "Oh, you have to come here, it's great here." They're like "Well, the work is hard, but you'll love it. And it'll be a great experience."

Did you meet a broad range of people when you came?

Yeah. There's interviews to meet everyone.

Did you stay with a freshman?

a freshman.

What kind of feedback did you get about the school - besides it's great, you have to come?

Well, they liked the school. They said there's not a lot of stuff for minority students to do. Well, I don't usually go out and party and stuff. I'm kinda like a person who stays home and watch TV or read a book, so I didn't mind not having the social aspect. They pretty much liked it.

Please describe your reactions to do this campus visit.

It was different. It was not like - well kinda what I expected, but I didn't expect the students to be so separate.

In what sense?

Well, when I came, the minority students sat at one table, and you know how long the tables are at the D Hall, and all of them sat at that one table, and I was like "Well, this is weird." cause the high school I came from, everyone's mixed in together. And I usually don't hang out with minority students and it was weird just, them just sitting at that one table. And it was like "Oh, OK, is there a reason why we can't sit at the other table?" And then I remember one day I sat at another table, and everyone was like "What is she doing over here, separate from the other table." and it was like "OK." So this year I'm trying to do like sit different places rather than that one particular table. It's a little different this year cause a lot of the sophomores don't eat in the D Hall, so it's a little different. The freshmen minorities move around.

So what else were your reactions to do the campus?

Trying to think.

Did you stay with a minority student during that visit?

Yeah I did. Um, I don't know what else to say, I just loved the school, the buildings.

Did you get to do attend classes?

Yeah, Oh I loved the classes. Like English class - the first though, the first class I did see was English and I was like "There's no way I can sit through a class here." the teacher was way over my head. And I was like "OK, maybe I have to rethink this." But she said "Oh, well we're just in the middle of a chapter, that's why it seems like it's all jumbled." But then I went to a politics class and it was like "Oh yes, I most definitely have to come here." Because, oh the teacher was just like into everything he was doing and into the students and he knew all the students and was just walking down the hallway following me and was "Hi, so and so, Hi." and I was like "Wow, he knows everyone." And I like that relationship how the teachers know the students. And they're like "How are you doing?" and they weren't asking about a politics paper, like "How'd you do on that English paper." So I thought that's good.

10a. *Was W&L your...*

First choice

Second choice

Third choice

Less than third choice

First choice.

10b. *About how many other colleges did you apply to do?...*

No other

One

Two

Three

Four

Five

Six or more

Four

10c.

How many other colleges accepted you?

None

One

Two

Three

Four

Five

Six

Four.

11. *What made you decide to do attend Washington and Lee?*

Relatives wanted you to do come here

Teacher advised you

Good academic reputation

Good social reputation

Offered financial assistance

Offers special programs you wanted
Tuition lower than similar colleges
High school guidance school counselor advised you
Private college counselor advised you
Wanted to do live near home
Friend suggested attending
Recruited by college representative
Recruited by athletic department
Graduates go to do top graduate schools
Graduates get good jobs
Religious affiliation or orientation
Size of college
Not accepted anywhere else
Rankings in national magazines

Well, everything I talked about before. The one on one with the teacher and students and also the relationship that the students have with each other...

Do you mean among the races or do you mean particularly within the minorities, or what do you mean?

Just like, you know, friends. They seem very close knit and how you walk down the colonnade and people wave to you and they don't know you and [Bob, this young woman looks at least half Indian(East) - some on her mother's side] they're, they ask you how you're doing and they really want to do know how you're doing. So I like that, and the small environment and is..

You mean the region?

Yeah.

Were there other factors you considered in making the decision?

Good academic reputation.

12. *Once you decided to do enroll at W&L, what was the reaction of friends and relatives?*

My friends were like "Oh, you're going to that prestigious school, my goodness?!" The guy I worked with at K Mart said "Oh great, now you're going to do join a sorority." Cause he went to UVA. And he met some W&L students and said they were really snotty. And I said "No, they really aren't. You need to come and see the school yourself. You don't need to - I'm sure you met one person and not - You need to see them all together." I was like "They're not." My mother didn't know very much about the school, but she came and visited and she liked it.

She came at the same time or at a different time?

At a different time, and she liked it.

Were there negative images about W&L that made you think seriously about not coming?

Yeah, the separation of the races. I didn't like that very much. I like the mixing. But it's not as bad. I mean, a lot of people say it's bad, but I haven't noticed anything great about them being so separated, haven't noticed that it's like "Oh they'll never talk to you because you're black." I haven't experienced that, so I'm pretty happy about that.

13. *Once you were enrolled, did you find the University to do be as you had expected?*

Yes.

Except for the fact that you were afraid that the groups were separated, and you're finding they're not as much?

No, they're not.

If the school differed from the way it seemed when you first heard about it or visited the campus, please describe how it differed.

Have we covered that?

Yeah, I think so. I don't know what else to do say.

14. *Please describe what you consider to do be your greatest challenge at Washington and Lee.*

How have you dealt with it?

Just making the grade. I think that's, I've found that very difficult. I'm trying really hard. It just seems like, I don't know. It's like in high school I'd get all these As and here it's like haven's seen an A yet, but I'm doing a lot better this semester than I was last semester. I'm getting some Bs this semester, so I'm pretty happy about that. But it's just the constant trying to do make the grade.

I've been going and asking the professors for help and also getting help from other students.

Older students, or peers in class?..

Peers in class.

15. *How has your academic performance at Washington and Lee compared with your performance in high school?*

Very different. Almost straight As in high school and here I'm like struggling for a B. But I'm trying. I think it's just the adjustment. I keep putting in my head that, I need to take that out of my head though, that W&L is this prestigious school and you can't make the high grades that you used to make. But I need to stop saying that and say I can do it.

16. *What academic resources have you used at Washington and Lee?*

- x Undergraduate library*
- Science library*
- x Computer facilities.*
- Writing Center.*
- x Tutors in the disciplines.*
- Study groups.*
- Public lectures on academic subjects.*
- x Language lab.*
- x Visiting professors in their offices.*
- Study skills courses*

Do you have suggestions for the development of these or other facilities?

No.

17. *What factors contribute or contributed to do your selection of a major course of study?*

Promise of earning a handsome salary after graduation,

Interest in the particular academic discipline,

College friends recommended this major,

Adult relative recommendation etc.

Other

I just like writing, I've always liked writing and I find it easy to do write. The only problem is I have a problem with punctuation, but I'm working on it.

So, have you used the writing center?

Well, my professors don't like me to use it. They prefer me to go to him than..

18. *Have you changed majors since you have been enrolled at Washington and Lee?
If yes, please describe that change.*

Well, I haven't had.. When I first got here I wanted to do politics, but I'm noticing that the politics is not philosophy, but more like the mechanics of it - like, it's more math than I thought it was. It's not like going through the bills and all that. That's what made me change over to English.

19. *If you saw a person or group of persons lying, stealing or cheating would you report it as an honor violation? Please elaborate.*

Yes.

Could you elaborate on that?

Well, if someone was cheating, I mean, isn't it my obligation to tell EC or whoever that they're doing so. Or if someone's stealing to tell. I mean I wouldn't, I don't know, I don't know how else to say. If it's something - well cheating's not something small, I was thinking like stealing, I mean, what would be the definition of stealing, what's an example of stealing..?

Well that's for you to say.

Oh, for me, oh OK. Well, all forms of stealing cheating and lying would be bad. Yeah. I would definitely have to report that.

By the way, there's not a right or wrong answer for these. It's just for you to say what your experience is or your feelings or your perceptions are. How you think you'd handle things. I just want you not to think that in question 19 there was something you were supposed to say. It's up to you entirely.

20. *Do you find Washington and Lee professors easy or difficult to do approach?*

They're very easy to approach. I'm very shy, and it takes a lot for me to ask someone for help. I've always had a problem with that, and here I'm finding it a lot easier to go to the professors and ask them for help, and they're always like "Come by my office if you need this..and if I'm out of my office here's my home phone number." They're very willing to help. And they'll wait after class with me, I've noticed that, that they'll wait for me to answer my questions. In high school, the teachers left the classroom before the students did, and here I'm noticing that the professors wait till all the students are gone, so after everyone's gone I can go up to my professor and say, "well I need help in so-and-so", and they're very willing to help. If they can't help at that moment they'll go, "Well, I'm available at this time." So I find them very easy to do approach.

Please describe in what way they are easy or difficult.

Have you been able to do establish close working relationships with a member or with members of the W&L faculty?

Not yet.

21. *What has been your experience at W&L with regard to social life?*

I love people but I don't like the party scene. I don't drink any, so just the five of us hang out together. None of us likes to drink so we just stay together. We don't go anywhere. Maybe to the movies or in our room and play games.

How important to you is alcohol at a social event or social engagement?

I don't drink alcohol.

How important to you are drugs at a social event?

I don't do drugs.

22. *What experiences, if any, have you had with Greek organizations on campus?*

How would you evaluate or describe any experiences you may have had?

I'm not part of a sorority, so I haven't had much experience with that.

Have you visited any of the fraternities or sororities?

No.

23. *Evaluate your experiences with regards to athletic teams/athletic facilities/and physical education classes.*

Well, I've only taken swimming. I didn't think I'd really enjoy it because I am horrified of deep water, and I thought I never was going to get it, that I'd be here my senior year, sitting in this pool. But I'm amazed that I've learned and that it takes me a minute to do both laps, I mean going back and forth. I did one in 13 seconds. I was like "Whoa!" Once I got in the deep end, I was like, "Well, there's no stopping now, you might as well get going!" I have no experience with teams or with the other features. I've only been to the pool. I guess I should look around and see what the facilities are.

24. *How would you characterize your opportunities for "dating" while enrolled at Washington and Lee?*

I see opportunities.It's the same as in high school, you meet someone and talk, there are people to meet.

25. *Have you ever considered transferring from Washington and Lee to another college/university? No*

Why/why not?

Just that I like it here. I never thought of transferring.

If yes, what factor(s) influenced you to stay?

26. *Have you had a paid job on campus (including work-study)?*

Yes, I have work-study. I work in the library.

If so, has this influenced your level of satisfaction at W&L?

I guess, yeah. It gave me the opportunity to have my own money. Also, well, I haven't started yet, but I want to pay back my mom for the school loan, but I decided not to. It's like something I'll do, well I can do that. But I haven't started yet. But I like the idea of having my own spending money. I appreciate that a lot.

27. *Would you be willing to recruit other students for Washington and Lee either as a student yourself or as part of an alumni program? Please elaborate.*

Yes. I've been talking my cousin and my sister into it and also when prospectives come I try to show them all the positive things about W&L. I guess I have to show them the negatives, too, but there's a lot more positives than negatives. I haven't signed up, which I should have done, but called me up and tells me that so-and-so doesn't have a place, can she come with you. And I'm like, "Yeah! Yeah! Sure!"

So how many times have you gone out?

Three. I love having a room and showing her things. And I find someone else to take them to the parties. But I try to show them everything.

When you say you show them the negatives too, what would that be?

A lot of people have the fear about the separation of the races, so I tell them that it's not that bad, but there is some separation but that the work is doable and they can make it if they try.

Now we ask some background information:

28. *In what geographical location did you grow up:*

Country:

State: New York

*In what type of **area or community** did you spend most of your growing up years?*

Urban New York City and

Suburban Virginia Beach

Rural

29. *Describe the type of **high school** you attended.*

Urban

Suburban

Rural

Predominantly

Black

White

Mixed

30. *Please give the kin relationship(s) between you and family members in your home when you were growing up.*

My mother and two sisters.

31. *What was the highest level of education achieved by your parents, guardians, or others with whom you lived when you were growing up?*

My mother went to college.

What are the occupations or professions of your parents or guardians?

She's a teacher. She taught in Jamaica. When she came here she started to do child care.

32. *As compared to other W&L students, how would you characterize your overall social class position (based on parents' education and family income)?*

I guess lower middle class.

How do you think this has affected your experience?

I don't think it has affected me at all.

33. *In general how do you think about yourself first at Washington and Lee --*

as a member of a particular racial/ethnic/national/gender group, or as a student?

I really don't pay attention to race or ethnic background, I've as everyone else, and have the same opportunities as everyone else. There's nothing to hold me back. So I can do whatever other students can.

Please explain.

34. *How homogeneous do you believe black students are on this campus? In answering please consider racial identification, political perspective, and/or social class position.*

I think most of them are similar. I think I'm the one that needs..... . I listen to different music than they do, I have different political views than they do, I look at the school different than they do. I think I'm separate from them, but I'm a part of them because I'm It's hard, because they're talking about college pictures [?] and I'm like, "OK, keep your mouth shut Chris," because I..... And then it's like me against all of them. So I'm like, "OK, never mind."

Is this among freshmen or among all of them?

All of them.

So are you saying that you think the black students are mostly homogeneous?

Yes.

35. *How similar or different do you believe blacks and whites are on this campus? Consider the same categories that are mentioned in number 34 above and add any other factors that you deem important.*

I think the blacks have way different social views than the whites — just some of them. Also, just their backgrounds.

What do you mean by "just some of them"?

Well I'm sure there are some other students that have the same political views as the black students. So I don't want to just generalize.

Most of the blacks here are from the DC and Maryland area, upper Virginia area, while the whites are spread out more, while the blacks are from a more general area.

36. *Do you believe the size of the black student enrollment at Washington and Lee is adequate or inadequate?*

I think there could be some more. But the school's working on it, so — I would like to see more. So there would be more diversity. More cultures. It seems like there's either one or the other, and I think if there was more I wouldn't be the one on the outside. I think it would help to learn more about people if there were more diversity.

Do you believe the number of black professors is adequate or inadequate?

There aren't any black professors, are there? I haven't seen any. I've seen one, though. I think there could be some more.

Do you believe the number of black administrators is adequate or inadequate? Explain.

If they could do their job I'm sure the school would hire them. But I don't know if any have applied. I don't think they would want to come way out here, though. I think they would want to be where they can help more black schools. If there were more black students, probably more black administrators would want to come to help the students here.

37. *Should the university offer activities designed to bring new black students together?*

Yes. They also should bring all the students together. I don't think they should have activities for just black students but for all students. They should have it for just blacks and for all students. More than they're offering now.

If not, why not?

If yes...do you have suggestions?...

No, not really.

Has the Chavis House played a role in your life at W&L? Please describe.

No.

Has the Minority Student Association played a role in your life at W&L? Please describe.

No, not really. I've gone to some activities.

38. *Do you believe that it is important that courses in the humanities/social sciences include recognition or study of works by persons of color?*

Yes. I really don't know why, but it would be a good thing for them to learn about other cultures, especially ones that are here. Maybe it will help them to understand more about the students they are seeing walking down the colonnade and won't talk to them or are afraid to talk to them.

Are you saying that the people who look at them are the ones who won't talk to them.

No, it's just the separation. If they both knew a little bit more about each other's culture maybe they'd talk to each other more.

When you say "won't talk to them" do you mean people in general?

Yeah, they just think, well, they're not going to talk back to me. I think both sides think that. They are not going to talk back to me so I'm not going to say anything. So, if they read about each other, maybe they'll go, "Oh, OK, well they're not that bad after all."

If you think works by persons of color should be included do you think the recognition was adequate, inadequate, or excessive? Please explain.

I haven't had enough courses yet. I don't know.

39. *How would you characterize the climate in the classroom for you [as a black student]?*

I don't have any problems in the classroom. I'm just like all the other students. I don't feel different or anything.

If you have encountered problems in the classroom, how have you dealt with those difficulties?

40. *What is the role of the Office of Minority Student Affairs?*

I have no idea.

That's Dean McCloud's office.

Oh, Dean McCloud. I really don't know what Dean McCloud does, actually.

How can the role of this Office be improved?

I'd like it to promote diversity, help the students learn about each other, help the students adjust to the change of coming to the school where there is not a lot of similar students.

Any suggestions about how she can do that?

I guess in aiding the other new minority students, meeting minority students who are already here, having more events where everyone really enjoys what's happening and learning about each other. Have lectures.

41. *From whom do you receive the greatest emotional support on campus? Do not use name(s), but please describe the person(s) in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and position (i.e. fellow student, faculty member, administrator, staff member). If appropriate, include more than one individual and describe the type of situations in which the person provides emotional support (i.e. personal, family, religious, etc.)*

It would be a male friend who is white, who is American, he's Jewish. Well, I just talk to him about what's going on, about my feelings, that I can't do the work.....and he tries to support me. If I have problems with my friends, he'll sit there and listen to me and give me suggestions.

Is this another freshman?

Yes.

What percentage of your friends are black, what white, and what international?

Maybe 10% are international, 2 % would be white and the rest would be black.

42. *Have you experienced any discriminatory behavior on campus directed against yourself?*

No.

What form did that behavior take (written remarks including graffiti, spoken remarks, physical assault, discriminatory treatment).

Who was responsible for that behavior?

Individual students

Student groups

Greek

Non Greek

Faculty

Staff

Security

Leaving aside behavior, do you sense racial tensions on campus beyond what exists in the larger society? If so, how do you think such tensions could be eased within W&L?

No.

43. *Aside from the Honor System do you believe that the student Executive Committee, the Student Conduct Committee or other University judicial committees treat black and white students equally fairly?*

I believe so. I haven't heard anything about them not doing so.

44. *Do you believe that the honor system is applied in an even-handed way to black and white students?*

Oh yes.

45. *How would you evaluate student publications (i.e. the Ring-tum Phi, the Trident, etc.), the student radio and television stations with regards to opportunities for black students to participate.*

I am sure there are opportunities for black students to participate. I just don't think they have a chance to participate enough.

How would you evaluate them with regard to their treatment of news about black students?

I think they do report what's going on in the black student community. And I think they report it just fine. They do talk to the black students. I remember sitting at dinner one night telling one of the stories about the newspaper, how black students are so unhappy here, happy that they are graduating. And I was like, well gosh, if you don't like it here, then you can transfer. It's not like you're stuck here. I just remember crying at the dinner table, and my friend was like, You

know, Chris, He's like, "You're so separate from each side." It's like I'm torn. It's like I don't know what to do because I can feel where black students feel and that but the school is trying. You have to remember that this school was originally for white students and the school is really, really trying. In Admissions, everywhere, every part of the school is trying. I think they just have to be patient and help the school to achieve what they want.

So what was it that made you cry?

They were saying that there's not enough activities for black students. They can go to the parties and they can do their own activities. They can start something up. That there aren't enough black students. Well, the school is trying to do that. They're like the school doesn't really want them here or something like that. It was interesting. But how can you say that: the school accepted you, the school could just not accept you, you know. I guess it took me a lot of time to get used to the school because with my foreign, they couldn't find some of the information because my father had our papers, our green cards and everything.

At home in Jamaica?

No, when he left my mom he took all our stuff. So we're sitting here trying to get into the college and we have no proof of us actually. And this school was just constantly trying. I mean, if the school didn't want me, they would have gave up from day one. Even over the summer, calling me. Even to the first day, we still haven't had any financial aid or anything aid. The school was like, "Well, don't worry, we're not going to make you come and then have to go home." And they really tried and sat there and worked with me finding financial aid. My mom has no money to pay this school, and the school gave me all this money. I appreciate it. I mean, I can't imagine someone giving up all this money to a person whom they don't want! So they must want me. They have to sit back and look at what school is doing for them and not just look at the itty-bitty things that are going on. They have to look at it all together. I was just sitting there thinking, I can't take it. I felt like I was by myself because they were "Well, you have to understand how the other students feel." And I'm like, "Well, guys, you've got to look what the school is doing." And as soon as I said that, they went off on me and I was like, "Oh, OK, I'll just continue crying." I just felt all alone at that table. Then I sat down with my five friends and I explained to them how I felt, and they were like, "Well, yeah Chris, I can see your point." And I sat there with them and I tried to understand their point. I kind of understand what they're going through. A lot of the upperclassmen minorities have felt racism through other students and also certain things happening to them where they feel that professors would grade them different. I haven't had that happen to me. But they said professors would grade them different. And I was like, "Well, why didn't you report that instead of keeping it inside?" And now it's in the paper. And they're like, "Well it's over and I'm leaving in a couple of months, so..." And I was like, "Hey, if that's the way you want to deal with it, I can't force you to deal with it any other way."

46. *Do you feel that black students at Washington and Lee today have problems that are basically different from, or basically similar to those of whites? Please describe in what way you feel they are different or similar.*

I would guess they are similar. They are trying to make their grades and also to get along with other students, social life, meeting someone, having friends, the same thing that everyone has to deal with.

*47. Sex F

*48. Age? 18

*49. Year in college? FRESHMAN

*50. Cumulative grade point average [as of Fall 1996]?

*51. How do you identify yourself in terms of nationality? JAMAICAN

52. How do you identify yourself in terms of race? I don't identify myself in terms of race. I'm just a person. I'm an original. I try not to get up in the morning and go, "I'm black," and I walk outside. I'm like, "I'm a student here and I'm just like everyone else. I can do it." So I don't think of myself as a race.

53. *Are there additional comments you wish to do make about any aspects of Washington and Lee?*