

#28 INTERVIEW OF BLACK STUDENTS ENROLLED AT WASHINGTON AND LEE

1. Have you decided upon a college major?

If yes, what?

Yes, since high school I've wanted to do computer science and engineering.

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

It's about an A. It's an A.

Four point?

I mean, if we are talking about in that subject, yeah.

Good!

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

BS [science or commerce]

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

Computer science.

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

Not immediately, but maybe after a year or so. It depends on the job I get, if it's good enough, or whatever.

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. I am still. I'm a Jehovah Witness. Well, I go to do meetings like three times a week. I also do some evangelism work, so, back home, and here too. I still do it. I still go three times a week and I still do the evangelism work. I've met all the Jehovah Witnesses in Lexington.

How would you characterize your church involvement in Lexington?

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

Well, definitely higher in high school. Still haven't found the right club for me here yet. I'm looking now.

What did you do in high school, extra-curricularly?

I was in student council. That was my life really. I was student council president for four years.

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

W&L literature

W&L admissions counselor

Relative

Adult friend

Peer

Other

Well, the guy I was doing SAT classes with, he had known somebody who was going here, and so he said it was a really good school and I should apply there.

Who did he know that was going here?

Well, he had sent Dawn here, and he also thought it was a good school too. Since I wasn't even sure I was going to do come to do an American college, I just accepted his recommendation on those things.

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

None. Not at all.

10. Did you visit the campus before you matriculated as a student?

No, I didn't. I only decided to do come in the summer. I was going to do go to do an engineering school we have - the engineering faculty of the university that we have at home. Then I changed my mind at the last minute.

If yes, under what circumstances?

Visited on your own

Participated in the Summer Scholar's Program

Visited during a Prospective Student Weekend

Other:

Please describe your reactions to do this campus visit.

10a. Was W&L your...

First choice

Second choice

Third choice

Less than third choice

So, it was really second.

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

No other

One

Two

Three

Four

Five

Six or more

I applied to do about four more.

10c. How many other colleges accepted you?

None

One

Two

Three

Four

Five

Six

None with the type of money that I would have needed, so..

They accepted you but they didn't offer you the same financial package?

Yeah.

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, that made a big difference there.

The financial aid?

Yeah, and also it was -then it was - I could have gone to do my university for - I would have got a scholarship there too, but then I wanted to do come to do America because I decided that being in engineering here would be more flexible. I could stay here if I wanted, but if I was an engineer back home I couldn't really work here.

Were there other factors you considered in making the decision?

Well the rankings definitely helped, cause I wouldn't have come to do a bad American college. I would have just stayed at home into my own. The size of college didn't really play a big role. Good academic reputation, same thing as the ranking. And the friend who suggested it.

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

Well they were all pretty excited about it.

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

Well, for me it was just that who would I know here and [] and all that, and being where it is in the south, Virginia and all that, probably wouldn't be the best place for me to do go.

Because why?

Because it's in the south and, well even the brochures we didn't see a lot of diversity here from the brochures. and from the percentages too.

So it concerned you about the social.. whether you'd be accepted as a black person?

Yeah, yeah.

Just the sense of what the south is like..

And just the lack of diversity within the school itself.

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

Well, for homogenisity, no, definitely not. I thought it would be a lot worse.

You thought it would be worse that it is..

Yeah.

So, what else?

Well, pretty much I leave my mind open cause I knew it would be a lot different from anything I was expecting. I left my mind open to do accept whatever came, and so far that hasn't been bad.

Any surprises?

Well, not really. As I said, I left myself in a state where I couldn't be surprised really. But, I was surprised in terms of how well I am enjoying it really.

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

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

How have you dealt with it?

Well, it's probably pledge ship.

Really? did you pledge?

Yeah, I did.

And that's your biggest challenge?

Yeah.

And how are you dealing with it?

Well, it's over now. I didn't deal with it too well. In terms of balancing it and grades and also my religious activities I told you about. I had decided for some reason, well not for some reason. I told you I had decided on my major, but I had to do do English 105 this term too, so I did an overload. I just did one []..

And pledge ship..

Yeah, it was a bad decision there.

So, you're saying your grades suffered.

Oh, yeah, they definitely did.

So, you're saying you haven't dealt with it very well, but it's over now.

Yeah, it's over now.

Now you get to do study extra hard, I guess.

Yeah, well, most of the damage is already done. I'll see what I can salvage.

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

Well, it's about the same, not about the same, .. I did really well in high school, I didn't do really a lot of work in high school. Here I have to do work harder, and I'm not really that excellent, but I do alright.

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

Undergraduate library

Science library

Computer facilities.

Writing Center.

Tutors in the disciplines.

Study groups.
Public lectures on academic subjects.
Language lab.
Visiting professors in their offices.
Study skills courses

Visiting professors, I did that a lot last term, but I didn't do it a lot this term. That's a difference there. I use the library, computer facilities, never went to do the writing center. Somehow I think it's rather remedial. Just give me a bad feeling to do go there, it would. *You mean you'd feel bad about yourself to do go there, like you'd have to do be behind to do use it?*

Yeah. But undergraduate library I've used that on occasion. Study groups, no. Not public lectures. that's about it.

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

Well, they are working on the computer facilities. they always had a problem in that. *what sort of problem?*

That there is only. In computer science they only have one lab that you have to do work in because that's where the software is, ...[] and he said that two days [] campus that you could work would be about it. But I hear we're moving to do a new science building next year and that will probably help. And too, they use Apples, but a lot of computers - I don't have a computer, but my roommate has one, and it's a PC and everybody I know has a PC and so if there were like PCs in the lab then I could like do it at home in my room and carry it. But I hear it's like PCs in the other buildings too, so I guess that answers my questions.

Pardon me?

They are answering my concerns then, addressing them.

By giving you PCs in other labs to do work on.

Yeah, that will definitely help.

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*

Computer science because it's the only subject I can say I like. That I enjoy working long hours at. No other subject I can say that for.

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

No.

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

Seriously, I doubt I would.

And why is that?

Unless it really, unless it was something really bad. But if it was one of those other things I'd at most talk to do the person, since they'll get kicked out, I doubt that I would want to do do that.

So the thing that would hold you back from reporting is that the penalty is so severe?

I suppose, yeah, I mean for a minor offense, I wouldn't report a minor offense. Something really serious, even then I would talk to do the person.

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

Please describe in what way they are easy or difficult.

In general they're easy to do approach. I haven't met a hard one yet.

And in what way are they easy to do approach?

Well, they expect you to do come and ask questions, so they are always ready to do answer it and all that.

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

Well I did with my physics teacher last term. I don't have a close working relation with anybody this term.

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

Well, you know, most of it centers around fraternity parties and stuff. Sometimes I get tired of those. The other Fridays I don't enjoy because a lot of people don't go.

The Fridays things?

Yeah, alternatives to fraternity parties.

You don't like them because they're not well attended.

Yeah, I don't know a lot of people there.

What fraternity did you pledge?

FIGI.

So you do go to the fraternity parties but you do get tired of them?

I get tired of them because a lot of them, some of them, I don't know the music. It's not music I'm used to. Just the whole scene is not something ..

What do you mean by the scene?

The music, the drinking. It's different from parties back home.

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

Not really important.

Do you drink some?

Yeah, I drink. But there is not drinking age in Jamaica.

So it's never been an issue one way or the other.

How important to you are drugs at a social event?

Not important at all.

Have you encountered them much?

Yeah, I've seen them.

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

I found a fraternity that I was comfortable in, so it hasn't been a bad experience. I'm really comfortable where I am now. Not so much with the brothers that were there before, but with the pledge class, freshmen class, I'm comfortable with them.

Not so much the brothers that are there?

No, because I didn't know them. They're upperclassmen and all that. I never met most of them before, but I knew the people who were going in.

Because of being in the dorm with them, etc.?

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

It takes some getting used to. I think that the brothers at FIJI, for me it was something really different. For two or three weeks I seriously considered depledging. I wasn't used to doing stuff for people.

All the things you have to do for them?

But they were really understanding. In fact they didn't let me do a lot for the first half.

Is that the part that took a lot of getting used to? Is that what you mean?

Yes, and the whole brotherhood thing, all that.

What do you mean by that?

When I joined, I thought it was more of a social club than a real tight close-knit thing. That took some getting used to.

The idea of being super close to anybody?

Uh-huh.

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

They haven't been bad. I'm not a physical person myself, but they're not bad. I'm trying to use it more evenings, trying to use the gym more.

In what way?

I go at night just to work out, just to try to gain some weight, a personal thing.

So have you had any experience with the teams?

No, I know people on the teams, but I'm not on a team myself.

Are you happy with the facilities?

Yeah, they're adequate enough for me. I don't need much.

Have you taken phys ed classes?

Yes, I have.

How has that been?

I don't like them much, because I'm not a physical person. They are bad..

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

So far my dating group has been like 5 people.

5 people to choose from you mean?

Actually it's ... non-white freshman, it's like 9 people.

So it's a small group?

Yes.

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

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

I do work study in the Financial Aid Office.

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

Well, generally, I'm really happy with my job. I like the job. ...helped me a lot, well not me but my sister. She's coming next year....

So would you say that it helped you to be happy to have that job?

Yes.

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, actually Sunday I did an interview for the SSE (?)...I would be happy to help recruit.
Sunday you interviewed to be a person who interviews?

Yes.

Now we ask some background information:

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

Jamaica

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

City

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

City high school, all male.

Predominantly

Black, Jamaica is predominantly black, but it was mixed in terms of there were westerners there too.

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

I lived with my mother and my sister.

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 is a nurse. My father doesn't live with us anymore, but he's a doctor. He lives up in Maryland, works at the University of Maryland.

And your mother has some sort of degree in nursing?

Yeah, a nursing degree.

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

As I said, my parents are divorced and all that. I think I would be a little below the average.

Just because your economic status is different because of the divorce?

Yeah.

How do you think this has affected your experience?

I don't think it has.

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?*

Mostly as a student. I do think of the racial group some.

Some but not first?

Not first.

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.*

Actually there are two groups of black students. There is black African Americans and there are black internationals. Somehow they don't mix for some reason. They are pretty homogeneous

within those groups.

In what ways are the two groups different from each other?

Actually I mix with the black African American girls. I don't think we are much different, but for some reason we never talk together.

So they are fairly homogeneous but they don't interact as much.

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.*

Very different it seems.

Describe in what way you see them as different.

I don't even know how they are different. Maybe because they are different groups. Like very few black kids join fraternities and stuff like that. The black freshman girls, I have never seen them at a party except one that I have dragged them out to.

So it's not obvious to you in what way the black students and white students are different, but you're saying that they don't mix with each other.

They are different in terms of what they talk about, just their different experiences, how they grew up and all that is different from white kids.

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

More would be good. I like international students myself. I'd like to see more of those.

Explain why; describe more what you mean.

International students are fun, interesting people. One summer I went to summer school where almost everyone was from different country. It was a great experience. I think it adds something when you can talk to somebody from a different country. That adds something to the experience.

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

Doesn't matter to me really.

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

Never thought about it.

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

I think they do enough of that already.

You found the activities sufficient?

Not what the university does but what they do.

Oh, the black students are already doing it?

I think they cling together too much, in fact. It's a problem. I'm coming from a country where there is not so much racial tension. I've tried to recognize that it is here, keep it in back of my head.

Why would you want to keep it in the back of your head?

Just so I don't act naive or anything like that. I always want to recognize that I am in a different country that's different.

So what you're saying is that the black students are already coming together and from your perspective maybe a little too much, because they're not interacting so freely.

There are some really cool black kids here.

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

No, I don't really hang out there.

Has the Minority Student Association played a role in your life at W&L? Please describe.
No.

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?*
I'm not interested in social sciences.
You haven't taken those courses yet?
No.

39. *How would you characterize the climate in the classroom for you [as a black student]?*
I don't see it as being different from any other student in the class.
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 don't know.
Do you know Dean McCloud? That's her office.
I don't know.
How can the role of this Office be improved?
Maybe more diversity would be good. More students on campus.

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.)*
I can't think of anyone. Maybe the people at my church. I have one lady there that I talk to a lot. She doesn't really help—she can't. I just talk to her.
But she supports you?
Yes, she does. I just talk to her, not that she can do anything to help.

What percentage of your friends are black, what white, and what international?
I talk to all of the black and international freshmen—all of them. White ...
A greater percentage of white students because of pledging and because of such a small number of black and international students.
Yes

42. *Have you experienced any discriminatory behavior on campus directed against yourself?*
Nothing that comes to mind. Nothing that I can say was definitely because of my race. Nothing serious that I can remember.

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?
I don't know much about the larger society. There are tensions here. I heard somebody said something about a brother of my house that is black. There is one other black brother in FIGI. Somebody from another house used some racial slur for him, saying something bad about the house.

So you do sense racial tension?

Yeah, I sense it.

Could you describe the kind of thing that you mean?

In terms of—when I am with the black students, I feel more. They are more sensitive to it. They don't mix a lot with the white students. They don't feel comfortable at parties. I can never see black girls joining a sorority.

Why is that?

Just because of what they perceive is there.

They perceive something that would keep them from doing it.

So you do sense some racial tensions. Do you have any ideas about how those racial tensions could be eased?

More black students and more international students. With such a small group, there is a tendency to be like a clique together. I've been in situations where there are bigger percentages.

What sort of situations were you in where there were bigger percentages?

My summer school. There was like 75% white, 25%

Where was that?

That was in Connecticut. It was definitely better that it is here.

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 only have limited contact with these groups, thank God. I think they get the same treatment.

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

Yeah, I definitely think so. In fact, I think they would make sure they were doing the right thing if they kicked out a black student.

Extra careful.

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 think you could definitely participate if you wanted to. I'm just not a writer myself. I wish I could. I write, but it takes so much effort that I don't have the time now. I would.

You're aware that you could.

I don't think they would stop me.

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

News about black students in terms of accomplishments or what?

In general—whatever you want to talk about.

It seems to me that they are pretty eager to put anything that speaks of prejudice or racial tensions or whatever on the front page. Too eager maybe.

So what would you like to see?

Just a calmer approach to it. Not so much flaring (?) I think it only helps to increase what is there.

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.

They have the same basic problems. Different in terms of you belong to such a small group in a bigger group than the rest of the school. Any different problems arise from that. That you're in a school where a majority of the population is not black.

The assumption behind that is because you're black it automatically puts you in a different group. Is that what you're saying?

It doesn't automatically, I don't think. There is general forcing towards it. Towards just hanging out with black students. They have that feeling, that you have to hang out with them.

They encourage you to do it?

Yes.

So you're saying that the problems are basically similar except for the fact that the two groups are. -

A lot of white students would expect you to hang out with only them.

With black students?

Yes.

You know that or you're just assuming that.

Even when for 4 weeks I was pledging FIGI. I think there is a requirement that we have to live in the house or something. Everybody kept asking me if I was going to live in an international house.

Everybody - white students and black students?

A lot white students. Even some pledges themselves.

How did that make you feel?

Not real ...international house. Well, the people that asked me - I expected that sort of question from them. My friends didn't ask me that - just people I knew could ask that question.

How could you know about someone, that you could expect them to ask that kind of question?

What would lead you to know that about them?

Just how much they talked to me, how much they answered to me....

*47. Sex

M

*48. Age?

19

*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?

Black.

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

I think that pretty much covers it.

If you had to say just briefly what your experience has been, how would you describe it?

My experience - I don't know how much of it is due to W&L, how much is just first year in college. I have some other problems in terms of getting finances and all that. I can't say W&L is causing a lot of problems. In fact they've been pretty helpful lately - very helpful. I'm not sure

their diversification program – I'm not sure they're putting as much effort as they say they are. I think they could have done a lot more in so many years. I definitely think it is better for the school to have a more international campus. I think they're still proud of this southern heritage thing.

So it might take a while to change. Do you feel like efforts are being made but not enough efforts perhaps?

In some ways I think the whole southern heritage and the international thing conflict with each other.

In what way?

The effort to cling on to your southern heritage is—I don't think it really helps the effort to be an international campus, to attract people of color, all that. I don't know how they can run parallel.