Speaker 1:

You spent quite a bit of time in California, is that correct?

William Dorsey:

Yeah. Well, I was there for grad school at Berkeley for four years. But four very interesting years, from 1968 to 1972.

Speaker 1:

Yes. Wow. What a time to be in the Bay Area?

William Dorsey:

As a matter of fact, when I came here, I had gotten used to seeing the country by going to school. So I'd say, "Well let me check out Atlanta and maybe check out the Boston, Cambridge area, maybe Chicago." But I just wanted to let Northern California get that big earthquake out of the way so I could move back.

Speaker 1:

Right, right.

William Dorsey:

When I got here, Atlanta... I mean being a sociology major and got here, I hadn't thought about it, but it was four years after King was assassinated. But Atlanta was just starting to take off, as a rapidly developing urban center after having been already an important urban center.

William Dorsey:

And also I came here to teach at Atlanta University, which at that time was a grad school. But inadvertently let the President know that the Dean of Students was not doing his job, the Academic Dean I mean, was not doing his job. So in a few weeks after that kerfuffle I got notice that my contract would not be renewed. So I was there two years, that lead me though... That's how I got [inaudible 00:01:40] the Black world.

Speaker 1:

Okay, so-

William Dorsey:

I had met Howard, Howard Dotson, spring of my junior year in College at Swarthmore. He was recruited for the Peace Corps.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

And so he knew I had, in fact, he was in Berkeley for grad school when I was there. And when I got here, he was here. But he knew I was here, so I got an offer from him to work there. So I did that full-time until I part-time at Georgia State for two years.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

Before I got a full-time thing at a college then called Atlanta Junior College, but now Atlanta Metropolitan State College.

Speaker 1:

Okay, okay, so that's how you came to Atlanta. So take me back a little bit to formation background. Where are your parents from? Where were you born? Sort of as much as you feel like sharing about your formation and more?

William Dorsey:

Okay, my mother was born in Yazoo City, Mississippi. Like many Black people, I know a whole lot more about my mother's side than my father's side. Her father was born a slave in Huntsville, Alabama, William Henry Veneer. That's why I'm William Henry Veneer Dorsey. As a matter of fact, his owner was his father. He didn't even know that there was a Civil War going on until after it was over. His father owner, poisoned his mother because there was a rule that orphan slaves had to stay with the master and he wanted a man servant. But when William Henry Veneer found out, he ran away.

Speaker 1:

Okay.

William Dorsey:

Okay, and I've come up on a few things. He went to a few small colleges, including Fisk. I do have one picture of... I don't know if it's his class, it's not many men, but it's all men, 1888.

William Dorsey:

I think he overlapped with Du Bois, somewhat. But so anyway, he got his PhD in something and wound up, I think he was the fourth president of Alcorn in Mississippi, the Jackson area. And there was... My mother told me this story that we had, it was a state school for Blacks, to Coloreds, to be more accurate, more historically accurate. And they were building a women's dorm and he noticed that the materials weren't there. So he reported that to the State Legislature, or the Regions, to whoever they were and kind of foreshadowing me in a sense. I think that's when he lost his job. But that was probably in connection with that there was an assassination attempt, I just read, I didn't know this was a Black guy. But it was one of those south has these, in the winter time, has these ice storms and slate, and then it'll freeze overnight. So it was partly in January, something like that, and my grandfather was going somewhere in town. And the guy jumped out of the alley to try to stab him, but he slipped and fell on ice.

William Dorsey:

I don't know what happened after that. I just saw that, my mother told me that, and I saw that a few weeks ago, something that I ran across online. So then he went to the Robinson School, which everybody in Jackson called it Dr. Linear's School because he was the one who was running it. And then my brother called me years ago, my brother was a pilot for TWA, Captain for TWA, he lived in LA.

Speaker 1:

Okay.

William Dorsey:

So when I was in Berkeley, I was also back and forth with LA too. But he called me one night and said... Asked me if I had watched that Richard Wright presentation on American experience on PBS. I said, "No, but I have it taped." He said, "Can you get to it?" I said "Yeah, it's right here." He said Well, watch it and call me back." I said "Okay, you want me to call you back when it's over? Or..." He said "Well, you'll know." So I don't know, maybe 20 minutes into it or something, this picture that is also one we had of our grandfather when he was old, that was up on the screen says at eighty so-and-so, Richard Wright finally got to go to school at Dr. Linear's School in Jackson, Mississippi.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

He didn't like the school though, he stayed there one year or something like that. So he did that for some period of time, eventually became, I guess Superintendent of Colored schools, Negro schools. There's a junior-senior high in Jackson named after him.

Speaker 1:

So he went from being an enslaved person to being a Superintendent.

William Dorsey:

Well, and a college President, then a Superintendent. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Wow, okay.

William Dorsey:

Yeah. Oh and his first born, was born in 1900 and he named him Emilio Aguinaldo Veneer. Aguinaldo... Emilio was the Filipino freedom fighter.

Speaker 1:

Yes, yes, yes.

William Dorsey:

So I said, "Okay, he must have been friends with good boys if he kept that kind of politics."

Speaker 1:

I can't imagine that he wasn't. Wow. So what did seeing him in that moment on that PBS special, what did that feel like?

William Dorsey:

Just kind of pleasant surprise.

Speaker 1:

Yeah, yeah.

William Dorsey:

I kind of take... I kept kind of a stream of consciousness, when I read about that in some English class reading English novels or something, I learned that term. I just kind of take things in and whatever they mean, or whatever significance they have develops later, almost subconscious. You know just keep moving forward, yeah it's nice to have a lineage behind me in that sense. So my mother, she was the daughter of a... I guess when she was born in 1907, he was probably already at the Robinson School because he was still at Alcorn when her brother was born in 1900. But like I say, that didn't last... I forget how... I never did really pay attention to them in years. And so now they have it on their website, Alcorn does.

Speaker 1:

Right.

William Dorsey:

So she went into... Now her mother was one of three sisters born and raised in Shubuta, Mississippi. Which like most people say, "Where?" And if I remember we went there for a family union, I think it's south of Tupelo, if I remember correctly.

Speaker 1:

Okay.

William Dorsey:

We went to Tupelo and then went to some town, and then went south. There was three sisters, one of the sisters... The, I guess grandson, of one of the sisters is John Grayson, at UMass Amherst, Du Bois Black, Du Bois African-American studies department.

Speaker 1:

Yes.

William Dorsey:

The other had... I know one of her grandchildren is a doctor somewhere down the way, cause it's been a while. The ones we knew lived in New Iberia, I grew up in Houston. I was okay, yeah... So I was born in Durham, but I was going on three when we moved to Houston. Because my father was called to start the music department at the then Texas State College for Negroes, which is now Texas Southern.

Speaker 1:

Okay. So your father's a musician, had a musical background.

William Dorsey:

Yeah, actually he had a... When my brother was born, he was teaching at Lincoln and getting his PhD in music composition from Penn.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

And I guess once he got that, they moved to New York. Cause he also got a D.Ed in education from Columbia Teachers College. And when our mother was... When my brother had to go back and clean up the house, when she needed to go to constant care, he found a book by Langston Hughes and opened it up. And in it was written a dedication to little Jenny Dorsey from Langston Hughes, they knew him. But then it was such a... The Black middle class was such a small percentage of Black America. Even when I was at Berkeley, my last year there... This is actually kind of, going to wind up being backwards, but it will all get in.

William Dorsey:

My last year there, I was in a sociology house, to the husband of the wife, husband of the couple downstairs. It was a house that we cut up, with a flat on the bottom, and a studio in a one bedroom on the second floor. I had the studio in front and the guy in the back was also sociology. The guy downstairs was a secretary, and so his wife was a lab assistant, some biology, some labs, the guy in back was from Yale. And this last, I guess it probably was my last spring in Berkeley, a Black guy he knew from New Haven came out to. He had gone to law school, so he was in the Bay Area to interview at a law firm. So we got to talking for a minute, he mentioned New Haven, I mentioned the guy had a...

William Dorsey:

Okay, after I graduated from Jack Yates Colored High School, I was 16. My mother suggested I go to prep school, she was saying that if I did that, I could get into an even better school, otherwise it'd be Howard. And my brother had already gone to prep school, so I was like, okay. I thought for a minute, I thought, okay now wait a minute, I'm graduating. Then next year I'll be back in 11th grade, but I realized that would be Western Connecticut and I would see my homeboys only when I got back to Houston. So what the heck, you know?

William Dorsey:

So that first semester, or quarter I guess it was, it was quarter system. It was a place called The Gunnery at the time it was founded by Frederick William Gunn. They finally got rid of The Gunnery idea because every time I mentioned it to somebody, they say, "Oh, you went to Naval academy?" And I said, "No." But yeah, they finally changed the name to Frederick Gunn's School. They got rid of that Gunnery idea, I saw that in some of the alumni stuff.

William Dorsey:

But anyway, being freshmen in all Black world, there was this brother, Ron Brown, and we wound up rooming together that first year. So I mentioned since he was there, and he was from New Haven, so I said I know this guy from New Haven, Ron Brown. And the guy who was out for an interview for law school for a law firm, he said, "Oh yeah, that's my sister's Fiance."

William Dorsey:

So here we are all the way on the other side of the country. If the house is two doors from the corner, if you went down to the corner and looked west, you can see, you can see San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge. So I'm like, okay so here we are and essentially through happenstance, there's one degree of separation between this brother and you know, between... Among the two of us, I guess you could say. And that same summer there had been a... Probably a newspaper article, somebody had done a mathematical study. If you interviewed 12 people in the United States and got them to name every single person they had ever met or heard of, by the time you went through 12 levels of doing that, you would have everybody in the country. You would have everybody on the world, their name would be on your list. And I thought at that moment, I thought well, for Black people there must be six.

Speaker 1:

Yeah, it must be smaller.

William Dorsey:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

And in that sort of smallness of the Black middle-class that you're speaking to, would you also say that there was generally comradery as well? Like a unit.

William Dorsey:

Yeah, there was a... I was also in possession, especially in Houston because after World War II, the Black people just started flooding into Houston. So I was there, my mother was actually, when my father was teaching at the Lincoln, friends of hers who lived in Philly, started this group called Jack and Jill, which you might've heard of that.

Speaker 1:

Yes, my boyfriend did Jack and Jill in Nashville.

William Dorsey:

You might have heard of that.

Speaker 1:

Yes.

William Dorsey:

Yeah, she told me they're thinking at the time was just, okay well, there's only like 14 or 15 little Black middle-class kids. How can we make sure that they meet each other, that kind of thing. So that was the original reason for Jack and Jill. And that's pretty much as I was coming along, that was pretty much the attitude. But I saw it beginning to change before I finished high school and then started going away. And then there was a documentary about class, I can't think of the exact name now. But it was significant because it dealt with white and Black, and on all levels, not just upper-middle working in lower. And one

of the things I noticed in that was some young Black college women was a real level of middle-class arrogance, bougie arrogance. Have you heard of Abby Wardlaw?

Speaker 1:

No.

William Dorsey:

Okay. I met her when we got there, so I've known her since I was two. She's curator of African-American something in the Houston Art Museum, something like that. My best friend from elementary school, a guy named Tex Allen, a jazz trumpeter now. Better known are his two sisters, Debbie and Felicia.

Speaker 1:

Oh, no big deal.

William Dorsey:

We were like one of the houses, [crosstalk 00:18:05] another daughter house, third, second from the corner on Isabella Street. And the next block over was [inaudible 00:18:14]. And three houses from the same street was their house, so I'd be over there, you know... I remember Debbie when she was three.

Speaker 1:

Oh my gosh, she...

William Dorsey:

But yeah, so that was...

Speaker 1:

Debbie Allen.

William Dorsey:

The guy who... I got appendicitis between kindergarten and first grade, the surgeon that took that out, his son and I got to be best friends in high school. That was... There were people who had, good achievement. Matter of fact, talking with another friend of mine, I was realizing how... Like the kind of fact, when I got to... probably when I got to Swarthmore and got into sociology, I learned about tracking. And I realized that my high school experience had been tracked, because that was in my home when there was a couple of people whose fathers' taught at Texas Southern, my minister's daughter was there, the surgeon who had taken my appendix out when I was five, going on six, his son was in there.

William Dorsey:

And then, but my mother suggested, okay if you go into college, you need to know how to type. And my brother was into science and engineering, so I took typing, electricity, mechanical drawing and something else. And in those vocational, quote-unquote, I met all these other brothers and sisters who were students there. But I never saw them, when I was in 10th grade, we were taking biochemistry.

Speaker 1:

Okay.

William Dorsey:

So one thing that Charles, Charles Jones, it's brother that I'm talking about it, we were talking about that. He was president of NCBS for a while, he was here. He actually founded the African-American studies department at Georgia state. But he was talking about the fact that, at that time, the teachers were PhDs in high school, because they damn sure weren't going to get no jobs at University of Texas, not in 1960.

Speaker 1:

So then speaking to that, and that what my mother has shared something similar, she talks about her elementary school teachers. And I think, gosh, what level of education did they have? You were learning stuff I learned in middle school, but it speaks to what you're saying. And then I wonder, was it segregated among classes? Did you notice class segregation in terms of, kind of really only interacting with lower working-class and frankly working-poor Black folks in certain arenas?

William Dorsey:

That's what I mean, other than those 24 classes I mentioned, I was always with the same kind of people I was in my homeroom with. I never had a problem, I never really saw any... I saw one of the questions that you sent, how to identify. I remember a situation, AHSA had a conference in D.C. A few years ago, and a woman who was the President at the time. She, actually her daughter, was doing a session and the question was, when did you first know you were Black?

Speaker 1:

Yeah.

William Dorsey:

And I never didn't know.

Speaker 1:

Yeah, that part.

William Dorsey:

That was the strangest, but it was kind of revealing to me, to hear what people said in her session.

Speaker 1:

Yeah.

William Dorsey:

So I never looked at it as anything other than black and white, which is probably inherited by osmosis from my mother, who inherited it from her father, that kind of thing.

Speaker 1:

That makes sense.

William Dorsey:

And her mother by the way, had gone... She was at Tougaloo, so she had gone to college. And that's where she met William Henry Veneer. Because this handsome president of Alcorn had come to Tougaloo for some reason, and at some point they got married. Now why she was in college? I'll never know, nobody around to ask now. Shubuta, Mississippi is not exactly a hotbed of what you might consider higher education, but at any rate, yeah.

Speaker 1:

But education was important.

William Dorsey:

Yeah, those who had access and had a, I guess temperament and access.

Speaker 1:

Right, access is huge.

William Dorsey:

Temperament is too, I can tell you that from having taught for 41 years.

Speaker 1:

Oh, you are so correct. Yes.

William Dorsey:

College is 41 years, but 45 actually, if you count... Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. So what about anything on your father's side that comes to mind?

William Dorsey:

I've got a line on... I forget who, but some brother wrote me, who ironically enough lives near Swarthmore, where I was for four years and which is also near Lincoln. Which is where, like I said, my parents were before when my brother was born. But anyway, I think he got in touch with me, but I was in the middle of some stuff, so I told him I'd get back with him. But right now, at one point I had thought that my father was from St. Louis, and went to some school in San Antonio, but his two sisters were in Battle Creek. So I'm starting to think he was actually from Chicago.

Speaker 1:

Yeah, that makes sense.

William Dorsey:

And he might actually... And then there's a sister who has a Black bookstore here. She's from St. Louis and she tells me I look just like her uncles, and I said, "Well maybe." We call each other cuz, you know?

Speaker 1:

Yes, yes, yes.

William Dorsey:

So he got his PhD from the Ivy League, he got his bachelor's of education from the Ivy League. Started the music department at Texas State College for Negroes. When I was four, he divorced my mother and he actually, I kind of met... My brother was born in seven and a half years before me. So when my brother passed and I went out to LA for his memorial service, I started off with, even though my brother was an only child, I knew him all my life. Everybody had a good laugh at that.

Speaker 1:

Yes, that is a good one.

William Dorsey:

But I realized, I never took it personally. And there's some people say the absence of a parent, but like I said, I just kind of... I have always kind of just taken whatever information that was available. And then whenever it clicked, that's when it made sense, but I find it hard to impose. Every now and then I catch myself imposing expectations on reality. But for the most part, I just go with whatever the flow is. It's worked so far.

Speaker 1:

Yes, I would say so. I would say that's a good philosophy.

William Dorsey:

So he continued teaching, he stayed in Houston for a bit, then went to Texas College and Tyler, wound up teaching at Elizabeth State in New Jersey. That went, my brother kept in better touch because after all he was around seven and a half years, he was around me for three and a half really. Well no four and a half, cause I was four and a half. I did go see him once, but he always referred to me and my brother and our mother as his good friends. So that just tells me that he just detached emotionally. And the more I thought about the kind of thing that Black people in general and Black men in particular had to go through... Oh, and he also became an advocate of, a member of Christian Science.

Speaker 1:

Okay, yes.

William Dorsey:

I almost keep saying Christian Science monitor, but it was Christian Science. And I kind of understood as I got older and started to understand people better, I can see how that too was probably a reflection of his desire that life should not be so complicated. There should be something in it for people who are good people of good faith, so forth and so on. So I just took that as his personal crisis, but I never... It did have something to do with why I never got married, because I guess I was my junior or senior year at Swarthmore. I had kind of realized... Taking sociology courses, learning about marriage and the family. And actually I had started to be a psych major, so I had all these psych courses, plus sociology, plus anthropology. So I kind of became a student of human behavior in those four years.

Speaker 1:

You did.

William Dorsey:

But I realized that, that was marriage as an institution was having problems. So I wanted to understand what that was and even more so, I wanted to understand what night impends on me. Because I remember my father apparently came home one Friday and said, "I'm gone, I'm leaving" and just left. So the next morning is Saturday, one of my earliest memories is my mother was crying and I'm telling her, "Don't cry mother, it'll be all right," that kind of thing.

William Dorsey:

But I just never wanted to hurt a woman the way he had. So I wanted to understand what the pitfalls might be. So basically, eventually I came to understand, first of all, the only person you have control over is yourself. So stop trying to... as far as anybody else goes, pick somebody who's already the way you want them to be. And you don't have to worry about trying to change somebody. And that... But so at first I needed to get myself together, you know? So by the time I did that and looked around, lo and behold, all the women that wanted to get married had gotten married. And those who weren't married, there was a good reason.

Speaker 1:

Understood.

William Dorsey:

So I said okay, sociologically I know that after 18, 20 years there would be a... That's like the highest divorce rate is, for when people get married in the late teens, early twenties they last until the first kids. If they last, they last until their first kids are old enough to go away to school, then they break up. I said, well okay, somebody will be coming free. So I waited around and sure enough, some did come free. And it turns out the one who was already the way I wanted them to be, she had had four kids and this was her first time being on her own and she was enjoying it. So you looked too late to worry about trying to have kids anyway, so I said, okay that's fine. So it's a beautiful relationship.

Speaker 1:

Yes.

William Dorsey:

And it's... Every now and then with her or some other friend or something, every now and then, I have a passing, a fleeting thought that at an earlier age, I would have gotten sucked into. And chase that particular rabbit down the rabbit hole, but I can see how having gotten myself together does make a difference.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

Yeah, but I met actually my friend. Now I met her, she came through Moscow when I guess her youngest was young enough for her to go back, resume college. So I met her then and she finished up my first two

years, there was still a junior college at the time and went to Agnes Scott. And she was having a major in sociology too, so then I wrote her a letter of recommendation. But when eventually some point she got before us, I needed to ask her when I was [inaudible 00:31:19], it just happened that way. We were talking one time and she was saying that she couldn't remember either. Cause it wasn't like we met at so-and-so's party, it wasn't like that kind of thing. But so, yeah, so she was enjoying for the first time, because she went from her parents' house to being married. This was her first time to be on her own, and she was reveling in it, and that's fine you know?

Speaker 1:

Yeah.

William Dorsey:

Beautiful.

Speaker 1:

Yeah, wow. That's a beautiful perspective. You have touched on this some, but I would love it if you could take me through places that you've traveled or lived and you can speak about what brought you there too. You can speak about your work and career goals, kind of intermingled, or you can just list different places that you've been to and experienced.

William Dorsey:

Okay, the only place I've been out of the country is Toronto.

Speaker 1:

Okay.

William Dorsey:

Which I enjoyed a lot, and actually I went there because a homegirl of mine. My first high school reunion that I went to was the 50th, so that was 2012. And I saw her for the first time since I was in prep school, since before 1964. [crosstalk 00:32:43] She said, she told me she and her husband... I said what?

Speaker 1:

When did you graduate high school? Is that...

William Dorsey:

Oh Yates, I graduated at Jack Yates Senior High. Parenthetically also the high school that George Floyd graduated from [inaudible 00:32:56] 1962.

Speaker 1:

1962, okay.

William Dorsey:

So then 62 to 64 hours at the prep school, The Gunnery, Frederick Gunn's School in Western Connecticut. If you ever saw Gilmore girls....

Speaker 1:

Oh, I loved it, I loved it.

William Dorsey:

The town that was whatever their town was, was actually Washington Depot. Which is down at the bottom of the hill from The Gunnery, from the school.

Speaker 1:

Oh wow.

William Dorsey:

So every time I look at that I say, "Damn that place looks familiar."

Speaker 1:

That is a great connection, I enjoy that show.

William Dorsey:

I just, I read that some kind of way I read it, that was Washington, Connecticut. Washington Depot, Connecticut was where they they did the... It was a setting that they used.

Speaker 1:

Yes.

William Dorsey:

So yeah, so my homegirl told me she and her husband, she had married a guy from Janatar, had a place in Toronto. Actually they have a house in the countryside.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:34:04]

William Dorsey:

So actually they have a house in the countryside, but they still had an apartment in town. So she said, "If you ever want to go, you can use our apartment." The biggest thing other than the fare to get there is lodging. That was like that, you got that. So [Naim 00:34:20] and I went three, four years ago, something like that. And that was actually the first time I had gone, another friend of mine who teaches at temple now, she was on sabbatical, working at York, but she was in, and I just went up there for a few days, so I have actually been to Toronto twice now, and I was actually going to start going places last year, but something about a virus came up.

Speaker 1:

Yes, indeed.

William Dorsey:

And everything was on lockdown. But yeah, now I will be. But yeah, in the states, well, born in Durham, not that I remembered that since I was two going on three when we moved there. So Houston, spent

some time in New York, obviously. Washington, Connecticut, where the school was, Philadelphia, Swarthmore, Berkeley, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and here, but I've been to Boston too. In terms of places I've lived, it would very simply be Durham, Houston, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, California, Georgia.

Speaker 1:

That's a wide range of American cities and experiences. That's very cool.

William Dorsey:

Yeah, it's been most entertaining. One of the things that made being here so interesting was a year after I came, Maynard Jackson ran for mayor.

Speaker 1:

Yeah.

William Dorsey:

I said to myself, because like I said, I had thought about spending some time here and going to Boston, but I've been to Boston. One partner of mine from Swarthmore had gone to Harvard Law, I think. No, he actually went to Penn Law. He was in Boston for some reason when I was there. But I started to remember, I'd been in the winter, and after a snowfall, and you could use your car like a train, just pick the ruts you run in. You didn't even have to stare at a car when you got to an intersection, you just switched lanes, to whichever way you needed to go. And the ruts would hold the wheels in place.

William Dorsey:

So I got to thinking about that, and then after 16 years, or what, 15, 13, 14 and a half years of east Texas weather, and actually I had, so I had some New Englands when I went to Connecticut. I had some Northeastern when I was in Swarthmore, but then I had four years of sunny, California. And back here, I started thinking about, "Do you really want to go to Boston?" And the attraction was less to go, and the interest in staying became greater and greater because of the kind of changes that were happening.

William Dorsey:

Actually, probably in the last 10 years, with the school I was at, for most of that time, that would be, of course, the schools in the Atlanta University Center are private schools and very high tuition. Atlanta Junior College was started by Andy Young's first wife. It was at the height of the black power movement. So she got the school board to donate some land and build a building. And a rule for the university system of directors was if you had land and a building and at least 350 enrollment for the average for each quarter for the first year, then you could become part of a university system.

William Dorsey:

So actually, when I came back to Atlanta University for my second year, that Atlanta Junior College was just getting ready to open. That was one of the more interesting things too. That same academic dean that later on would tell me my services are no longer required, he called a meeting. Practice was, you come back the day after Labor Day, have a meeting just to make sure you're all there, and then the following Monday, the week after Labor Day, you would start classes. So he announced at the meeting that Tuesday night, that there was a special called meeting.

William Dorsey:

I guess it was the next night, Wednesday. Okay. Anyway, there was a meeting, and the question he raised was, "What are we going to do about this junior college that the state is fixing to open up on Stewart Avenue?" And to myself, I'm saying, "Wait a minute. This is a black grad school. Black junior college, eventually more business for a black grad school. So why do you have to do something?" So that stuck in my head. Eventually I cam to realize there's three things, one of which I apparently promptly forgot, but his other thing was, what would it do for the enrollment at Spelman and Morehouse? Not Clark, not Morris Brown. That's some of that bougie I was talking about, okay?

William Dorsey:

So I realized that, okay, it had to be sometime in the eighties. Yeah, probably, sometime in the eighties, it had made the front page of the Atlanta Journal Constitution Newspaper. Morehouse men were going around with sweat shirts that had this saying on them. I want to make sure I get them in the right order. Okay. "My hoe goes to Morris Brown. My girlfriend goes to Clark. My fiance goes to Spelman."

Speaker 1:

My God.

William Dorsey:

And then, yeah. I mean, I was already familiar with the bougieness, because actually, when I started going away to college and read Frank [inaudible 00:41:43], one summer I wrote a column that actually turned out to be ran in two issues of the newer black paper in Houston about bougieness. So I was familiar with that.

Speaker 1:

We need you to write again now. It's still a problem. I said you should write about it again now.

William Dorsey:

Oh yeah, oh yeah. Sociologically, when you have the idea of the nouveau riche from the middle ages, okay? And you're talking about human beings and stuff that is socially defined as valuable status is the issue. It's not too surprising when you have people of any religious, ethnic, racial, national background. It's not too surprising when you have that kind of attitudes show up. But, so one thing I did notice that basically the black middle class was roughly 10% up until basically the 1970, when desegregation and all started to expand. By 1970, let's say, it was roughly one third poor, one third working, and one third middle. And every time my classes would say, "What about the black upper class?" I said, "Is there enough of them to be a class?" And they say, "Oh."

William Dorsey:

So the thing that I noticed, like I said, those sisters in that documentary about class were obviously nouveau riche, okay? I never heard anybody who had a whole lot more bona fides when I was around them growing up, talk like that about anybody black. But that was like the hallmark for that. And I'm sure, whoever did the documentary is not aware of those kinds of nuances in the black community anyway.

William Dorsey:

So yeah, one thing though, since we're kind of jumping around. A few years ago, the same brother I mentioned, Charles Jones, he was president of NCBS. There was a conference here, and Karen Stanford, she teaches poli-sci somewhere on the west coast, one of the UC campuses. I can't think of it right now, but we were sitting up in the hospitality room and she was playing some videos on her Mac book. And actually, all I could see was the back of the Mac book. But Charles is over there, and apparently a video by a Beyonce came on, my home girl from Houston. And Charles said, "I don't understand why she got all that money. I don't understand why she acts like that." And what clicked in my head right then was what I had been noticing, because in the seventies, but especially the eighties and the nineties, I remember an interview with Cosby's wife. I think it was PBS news hour. She never once said black. She always said African-American.

William Dorsey:

But then I noticed that black started to make a comeback. And aside from being, it's more linguistically economical to use one syllable as opposed to whatever it would be, four or five. But also that the reality is about color. Phenomenologically, that's why black people were chosen to be child, because a white indentured servant could and would run away, change his name, and be lost forever. But somebody black would always have that so-called Mark of Cain. So that is so semantically and symbolically important. And also, blackness cuts across. African American definitely tells you about where you came from, but in this social context, black pretty much says who you are in that sense. So anyway, it hit me. Charles said that and I didn't know that much about Beyonce, but I knew that young women of all walks of life that I'd ever run into all dug her. So it just hit me that what she's doing is she's upholding blackness.

Speaker 1:

Yeah, she is.

William Dorsey:

She can mispronounce words and she's one of the girls. It doesn't matter that she has that. And that made me conscious of it, and I kind of watched that consciousness grow too. So one of my areas at Berkeley was social change, so I've been paying attention to that since, what, 1969, 1970, something like that. The other two were role theory and racial relations.

Speaker 1:

And I think I read in the interview that you sent that you had work framed around gender that you felt was overly ambitious, but a study of gender role expectations.

William Dorsey:

Yeah. Yeah, no, that was going to be my dissertation, and I'm still going to write it, even though it won't-

Speaker 1:

That's so incredible.

William Dorsey:

It won't have a thing with it. And what I found interesting, it's really about black males. That actually goes back to a lot of the insights I had thinking about my father growing up, and then my own passage,

walking around with a white chromosome. But yeah, because there's still a lot of things, but one thing that has both intrigued me and been somewhat disappointing is a lot of the angles I have on that, I still haven't heard anybody or read anybody talking about. I have to, it's almost like I have to do that.

William Dorsey:

So yeah. So yeah. And then gender roles, I mean, you look at the reaction to trans people. If you look at, I showed there's this little trans girl named Jazz. I don't know if you ever saw anything. I never heard of her, but some kind of way, I got onto it, and got a video interview, and saved it on a disc drive and would show it. And we got the gender and marriage and family or intro to social or something like that. And most of students would be, "Okay, I can understand if that's the way she feels, that's the way she feels." But some would be so apoplectically outraged that somebody would violate the sanctity of gender. And so you start telling them about how different cultures look at gender, and of course, in their mind, everybody's wrong except American Christianity. So yeah, that's pretty strong.

Speaker 1:

Indeed.

William Dorsey:

And a lot of the games that men have to play with themselves, let alone amongst each other has gotten to be so stereotyped, but also so important. Very few can break out of that. That's why I want to put those ideas out there. I do it on my Facebook stuff. Matter of fact, I got on Facebook in '08, a small group of brothers who I was with at Swarthmore, we decided to occasionally get together starting in '08, which serendipitously happened to be when a guy named Barack Obama was running.

Speaker 1:

Yes. Yeah. Very serendipitous.

William Dorsey:

So I got on Facebook to kind of stay in touch there. And once I got retired, because one thing about teaching at a community type college is a huge percentage of the students are the first in their family ever to go to college, and you have a great load of classes to teach. And then, since I like living life, I didn't try to also be academically productive in that sense. But now that I've retired, I got time. A couple of weeks ago, I finished a 50 page chapter. There's another friend of mine I met, actually, he's from Baltimore, teaches at Old Dominion now, but he was here in Atlanta getting his PhD in political science, and working in a title three office at my school. That's where we met. And he's the principal editor for this.

William Dorsey:

Well, the book is Dream and Legacy: Martin Luther King in the Post-Civil Rights Era. And that was a University of Mississippi Press. But since I was teaching, that's the first book with my name on the cover, but I was just an editor at this time. University of Mississippi Press that they wanted another edition. So this time I could write, so I wound up doing a 50 page thing playing off of, where do we go from here? The title is How Do We Go From Here? So yeah, I finished that, and as another, that brother is Michael Clemons, the one that teaches at Old Dominion, who was getting his PhD. He also started the journal of race and policy. So I'm also copy editing. Well, final editing some things for the next edition of that.

Speaker 1:

Okay. So now you're busy in a different way with the things that you... Well, tell me about, I am looking at your CV, but for the purposes of the interview, tell me about your work trajectory.

William Dorsey:

Actually, when I moved here, I was supposed to be working on dissertation, but I realized at some point, it might have been when I got here or it might have been close to the end of my first two years at Atlanta U, but I realized that I had too ambitious a bite I was trying to take. I wanted to include all classes and all major regions of the country. And unless I was doing work that was going to teach the military or the FBI how to spot traitorous Negroes, I would not get any funding for anything like that.

William Dorsey:

Ultimately, when I started working at Atlanta Junior College, and ultimately, I learned that you could get 12 PhDs, but you weren't going to make any more money. It was like, "Okay. Why bother?" I always was more interested in learning stuff than introducing until I have something to say. That's what I was going to say about Facebook. Since I got retired, I've been using it a little bit more like a blog, putting more comments in there. And I just got an explosion of friend requests, which is interesting. It's nice to know that there are people out there who don't mind.

William Dorsey:

There was an interview that [inaudible 00:54:01] had done when I was a research assistant at Berkeley, and it was transcribing as well. I was actually classifying some things from interviews, but this guy had said that some people talk, it makes his brain hurt. So I always wanted to be sure I didn't do that. But in some cases, you have to drop some complicated ideas. But I have to say one thing about 41 years of teaching at an access college, I did learn how to be very simple. There's this quote from Einstein, "Keep the questions simple, keep the question simple. When the answers are simple, you can hear God's voice."

Speaker 1:

That's beautiful.

William Dorsey:

And kind of the way I had always thought of it as everything complex is composed of simple things. Just stack them up.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. Makes a big idea.

William Dorsey:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Yeah.

William Dorsey:

So let me see now. I sidetracked again. You had asked me about...

Speaker 1:

Work. Your career trajectory.

William Dorsey:

Yeah, yeah. Okay. Okay. Yeah. I guess I came here to teach at Atlanta Youth, sociology. And the reason I came was one of the grand old men of sociology, Herbert Blumer, was an emeritus at Berkeley, and I had taken a class from him, so he knew of me, and a former student of his from University of Chicago had written him asking whether he had any grad students who might want to come teach in Atlanta. So he told me about it. So that's how I came here.

William Dorsey:

And my uncle, actually, my uncle had taught, actually the president of Atlanta U had been a student of my uncle's at some point, Emilio [Agronaldo 00:56:10], the one I was talking about from 1900. So yeah, I was there two years just teaching sociology, and follows with the Georgia Sociological Association. Yeah, I think so. No, no, that was later. So I did that, then the two years I was full-time at IBW, I taught part-time at Georgia State. So I had race relations, intro to social problems. And that was really instructive, because it gave me a chance to see how far southern whites had grown behind everything that was happening in the sixties.

William Dorsey:

For example, for the first social problems class I had there, I was part-time, so whatever book was happening, but another, he didn't stay, but the guy, he had picked this book by D Stanley Eitzen, Social Structure and Social Problems in America. And one of the things that was as true then as it is today, "true" Americans don't want to hear anything about the problems of the way their society is put together. They don't want to hear anything about it. So I was expecting before I came, I looked at a map and I saw I-285. I said, I guess 20 feet outside 285 is all country. That's not quite true, but that was the way I was thinking about it. So the first day for this social problems class, I told people where I was from and my interests, I asked them about, and they were all local. And I don't know, some kind of way, I asked if anybody had been anywhere. And one guy said, "I been to Chattanooga," which is two hours north.

William Dorsey:

That was kind of expecting a real parochial mentality. And this book talking about social structure and social problems was actually talking about problems with societies. And this was the days of America, love it or leave it, of gun racks in the back window of a pickup truck. So I was expecting all kinds of defensive reactions. So the second class comes. So I say, "What are you saying here? And blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." And then I stopped. So a few seconds, they realized that I was through, and one of them said, "Yeah. And furthermore..." To my mind. Some woman said at some point, probably not that same class. "Well, if the government wanted to monitor and wanted to survey me or tap my phones, I don't care, because I don't have anything to hide." And I just let the rest of the class jump on her. So that's actually when the glimmer that major social change is generational started to light up in my head. That's something I've been watching for the last, what, 50 years, I guess, now. So yeah.

William Dorsey:

Oh, and there was a race relations class I had, it seemed like it was a morning class. Anyway, it was a few blacks and a few whites. There was this kind of regulation, standard regulation, little blonde. And she was obviously very interested in everything we were talking about, and I would always make sure that if I was teaching anything, it was going to be, even before I heard the word, intersectional. I'm bringing in examples from all around anyway. But she came in one Monday, and she was so obviously upset, I said, "Well, what's wrong?" She said, "I just learned my boyfriend is racist. I was telling him about..." Some of this stuff I had told them, and he told her off in no uncertain terms. So that was another confirmation that a lot of people just don't know where they are. You don't know where you are until you know where you've been. Isn't that the way it goes?

Speaker 1:

Yes, I believe so.

William Dorsey:

You can't tell. Yeah. Yeah. And one thing I do understand about people is if you drop a little bit of knowledge, it's like rings in a pond or a lake. I always used to use this example that the Pacific ocean would stay still, and you could get in the helicopter and the prop wash didn't disturb the water. Just drop a single grain of sand. Eventually, ripples would touch all the choppers.

Speaker 1:

Yes. Yeah.

William Dorsey:

I always kind of figured, and that worked out pretty well, because I was just writing something the other night. At Swarthmore, I was one of the people who found that the Black Students Society. SASS, Swarthmore Afro-American Students, Society, SASS for obvious reasons. And that was my senior year. So I was on the west coast dealing with west coast stuff. Ronald Reagan, Panthers, hippies, anti-war, you just keep... Women's movement, environmental move, all that stuff. When there was a strike the next year at Swarthmore, but also, when the break in at the next town down to mine, break into the FBI office that revealed Cointelpro.

William Dorsey:

So I've been kind of interested to see. One thing I always tried to do all my life, I don't know. I mean, when I was 10 or something, I didn't have any reason to avoid detection, but I just kind of like hiding in plain sight. I put it like that. I do whatever I want to do, and to minimize hassles from people I don't really give a damn what they think, just don't even let them know what I'm doing. But yeah. But since then, I've been kind of looking to see if I had any signs. And actually my brother, when he found that dedication from Maxton written to him when he was three, he said, "They probably been watching us ever since we were born." I said, "You're probably right."

Speaker 1:

Right, right. With your family. I know, I know.

William Dorsey:

But I do know what I can do to see what the FBI has on me, freedom of information stuff. But I haven't done that yet, but there is some stuff that came out. In fact, one of the guys who was the year behind me, he wound up being a spokesman for the student strike, SASS strike at Swarthmore, he sent me an article written in the alumni bulletin in '73, kind of debriefing on the people who were involved in the strike and all of that. And I was reminded, I was so glad that my name never came up.

Speaker 1:

Right. Can you share, what were some of the things that contributed to the student strike? I'm not familiar.

William Dorsey:

It was mainly, Swarthmore is Quaker background. So they had, actually, when I came in, it was the largest number of black students that they had admitted at the beginning of any year, in the whole history of the school, and combined with the few who were already there. But then the next year, they had even more that came. They still didn't amount to 10% yet, but then, the bigger, more named schools, the Harvards, the Yales and all, decided that they would, I guess, what would that be? '68? Yeah. '68. They decided that they wanted some blacks. Well, no, in '68, I graduated. '66, they would have started, they stepped up their efforts. So the pool that could come to Swarthmore was smaller. And then those who wanted a known name like a Harvard or a Yale or a Princeton, they went there instead of Swarthmore.

William Dorsey:

But the younger bloods, and this is people just no more than two years younger than me were already in that kind of new militant attitude that I guess they came up while the... But by the time as they were gaining political consciousness, there was already a very high fervor already going. So their socialization was a whole lot more confrontational and [inaudible 01:05:36]. but yeah, so that was a demand that the school admit more black students.

William Dorsey:

And in the midst of it, the college president had a heart attack and died. And of course, that was all the black people's fault. So much for white liberal. And actually, okay, another one of the brothers who was there, who was in my cohort, his father was an MD and taught at at Harvard medical. And Courtney Smith was the president. He had met Courtney Smith at one point. And he told Jack, his son, "He's not healthy. That man is not healthy." And the way black doctors do a diagnosis, they look at everything, that holistic approach, [inaudible 01:06:41] his heart is bad, sure enough.

Speaker 1:

He knew. Wow.

William Dorsey:

So yeah. So yeah. And then it was also a thing, I guess, it would have to be my sophomore year, a number of a higher percentage of black women got admitted than had come in. Angela's sister, [Fania 01:07:12], she and I were freshmen together.

Speaker 1:

Wow, I've just read a book of hers last semester. Wow. Oh my goodness. That's very cool.

William Dorsey:

Every time I think about Fania, I think about when we first met and talked was standing up in the snack bar at Swarthmore.

Speaker 1:

Was she kind? What was she like?

William Dorsey:

Oh, she's just straight forward. I mean, everybody was smart. So nobody had [inaudible 01:07:48] anything. Matter of fact, Spelman's kind of president was two years behind me. Mary Schmidt Campbell.

Speaker 1:

Yes.

William Dorsey:

Yeah.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [01:08:04]

Speaker 1:

Yes.

William Dorsey:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

What a time to have been there.

William Dorsey:

I need to ask her too, because she did all that stuff at Hunter and then she can't be much younger than me, but she came and she's been doing this for, I think, about five years. One summer, I had a Spelman student. She had just gotten here. So I asked her, I mentioned to her and she said, "I wish she would get with us more." So I wrote Mary. I said, "I think the young ladies would like to have closer contact." Then I started seeing pictures of her hanging out with the students.

Speaker 1:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

William Dorsey:

Yeah. No, Sonia was good people. She was going through some, everybody's going through adolescent changes.

Speaker 1:

Yeah.

William Dorsey:

To talk about that as though it was something special, it'd be like trying to try and make a big deal out of the fact that water is wet.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. It's to be expected.

William Dorsey:

Yeah. So, okay. So, yeah. So, Georgia State was interesting in a number of ways and now it's one of the biggest schools in the country, 40,000. Now one of the things about the concern that DBF Hudson had in that meeting, the beginning of my second and last year at Brown University when he said, "What are we going to do about this junior college that the state is fitting to open up?" Was the idea that a public school would be a threat to the private schools, mainly monetarily.

William Dorsey:

The way it was going to start out, you got about 5% of black Atlanta was middle class and the rest, unless they were passing by, they would be nowhere near AU Center. So that was really irrelevant. It was really more of a class status protective orientation than anything to do with any universe. It wasn't even in the universe of reality licensure.

William Dorsey:

No. I mean, we did have students who move left, got the associate, and we went to the AU Center and did well. But you couldn't tell those people that. Apparently the administration over there has changed. I was back on campus with AHSA, African Heritage Studies Association, for the first time. One time recently and then a little bit earlier than that for the campus showing of Tell Them We Are ... What's that the thing that, whatjamajigger did on black colleges? Tell Them We Are Rising? Something like that?

Speaker 1:

Oh, I know what you're talking about.

William Dorsey:

Yeah. You know, the brother documentary. Yeah. They had a special showing. Actually the part of the space that at the time that where I was told about this problem with the junior college, had been converted or torn down and replaced with a bigger auditorium. It was in that same space for that. Yeah, Tell Them We Are Rising. I think that was it.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. I think so.

William Dorsey:

Now this is an institution that had fired Duboris twice. But I remember the irony as I saw it of, they have a dedication. They brought a bust of him out in the quadrant.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

So I thought it was two faced, but I've come to learn that there's actually finally been some improvement in black college administration. Even the generational change has to happen there too.

Speaker 1:

Yeah, right. So I want to shift to questions about IBW, but I want ask if you need a break. If you want to get some water, rest room.

William Dorsey:

No, I've got some water right here.

Speaker 1:

Okay. Because if we were in person, we would feel those things more naturally. So I have to make sure over video. Oh, I love the NPR. I love NPR. So I'm wondering, did you know about IBW prior to moving to Atlanta? What drew you or led you to it? And what was your role there? Tell me about your time at IBW.

William Dorsey:

Well, actually, like I said, I didn't really know. I knew IBW was down there. It was two blocks away from the AU campus where I was. I knew it was there, but I didn't know what it was. And having just moved here and all of that, I hadn't even gone down there. But like I said, Howard knew I was in town and he knew I had not gotten a contract. So that's when he invited me to come down there.

William Dorsey:

But I guess I've always been like my friend says, she says I'm a race man. I said, yeah, but what else am I doing? It interested me. I mean when I got to Berkeley, a brother who's a friend of mine to this day who's got that bad Parkinson's right now, but he's from Tuskegee, but he was already at Berkeley. He came and asked me, "I'm going to across the bay to San Francisco State. You want to go?" I said, yeah. And I that's when I learned that the strike was going on that led to black studies. So the semester I got there, or the quarter I got there was the beginning of black studies.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

And I had already understood a lot of gaps and contradictions as I went through. I called those two years in prep school, four years at Swarthmore, four years at Berkeley, my journey through white land.

Speaker 1:

Yes. Well put. Awesome.

William Dorsey:

And at the gunnery, that's upper middle and upper class kids, boys. Mono sexual at the time. So I got a chance. And then I had to take history and some more history and some more history. So I got a chance to see how their up and coming leaders to be are indoctrinated in what I would now call whiteness.

Speaker 1:

Yes, sir. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

William Dorsey:

And going the Swarthmore, after that, Swarthmore being what it is, the political orientation, the Quaker orientation, and then the activist orientation on top of that gave me more and more context to understand that. So I've always heard and read with two eyes and two ears, with two angles on what's going on.

William Dorsey:

But and then, like I say, I've always known I was black. It never occurred to me that, what I'm black? Who me? Never occurred to me. So just what they were doing and the whole concept of the black world. Just all black folk. Yeah. Let's go. Let's deal with it. I was already interested even before I knew in that sense.

William Dorsey:

And then it was also good because IBW was non-ideological. I mean, while I was there, Farrakhan came through. Queen Mother Moore came through. Some people from Charles Drew Medical School, LA Watts came through. I mean, it was just anything black. If it's black, okay. That's all we needed.

William Dorsey:

And it was also nice like I say in that John Pan African studies piece, it was also refreshing. Because instead of people worrying about degrees and status, it was just refreshing to be with a bunch of people who were all working on behalf of black folk. But if they took. I mean, I guess if I had a particular kind of attitude, which would not have permitted me to be there, but let's just have a thought experiment. If I'd had a particular kind of attitude say well, I'm a sociologist, I can't do the mailing list. That's beneath me. If I had that kind of attitude, nobody had that. Some people had degrees, some people didn't, it didn't matter. So that kind of community. And you just walk in and it's already there. That's always sweet.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. So the question of asking what your role was doesn't really even seem to apply because it seems like the kind of thing where everyone was doing what needed to be done. Or did you have a specific kind of role?

William Dorsey:

Yeah. I remember a couple of things. I was one of the editors. I edited Black World View, which was a four or eight page newsletter. I managed the mailing list and mailings going out, bulk mail. Set up a bookstore. There was a brother that had a bookstore a couple of blocks down that didn't do so well. This

was at a time when you got into a low point of people black buying certain kinds of books, academic books. So he gave them to IBW. He set up the front room as a bookstore. That's what I remember, but I know I probably did more than that. It might be more detail in that CV that I remembered when I was doing that then I remember now.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. That's fair. And do you remember the people that were very present during the time that you were there? Also, what years were you there?

William Dorsey:

I was there from '74 to '76. Sunny Bellamy, Al Josee, Lynn Suruma. Gillian came through at some point I think afterward. Sue Ross came when I left, but I had known her father. He was the anthropologist at Atlanta U, same department of social anthro. He was really the only one that actually greeted me like an actual colleague. Not that my feelings were hurt, but like I said, it was seven years between me and my brother. So we weren't on the same page until I was like 18 or 20.

William Dorsey:

And the neighborhood that I group up in our house, there was kids that were four and five years older than me and four and five years younger than me. So I was by myself, socially isolated, even though there was other kids on the block. So I'm used to that too. Being introverted doesn't hurt either.

William Dorsey:

Of course, Howard was there. Yeah. Most of the people I really do remember. I would imagine that your project is already talked to Lynn Suruma.

Speaker 1:

Yes. Yes. One of the women interviewed, correct.

William Dorsey:

Oh, Betty Cheney. That's all that comes to mind right now, but I know there were some more. There were some. Malika too, Malika Darrell. She was a student at Clark and was there volunteering.

Speaker 1:

During your time at IBW, how did you think about the role of the women? Because our project up until now has really been focused on the stories of the women of IBW. And so I wonder with gender dynamics being what they were at the time, did it seem like there was a difference in the role of the women and the role of the men? Did it seem-

William Dorsey:

I have always seen women as people at any point all along in my life. So, I mean, as I learned how stereotypes worked and how a lot of men looked at women was the first I ever knew of most of that kind of stuff. So I mean, my only concern working with anybody was do they know what they're talking about?

Speaker 1:

That's fair. That's fair.

William Dorsey:

That was really it. As a matter of fact, in this IBW legacy group, one of the women said ... Occasionally we get together for some dinners and Sue said, "Well Bill, he's an honorary woman anyway."

Speaker 1:

He understands. Yeah. That says a lot. I appreciate that.

William Dorsey:

And my friend was there. So she asked me when I was taking her back, she said, "Does that mean we have a homosexual relationship?" I said, "No, I don't think that's what they ..."

Speaker 1:

They're saying he gets us.

William Dorsey:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. Leading to another question, how does it feel to be now reconnected? Or did you never really lose touch? Did you-

William Dorsey:

No, we've always been in touch. We started this-

Speaker 1:

Legacy group.

William Dorsey:

... these occasional dinners. We would see each other here and there being of like-minded interests at different functions. Actually, 2008 might be when we started doing these dinners.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

That, like I said, the other thing about 2008 aside from Barack is that's when these brothers from Swarthmore when we started to get together. And we did the first one here.

Speaker 1:

Wonderful.

William Dorsey:

So yeah, we've always been in touch. Sometimes more frequently than others, but still everybody had each other's numbers or most people did.

William Dorsey:

Betty Collet recommended me for this small community theater, impact theater. I'm on the board. They're on the board, they recommended me and I got on with that through them.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

One of my former students, really, not that much younger than me, but then that's the thing about an access college. He and his wife were actually doing a lot of volunteer stuff for at risk youth. He had boys, she had girls, they were boys and girls club. That got a little too restrictive. Eventually they started something on their own which didn't survive that long. He got into corrections. He said, "At least I can catch them when they first get arrested." So he has been running a smart moves chess club, a way to bring the young men together, have some conversation and teach strategic thinking and that kind of thing. So I told them when I retired I would be glad to come and volunteer and that's what I was doing up until ... Like I say, something happened last year. Everything seemed to stop.

Speaker 1:

Yes, that pandemic. Yeah.

William Dorsey:

But yeah, so that's a good thing. Because I even, I did four years as a counseling with Up or Down at Swarthmore.

Speaker 1:

Oh, wow.

William Dorsey:

One of my counselees had moved here. She said she got interested in photography with me because I was also into photography. She's here. The thing I heard about the other kids was good. Because I actually, I had a theory which actually I got from when I was at the gunnery, at prep school. My second year, my 12th grade, I was a dorm monitor. I was a door monitor, so I had my own room and I had a subscription to Saturday Review. And I remember this article essay, the best colleges have the least effect. It's basically making the point that if you take the kids who go to Harvard or Yale or Radcliffe or a Smith, they've already accomplished so much in their adolescent lives that college, it might add a little bit, but they're already pretty well developed. But somebody who's the first in their family to go to college, that's eye opening and opens up doors for not only them, but their family and their siblings.

William Dorsey:

So I already had that thought in mind. And I recognized that even, like I say, when I would be in those vocational classes at Yates and high school, these some perfectly fine black folk to me. I could understand that for whatever reason they weren't in biochemistry with me, but that was cool. One of the things I did like with the Upward Bound kids was they lived in Chester, Pennsylvania, which for a minute during World War II was a booming industrial center but had fallen on particularly hard times, parentheses, interestingly enough, that's also where Howard Dustin grew up.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

But then he's like 80, 81 or something now. So when he came along, it was booming, World War II, that kind of thing. So anyway, so taking them back, we'd have things during the school year. But then in the summer we'd have a two week or three week or whatever length of summer program. But taking them back home. So taking the car load back and of course they were on the other side of the tracks, of course. I mean, that's Urban Soc 101. And so we had to wait for a train. So I asked them as the train went by, I said, "I know you see these trains all the time. You ever wonder how they stop?" Because what I had figured out was that human beings are naturally curious. But if that curiosity is not satisfied, it atrophies. It may not go completely away, but it atrophies. But it can be easily stimulated.

William Dorsey:

So I said, "You ever wonder how it stop?" "No, how does it stop?" So I pointed out the brake shoes as they went by and they just clamp down on it, that kind of the thing. So I just would always try to raise things that would be within a student's reality or a person, wouldn't have to necessarily be in class, but that might intrigue them. That might get some extra neurons connecting in the brain, that kind of thing.

William Dorsey:

I think the education teacher at Atlanta Metropolitan State said to me after, I think it was her nephew, she told me that she had a relative in one of my classes, but she didn't tell me who it was until the semester was over. She said, he told her that that was the most interesting class he had ever taken. I think it was Intro to Soc.

Speaker 1:

I believe that.

William Dorsey:

Okay. Well, good. So it's still working.

Speaker 1:

Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

William Dorsey:

Because human beings, once we get socialized, I can't say mind is all, but mind is very, very, very influential.

Speaker 1:

Yes. Mm-hmm (affirmative) That is so, wow. I appreciate that. So how did the formation of the IBW legacy group come about? Was it born out of these dinners?

William Dorsey:

Yeah. Yeah. Probably the biggest impetus, you've heard of Ron Daniels IBW 21? 21st century?

Speaker 1:

No.

William Dorsey:

Ron Daniels, I met him through James Turner. You've heard Turner's name probably, yeah. Really in the spirit of Garvey, he had this desire to return to reboot state of the race conferences and that kind of thing. And he kicked it off here. It was an unfortunate time because the big conference was scheduled for what turned out to be four weeks after 911.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

So there was this big conference. A number of people came, but nothing as big as it could be. I didn't realize at the time, but he was doing some things to get it off the ground. He had another thing here, at least one other thing. And that was when he announced that he wanted his organization to be called Institute of the Black World. Well, I told him, I said, why don't you call it Black World Institute? He insisted. So I think once he did that and that forced a-

Speaker 1:

He [crosstalk 01:32:41] another IBW. This is the other.

William Dorsey:

Yeah. So his IBW, he concedes to it IBW21.

Speaker 1:

Yes, I have. I didn't know it by that name. Okay.

William Dorsey:

Yeah. For IBW 21st Century.

Speaker 1:

What were your feelings about that when he chose that name?

William Dorsey:

Well, on the one hand, what is it? Something is the sincerest form of flattery. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. I could understand his desire to do that, but I mean, the reason I suggested that he do something different was because I knew it would step on toes. And I think after that, I can't remember. Okay. So 911 was 2001, right?

Speaker 1:

Yes, sir. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

William Dorsey:

Yeah. So after that, I think that external circumstance might have forced a little bit more group consciousness. Because it was a good while before we did anything. I remember the first little gathering, there was a spot near the west end. And on the west end there was a black spot. And I remember I found it and went in. And I recognized some people, and some people I didn't recognize because it had been so long, maybe 30 years since I saw them.

William Dorsey:

But I think that's probably when it started. And at first we called it ... Al Josie was one of the main instigators. So we called her the leader and she said she wanted to call that the IBW KRU, K-R-U. So that's the folder I have, IBW KRU. And then since we're doing this, like [Snake 01:34:45] has legacy group. So I think somebody saw that and said that's really what we are too. The Snake doesn't exist anymore, but it's the legacy. And it's the same idea. But yeah, the scope, the inclusiveness and ecumenical-

Speaker 1:

Great words.

William Dorsey:

... intellectualism is what I dug about it and still do.

Speaker 1:

That's so well said. Ecumenical, yeah.

William Dorsey:

Is the whole thing, like the way that Jillian put it, non-ideological.

Speaker 1:

Exactly.

William Dorsey:

But what I saw at Berkeley, I'm going to tell you, with us and the Panthers and everything, the whole thing of having to be a true believer, ecumenical really strikes a chord with me.

Speaker 1:

Yes. Well, so expand on that. What was your time in California like and what [crosstalk 01:35:58].

William Dorsey:

Well, I mean, aside from being capital I interesting, I mean, look, hippies were happening. Life studies, the strike that led to black studies was just starting up across the bay. The women's movement was cranking up. The environmental movement was cranking up. Did I mention that Reagan was in Sacramento. What I did notice on the black side was this devotion to Marxist analysis or cultural nationalist analysis. And I couldn't see the point of lining up behind any damn ideology. My question is always what makes sense and how can it be used to make sense?

William Dorsey:

So when I got the black studies class, the brother who started black studies at Atlanta Junior College left after my first year, because I think my second year I picked it up. But the thing I had already founded in my mind was okay, yeah, both analyses are entirely useful, but like a hammer or a screwdriver, you need particular tools at particular times. And while the Marxist analysis does explain the systemic condition, the systemic circumstances that lead to our condition, our response to that needs to be first of all, to become congealed as a people so that the cultural nationalists, the we part has to be in place. Like the example of one pencil you can break it. Put a whole bunch together and you can't.

Speaker 1:

That's true.

William Dorsey:

Then, that's the only time you can move on the system anyway. And that's when that analysis comes in. So from day one, I taught both of those theoretical approaches and pointed out how they were useful. So whenever they went and wherever they went, they would be less subject to being seduced by an ideology and be their own person. So that's what I did with it. It wasn't like people in Berkeley were fighting each other, but the lack of cooperation and mutual respect was obvious. And I didn't have any interest in any of that.

Speaker 1:

That makes so much sense. You were resistant to being forced to subscribe. You wanted the diversity and the spaciousness.

William Dorsey:

Right. And that's why I never joined the fraternity either.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. I understand that. I understand that. What you said about tools, that analogy is perfect. You need one depending on what the circumstance is. You'll need another-

William Dorsey:

Sometimes you need a hammer. Sometimes you need a screwdriver.

Speaker 1:

That's true.

William Dorsey:
And the whole point of anything, if the point is actually like the liberation of a people-

Speaker 1:
Exactly.

William Dorsey:
... then isn't that what you're supposed to be focused on?

Speaker 1:
Yes.

William Dorsey:
Not what orthodoxy do I need to teach them or get them to agree to.

Speaker 1:
Yes. It's still so important now, I think, so I'm just appreciating, hearing this from you.

William Dorsey:
I got a million of them.

Speaker 1:
So bringing it out of IBW, would you say that your experience there influenced your trajectory, where you went in terms of your career and work and what you felt the freedom to subscribe to ideologically or not personally, professionally?

William Dorsey:
I think probably the main influence was essentially a permission or a consolidation of, okay, well, I'm going to stay a race man. I want to stay interested in all things necessary for the benefit of the people. Not that it was new, but just that ... Once you see a group of people who are dedicated to that, it lets you know you're not alone.

Speaker 1:
Yes, sir. Yeah.

William Dorsey:
I think that's probably the main thing. Actually, when I was in the Southern Sociological Society, that was the Georgia Sociological Society. There was a state or regional Southern sociological. There was a conference here I did a paper for. Just a paper for presentation. Actually, that was in the days of the Apple II and the five inch disks. And then the Mac came along. And we actually had a set up for moving files from the five and a half to the three and a half inch discs that would fit in and fit in the early Macs. But then the second president of Atlanta, still junior college, was one of those bourgeois posers who also wanted to id-

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:42:04]

William Dorsey:

... bourgeois posers, who also wanted to identify anybody with some potential strengths and either enlist them in his cadre, or you would be forever an enemy. So I was forever an enemy. When he found out that there was this Macintosh on campus and I was the one using it, so he sent the new IT guy, or whatever they called it at the time, to get it. And that was the next thing I was getting ready to translate onto a disk. So for years, I didn't have it.

William Dorsey:

But then I ran into, at the senior center I go to for water aerobics ... I had my knees replaced, so the doctor said, "Don't be trying to do anything land aerobics." I ran into this former student that I had given a copy of the paper to. And he had showed it to some woman he knew who took it with her to Chicago, and she just recently had sent it back to him. So he told me about it. I said, "I need that." So he got it, he gave it to me, I scanned it in, gave it back. So I actually got this thing from 1983, I think it was, that I had done.

William Dorsey:

But even that was about ... This isn't the most perfect summation, but basically it was about the mythologies around race in American society and the psychosocial reactions that people go through about race. And I was glad to get it because I'd never get it off of that five and a half inch disk. I probably don't even have that disk anymore.

Speaker 1:

So what do you feel passionate about these days? What's bringing you hope? What are kind of things that you are involved in that are sort of surging that passion and that hope?

William Dorsey:

Well, the one thing about this little theatre company, it's called Impact Theatre Company. And at first I got interested in it because I saw, I guess an ad or something for one of the plays, which was about an entirely yellow man. So it was a light-skinned Black guy's travails with being Black in a color-conscious Black society, something like that. But the sister picks plays that have that kind of resonance.

William Dorsey:

I'm still in African Heritage Studies Association, in fact I'm the treasurer. I spent a number of years editing, putting together the journal for National Council of Black Studies's Journal of Africana Studies.

William Dorsey:

But the overarching thing is I go back to that thing about social change, one of my interests from grad school. And they all fit together, race relations, role theory and social change, because the interface between the individual and society is the role they play. And the meanings that go along with that. I've had good luck speaking to students, man, woman, whatever situation, coming at it from their perspective, the way they see the world because of their interface, that role, their interface.

William Dorsey:

But the thing that ... For years now, I can't even tell you how long, I've been watching a white backlash, which is what we called it back in the sixties, but kind of the return of it since Reagan or daddy Bush or whatever. And I'm telling this partner of mine here, I call it "the death throes of white supremacy." At the same time, having been in ... Okay. 1962, I graduated public school, Jack Yates Colored High School. 1964, right after Kennedy got his head blown open, I went to Swarthmore. '64, '65, '66, '67, '68, there was a little activity going on in the country.

William Dorsey:

And social change became one of my interests, which I consolidated or consecrated or concretized, whatever, confirmed, I guess, when I got to Berkeley. So I knew that the system somehow would find a way to turn the volume down from what I am saying. I wanted to see how that happens. And I also knew that it wouldn't last, so I wanted to see how that happened. So I've just been kind of participating as an observer in my own life, in that sense. Participating in the sense of teaching and observing as we roll along, where different cohorts of students were in that 41-year period.

Speaker 1:

Wow. I have to say, Mr. Dorsey, that's a beautiful framing. That's a beautiful framing.

William Dorsey:

So what really ... I mean, I've been hopeful all along because it's hard for me to take retrogressive behavior as indicative of anything other than retrogressive behavior. But I call it the iceberg principle. Water contracts down to about four degrees before freezing, then it begins to expand. That's where ice floats. But that's also why it's just such a small piece that's above the surface, like an iceberg. But I've been using this term, "the iceberg principle," for a long, long time. That little bit that you see just tells you that there's a huge amount more beneath the surface where you can't see it. So when I see a little something, quote, unquote, "optimistic," I understand that it is representative of a humongous bunch of stuff. That's just sticking up above the surface. But I was talking with Bracey, my cousin, since the George Floyd protests. Something I've been expecting, cause ... Students for Democratic Society, SDS split off, the people who started SDS.

William Dorsey:

And the whole idea between the two, the Black and white radicals, was, "Hey, neither of our communities is ready to talk to each other. So we need to go get them prepared." And over the years I came to realize that's really generational, okay. There's this quote from ... Let me make a note, I know you'd like it ... Runoko Rashidi had a quote on Facebook that actually I put into a little graphic. Basically he says, "When I was young, I thought liberation was like a sprint. As I became a little older, I came to see that it was like a marathon. Now in my later years, I see it's really a relay, with the baton being passed from generation to generation."

Speaker 1:

Yes. Wow. Wow. Yes.

William Dorsey:

The funny thing about truth, it rings. When you hear that-

Speaker 1:

It does. It sends a shockwave on your spine. Yeah, that's good.

William Dorsey:

So yes. Like I was saying, what I was doing at first with the Black studies, but then as political situations changed and we went from a quarter system to a semester system ... And initially the setup, the Atlanta junior college that Ms. Young, I can't remember her first name all of a sudden, had set up ... The university system of Georgia had, for the first two years you took basically four courses in social sciences and humanities and fine arts, four in sciences, and then six in your major, something like that. But it was set up that in the social sciences, one had to be constitutional studies, citizenship basically. And the other had to be U.S. history. But there would be two others, so it was set up that there would be two analysis of the African American experience. So we actually had set up so that they would actually have two full courses in African American studies before they ever went anywhere.

William Dorsey:

Then at one point I developed ... We were successful for a few years at getting an introduction to human sexuality course put in as one of those area three, the social science electives, as a possibility. I took a lot of the understandings I had about marriage and family and employed those when I talked to marriage and family class, but as the Black studies kind of thing started getting more and more circumscribed, I just started teaching it in every class. When it fit, I brought it up. So you might be in social problems, you might be in introduction to social sciences, you might be in introduction to sosh, you might be in introduction to anthropology. You might be in juvenile delinquency, substance abuse. I was going to hook it in just like I had at Georgia State.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. Wow.

William Dorsey:

But it helps that, like I said, my father was in music, my mother being a librarian at first. So I had that side; that humanities side was pretty well filled. My brother was in science, eventually going into engineering and aeronautical engineering and being a captain for TWA. And I had my own interest in people, just kind of the place I was between groups, older on one side, younger on the other side, I being a people observer. So I'm interested in all of that stuff. So I'm able to bring it in, that's what I'm saying. To make analogies and connections between many different things. And that obviously helps.

Speaker 1:

Yes, indeed. There is a question I forgot to start with, which, and then from there, I'll go to the last question. If you are comfortable sharing with us, what year you were born, Mr. Dorsey?

William Dorsey:

1946, right after. And as a matter of fact, there we go again. I learned, I don't know, sometime after I got to living in Atlanta, that demography had set up the baby boom years as January 1st, 1946 to December 31, 1964. I was born January 1st, 1946.

Speaker 1:

Wow! Right there, right at the start.

William Dorsey:

But it was 6:15 PM. Like I would always tell people, and I've been late ever since.

Speaker 1:

Oh, that's a good-

William Dorsey:

But my brother was born in May 1st. So I started thinking about that. That's when I knew women had something to do with when the baby comes.

Speaker 1:

Right. Oh, that's funny.

William Dorsey:

Because I mean, look, out of 365 days a year, there's only 12 firsts.

Speaker 1:

That's true.

William Dorsey:

And if you have kids seven and a half years apart, and both of them were born on the first of any month-

Speaker 1:

That's true.

William Dorsey:

Something got something to do with something.

Speaker 1:

Yeah, that's pretty ... The odds of that. And so I remember reading the interview that you sent, you talking about being the son of a librarian, your father being a musician, growing up and living through what I think is one of the best decades of music, what is your relationship with music and stories told through music? How did the-

William Dorsey:

I saw that, I was ... Just for the heck of it, before I logged on, I was typing in some responses to that list of questions you had. I like Black music, up to but not including smooth jazz.

Speaker 1:

Okay.

William Dorsey:

Some smooth jazz is okay, but most of it is like-

Speaker 1:

That's fair.

William Dorsey:

... annoying.

Speaker 1:

That's fair! That is fair.

William Dorsey:

But I understand it too, because one former girlfriend of mine, we were at some local group, local jazz group for the local community station. It was like a fundraiser or something. And they were playing some sure enough African American classical music. And she said ... And it had a lot of angles and edges to it, you know? And she was saying, "I like it, but at the same time it makes me nervous." And then in another couple of years Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, "Don't push me cause I'm-"

Speaker 1:

" ... close to the edge!"

William Dorsey:

And then the popularity ... In fact, Clark's radio station had started out playing mainstream jazz, and for a minute flirted with going to smooth, came back to mainstream, and then eventually just totally broke and stayed. Don't ask anybody there who John Coltrane was.

Speaker 1:

Okay, got it.

William Dorsey:

And kind of using all of that "student of human behavior" thing that I had developed over the years and the kind of rat race lifestyle that more and more Black people coming into and being born into if not entering it, if not coming into the middle class, and having all those kinds of stressors to deal with. And Dot's comment about the music, liking it but it made her feel nervous. So they need that smooth jazz! That's why you don't have that many Black people running around committing mass murder.

Speaker 1:

Right.

William Dorsey:

Basically.

Speaker 1:

Basically. That is so well said. So this is probably an impossible question to pick just one, but I'm curious: if you had to pick, it doesn't have to be a favorite cause it's probably hard to narrow, but a near-favorite book and a near-favorite song as a son of a musician and a librarian for a time. Those are two storytellers.

William Dorsey:

Actually, the song that is kind of like both personal and social-psychologically relevant, is Sly's In Time.

Speaker 1:

Oh, yes, sir. Yeah. Yeah.

William Dorsey:

I also have a memory about that because Herbie Hancock was talking about how, that's when he was with Miles, he was talking about how one day they got together and Miles made him listen to it like 15 times cause he liked the time changes in it.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. Yes I love his-

William Dorsey:

No, no. Okay. That's why that's on my mind, I was just talking with a musician friend about that. The one of his that I really like both personally and social-psychologically, If You Want Me to Stay.

Speaker 1:

Oh, I know.

William Dorsey:

"I'll be around today to be available for you to see. I'm about to go, but then you'll know. For me to be here, I got to be me. You'll never be in doubt. That's what it's all about. You can take me for granted and smile. Count the days I'm gone. Forget reaching me by phone because I promise I'll be gone for a while."

Speaker 1:

That's a lyric. That's a lyric.

William Dorsey:

And the first cousin to that is, the same kind of sentiment, Stevie's Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing. Isn't that the one with, "Cause I'll be standing in the wings when you check it out"?

Speaker 1:

I think-

William Dorsey:

(singing) I think that's Stevie. I think that's, yeah.

Speaker 1:
Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing.

William Dorsey:
Those got the same meaning package to me.

Speaker 1:
Yes, they do.

William Dorsey:
"Okay, okay. I dig you, but I know you got to trip, so I'll be here when you get back off of your trip."

Speaker 1:
Yeah.

William Dorsey:
And then book, actually John Fowles's The Magus.

Speaker 1:
Hm, I never read that.

William Dorsey:
"Magus" is magician, and I had seen the movie and it had a lot of images and stuff I wasn't that clear about. When I read the book, I was very clear. But a lot of it's about the illusion of love, and a couple other things. There's a line from that that I use in a lot of situations, especially if I'm posting something that somebody did stupid online. The line from the novel is, "Stupidity is lethal."

Speaker 1:
Oh, yeah. Yeah.

William Dorsey:
That was something one of the characters said.

Speaker 1:
That's important.

William Dorsey:
But another movie I like is Women in Love.

Speaker 1:
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

William Dorsey:

McCabe & Mrs. Miller. 2001: A Space Odyssey.

Speaker 1:
Yeah.

William Dorsey:
Again, kind of a wide-

Speaker 1:
Yeah, wide spectrum.

William Dorsey:
A wide ... How did I put it? I was talking to Howard as we're getting this conference together. So I'm kind of an information omnivore.

Speaker 1:
Very well said. Thank you for sharing.

William Dorsey:
You said you had another, or was that the other one?

Speaker 1:
That-

William Dorsey:
Oh yeah, no, you asked me about birth year and then book favorite. Yeah. Okay.

Speaker 1:
Yeah. Anything else that you think you'd like to share? Are you excited for the conference?

William Dorsey:
Yeah, yeah. Actually I wanted some more stuff, not surprisingly, something about family, but at the time we didn't think we had enough to pay for the five or six or whatever we had. I wanted to do that and something on the environment, but that was temporarily in. But yeah, I think this is looking pretty good. I got a disappointment yesterday from Color of Change. I think they might have us confused with IBW21. But the whole idea was to have somebody from Color of Change, somebody from Black Futures Lab, BLM-associated.

William Dorsey:
I had to do a media thing with Black Futures Lab, and a sister called while I was out yesterday needing some more information. I called her back but she hadn't called me yet. But I also got an email from Color of Change that they declined. And I wrote back, "Thank you for your response. I hope you don't have us confused with Ron Daniels's IBW21, because we are the original, instrumental in setting up Black studies." But it actually turns out that since I hadn't heard from them through their media contact, I had

Rashad Robinson's email and Alicia Garza's, so I'd already sent them something. And I said, probably the best thing I need to do is make the subject line, "Not IBW21, actually IBW the original Institute of Black World." So maybe they'll read that.

Speaker 1:

Oh, I hope so. Yeah.

William Dorsey:

But the two sisters who are the president and vice president of AHSA are both political science. My session is Black agenda, largely political and kind of springboarding off of the 72 Garrick adventure. So one way or another, I'll get some people in there. It seems like the sister had called and left a message from Black Futures. She didn't call back, but I don't know where ... She said she wanted to get some more information. And I'm hoping that the sister who sent me the refusal from Color of Change, I'm hoping Rashad sees that and asks about it. And I hope she opens up, cause they would be two really good contemporary organizations to bring in.

Speaker 1:

Yes, certainly.

William Dorsey:

But if not, Afia Zakiya, she's the vice president at AHSA, she's doing some things. Or she's a Fulbright, actually, both of them are. I mean, we can get some stuff done. It'll be good. Actually, AHSA had something last fall and IBW kicked that off cause HSA got started kind of in sympathy, in a sense, with IBW.

Speaker 1:

Okay Okay. And is it open? Like can anybody register to attend the conference?

William Dorsey:

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. It's Zoom, it's not a paid thing. Actually, right now I told Jillian, we had already set this up. They had a meeting at 3:00, so they might still be at it, but she's getting enough of the program together to be able to send out.

Speaker 1:

Oh, wonderful.

William Dorsey:

So I'll make sure ... More than likely she's got your email, but I'll be sure that you get sent one.

Speaker 1:

Okay. Thank you so much.

William Dorsey:

So I guess from what it sounded like in the email, it sounded like they were going to get it tight enough, with enough information to be able to send something out for first time. It's going to be Tuesday, starting last Tuesday in this month, skipping July 4th week, but then going through to August 17th.

Speaker 1:

Okay. Okay.

William Dorsey:

Tuesdays, I don't know what time of day, probably something that can accommodate west coast. It would definitely be something to accommodate west coast because we looked up, I think our Josie ran into this group, PeoplesHub in Portland, Oregon.

Speaker 1:

Yes. In the Northwest.

William Dorsey:

Yeah. And AHSA and IBW need some contacts out there. In fact, a sister who presented at the session in Long Beach, she had actually gotten involved in AHSA but we had a president who was a real Machiavellian, and this sister got used and she just kind of backed off from AHSA altogether. But I'm kind of showing her that ... Actually, here's a good example. I knew that she was chosen by this sister to be played the way she tried to play her. But I tried to get the sister to understand that that's the way you know your worth to other people.

Speaker 1:

Oh. Yes. Okay.

William Dorsey:

If you hadn't been perceived as influential, valuable, important stuff like that, you never would have been a target.

Speaker 1:

That's a good way of thinking of it, yes.

William Dorsey:

Yeah. So I actually went last year. She was at the registration then, NCBS was here just as the pandemic was healing. Hold on a second, that's probably one of my robo call people. Let me see if it only rings one ... Nope, hold up.

William Dorsey:

Hey Kirk, let me call you back. Okay. Bye bye. That's the sister that cuts my hair and [inaudible 02:09:08] . Yeah, so she told me because I write her every now and then, cause I've told her how I got into it. Like I started out, first heard about the NCBS and then AHSA and NCBS, Abdul Alkalimat, he was at BU, had a combined conference. So I went there as NCBS and [inaudible 02:09:31] as AHSA, because at that time,

NCBS was at mostly big white campuses. They could afford to go to Ghana for a conference. Hell, I couldn't afford to go to Jamaica, you know?

William Dorsey:

Yeah, so I told her just kind of like how I got into it and some of the type of things I run into. And I wrote her this letter rather than try to ... And I'm not going to try to start on somebody, just give them something they can look at. So I got back in touch with her to see if she wanted to participate in this. And I told her a little bit more about something in that same vein. And she said, "I know I haven't told you this, but I appreciate your letter, cause I still look at it every now and then." Said, "Okay, that's the whole point." It's like in Ooh Poo Pah Doo. You ever heard that song?

Speaker 1:

Yes, yes.

William Dorsey:

"And I won't stop trying until I create a disturbance in your mind."

Speaker 1:

Yeah, yeah. And sometimes gentle is the way to do that. As you said, you don't have to strong-arm people.

William Dorsey:

Right, right. Meet them where they are and approach them. Understand, as best you can, how they are perceiving the world. And like in [inaudible 02:10:53] case, I knew that she couldn't abide having been played like that. And I can understand the strength of her reaction. But that's why I kind of knew ... That told me so much. Cause it took me a while to realize that a lot of the stuff I was getting was because it was actually positive about me, even though it felt negative on this end.

Speaker 1:

Yeah.

William Dorsey:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Important reframing. I'm reminded of, I think it was towards the end of the interview that you sent me, you quoted Sonia Sanchez. "It's important to remember, we are a bad people."

William Dorsey:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Yes, sir. Thank you.

William Dorsey:

I've always felt that. I felt ... You know [inaudible 02:11:48]? His mother is a Facebook friend of mine. And I posted one time about how I really love to watch Black people be people. And she wrote back too. She wrote back saying "Me too, except in Boston."

Speaker 1:

That's fair. Oh, that is funny. Well thank you so much, Mr. Dorsey, for your time. Is there anything else you'd like to leave us with? This is so rich, Voices From Our America is so appreciative of you all sharing your stories.

William Dorsey:

Yeah, I mean, I have a lot of things. I think I ... When we've jumped around, that's probably pretty much intuitive, the kind of stuff I would have anyway. You know? I can't think of ... there's nothing lingering, like "Oh, I need to mention this." So, I think I'm good.

Speaker 1:

Okay, just wanted to make sure. I thank you wholeheartedly for your time. Dr. Nwankwo thanks you as well. So I'll let you know once I get the transcript of our interview. I can share it with you if you'd like to have it, and also of course once the Zoom video is done.

William Dorsey:

Yeah, okay.

Speaker 1:

It'll just be a video of our conversation, but we would love for you to have it.

William Dorsey:

Yeah, yeah. Turner, James had been ... For the longest, he kept telling me I should do something autobiographical. And I finally saw what he was talking about. So that would be a good addition.

Speaker 1:

Okay. I agree with him. Thank you so much, sir. Enjoy the-

William Dorsey:

All right, you're welcome. I enjoyed it. Thank you for having me.

Speaker 1:

Very much. I hope to see you soon at one of the conference events for the legacy group.

William Dorsey:

Yeah, yeah. I'm moderating the one on August 10th, the Black agenda 21st, new Black agenda 2021, something like that. I don't know what title we finally settled on, but that's it. It's definitely "Black agenda" and some other words.

Speaker 1:

Okay. I'll put that in my calendar, August 10th.

William Dorsey:

Okay, but like I said, that would be every Tuesday. There's education for liberation, there's new Black studies, new Black poetry.

Speaker 1:

Wow.

William Dorsey:

The first session is kind of history of IBW. That would be important, cause Strickland expanded on a piece he wrote, Bill Strickland, and we got him. He's recorded reading that. And the last one would be tributes to those who have gone before, but in between will be specific topics.

Speaker 1:

Okay. Okay.

William Dorsey:

So the 29th is the kickoff.

Speaker 1:

Okay.

William Dorsey:

Yeah. And the 17th will be the tribute to the ancestors and in between.

Speaker 1:

Yeah.

William Dorsey:

Like I said, I'll make sure that if she doesn't send you one, I'll send you a copy.

Speaker 1:

Okay. That would be much appreciated, sir.

William Dorsey:

All right, all right.

Speaker 1:

Thank you so much.

William Dorsey:

You're welcome.

Speaker 1:
Have a wonderful day, and keep-

William Dorsey:
You too.

Speaker 1:
Thank you, goodbye.

William Dorsey:
All right. Bye-bye.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [02:15:15]