Transcript – Karona Mason, class of 1982

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Interviewer: Karona Mason
Interview Date: September 21, 2018
Interview Time:
Location: Pembroke Hall Seminar Room, Providence, Rhode Island
Length: 2 audio files; 41:62

Track 1

Mary Murphy: [00:00] OK, so good afternoon. My name is Mary Murphy, and I am the Nancy L. Buc Pembroke Center Archivist. It's September 21, 2018, and we are located in Pembroke Hall in the seminar room in Providence. I'm in the seminar room today with a member of the Brown University alumnae community who is back on campus for the All Class Black Alumni Reunion Weekend. And with that I will ask that you introduce yourself, and we'll get started.

Karona Mason: Well, my name is Dr. Karona Mason. I graduated in the class of '82. I was a biology major, and I came to Providence from Washington, D.C. at 18 years old.

MM: OK, so let's back up as we did in. If you can tell us a bit about your background, where you grew up, maybe a little bit more, and about what [00:01:00] drove your first thinking to think about Brown University as a place to go to school.

KM: So I grew up in Washington, D.C. At that time in the '70s for African Americans Washington, D.C. was like the place to be. It was like Harlem in New York in the '50s. I've always had black role models. The mayor at that time was African American. I did not know places that did not have an African American mayor. They were African American people. So my perspective – my father worked at Howard University. So my perspective was always one of self-assurance and being comfortable with myself and with everyone else. And so when I was looking – when I grew up my mother was saying, "Well, you're going to college, and you're going to Spellman." And so when I was in eighth grade –

MM: Can I raise my hand here and pause?

KM: Yes.

MM: Can you tell me about your parents? Did they attend college as well?

KM: So my parents did not attend college. My mother worked for the federal government and worked [00:02:00] her way up in a managerial position. My father actually was director of printing and reproduction for Howard University. He opened up their first print shop, and he was responsible for – they were printing their things outsourcing, and he was responsible for logo, just really kind of branding of the university, right, so it was a lot of history there. And they were free thinkers. My mother was very renaissance. Always worked but knew about Pucci dresses, designers. I mean, it was just a very eclectic lifestyle I had. We were around a lot of attorneys, doctors. My pediatrician was a black female.

I mean, it really was a world that was – at that time I didn't know it was a bubble. But it was a world that I was accustomed to, so I knew I was going to go to college because they told me – not necessarily because at the time I had the grades, it's just that I was going to go. At that time my mother thought that Spellman was a place where – that supported black females and where I could [00:03:00] aspire to be whatever I wanted to be. And those are the conversations we had around the table. You could be whatever you wanted to be.

Now my grandparents, my grandmother only had an eighth grade education, but even with that they were wise in terms of common sense, in terms of how to maneuver in life, how to save money, all those kinds of things. So I was very fortunate. At the table I had a vast array of conversations and thought processes. So it really shaped me and shaped my thinking. At that time, when I was in 11th grade – 10th grade, Brown was not on my mind. Beginning of 11th grade didn't even think about Brown. Spellman, Howard University, I would apply to Georgetown, but that wasn't my focus.

And then I met Dean Robinson, and there was a young lady who went to high school with me that knew about Brown. She applied to Brown, and she got in. And then Dean Robinson was at her home. I was at her home. We were eating. He said, "Hey, have you ever thought about Brown University?" And I said, "Morris Brown?" [00:04:00] There was an historical black

college called Morris Brown in Atlanta, and I was like – he goes, "No." And so I did my research. I went in and looked at the catalogues. They used to have a book of colleges, and I went in, and I said oh, OK, this is kind of, you know, this looks like it could be cool. So a friend of mine, she's like, 'It's a wonderful place. You're supported there." And I was getting very excited, so I applied.

I also applied to a couple of – I said, "Well, what's this Yale about? What's this Princeton about?" So I just started applying. I was fortunate in that I got into all the schools I applied, and then I went to visit. And visiting, I have to admit, I felt very much like, oh OK, it's not as much as, how can I say, intimidating as I thought it would be. I felt very comfortable there. There were a couple of other schools, I will not name them, that I did not feel as comfortable.

I remember I went to one college, I'm going to [00:05:00] name it, Smith, and when I was there, the first question I was asked of the students, what did my parents do? And I was like, my parents aren't coming here. I am. And so for me that really, that was like X on that. I went to Princeton, and it was a Friday night, and I was like, hey, you know, are you all partying, you know, socializing, what are you doing? They all, "Oh no, we – ." I said X on that. So then – because it's college, right.

MM: Yeah, you got to have a little fun.

KM: So then I came to Brown, and Friday night, you know, "Oh, we're going to go. Sorority's having a party." I was like, oh, really. OK, you get your work done and you hang out. I was like, bingo, bingo. That was – it struck to me.

And I thought the campus was pretty. I did not have to be up under my parents. From DC to Providence I thought it was a wide enough distance. I was – I was always adventuresome. You know, I was traveling. I was very young with my parents, so I wasn't intimidated, and Providence at that time was more like a town [00:06:00] than a city.

MM: Yes.

KM: So I was really comfortable here, and I just ended up here. My parents actually were a little concerned that I would be too militant and that they would kick me off campus. They were like, "Now look, when you go up there it's going to be a little different than DC. And so I need you to be adaptable, and I need you not to – you know, just get your work done." And when I got here I was like, oh no, it's fine.

And it was interesting, when my mother came up – and I pledged in a sorority here, Delta Sigma Theta. My mother came up for my step show, and my mother was amazed. And her comment was, "You guys act like this is your university." And I said, "It is." But she was like, "Interesting, you are really comfortable here." And that was, you know, interesting, a perception that they felt that I wouldn't be comfortable here. So it was a good fit for me.

And at that time we had 10 percent – 8 to 10 percent African Americans in each class. [00:07:00] So there was definitely a community. We had the Third World Center. We had Brother Ah. We had Perry Ashley as the dean of the college. You had Levi Adams. And that was, you know, pre-med Levi Adams. At the medical school we had financial aid. I mean, there were people strategically that I'm sure looked out for the entire college, but we also felt as though we had people that looked out for us. And you know, not wanting anything extra, just wanting to make sure that we were not forgotten, and at that time the university had that in place. I think Howard Swearer did a great job of really trying to make this the people's Ivy. That used to be what they called Brown. It was the people's Ivy.

The very first punk rocker from England I met on Brown's campus. And that was, I forgot her name. It was 1979, and she had green hair and spiked green hair. There was a Vietnam vet that rolled his motorcycle, and he had a long beard. I mean, at that time there were people on this campus. I was like, wow, what – [00:08:00] and you know, he said, "Yeah, I'm a freshman at Brown." I was like, oh, OK. So there were – it was really, I mean, there were African Americans from Bed-Stuyvesant in New York. There were African Americans that went to Sidwell Friends from Washington DC.

I mean, it was an array of intellectuals who chose to be here at this present time. And so it was an enrichment. Walter Mondale's son Billy Mondale, I mean, we were – you know, we all kind of hung out and learned from each other. We then would go back to our respective groups to check in, but during the week we all kind of checked in with our friends. I had friends in like three different groups. Dinner time I checked back with the black community, checked in. "How

you all doing," whatever, and then I would go, and that was kind of like everybody's experience is some people hung out with their roommates depending on what their interests were. You know, the basketball players formed a community, but we formed a community with our interest, but we also formed a community with each other for support.

And I think, [00:09:00] when I talk to my friends that did go to Howard and whatever, I mean, I do believe, especially in the sciences they got great education, and they also obviously had a sense of community and people pouring into them, but I really did not feel as though I did not have that at Brown. Now my friends that went to Princeton, my friends that went to Yale at the time, very different. Yale had issues with swastikas on I mean, Yale had some issues during that time. And we did not, and even when we got here, Boston was an hour away. I remember for admissions they were telling us, you know, "Third World Weekend when you go to Boston bring your Brown ID. They may not be as protective of you there. You need to let them know, you know, who you belong to," basically, and it was very comforting. It was real, but they let us know that we were there for them. So I mean, it was a good place for me.

MM: Do you remember going out on those trips to Boston?

KM: Yeah, we went to Boston.

MM: And how did that –

KM: Stopped at BU. Because we had friends there we never had any problems there [00:10:00] at all. We never really did. I never encountered any, but it just made me aware. It just made me very aware. You know, walk straight and narrow. I was never in any neighborhoods – I was always on Commonwealth Avenue for the most – I just stayed on Commonwealth, and that seemed to work. You know, that was great, but anyway, you know, in the Providence area never felt anything. We would go off campus. A lot of people lived off campus, very much – a lot of the Brown students were a part of the community, would do things in the community. So even – you know, Brown still, out of the, you know, Johnson and Wales, Bryant, Providence College, Brown is still a center of community trust.

2012, 2013, we've been hearing a little different, and when I made the comment to the young man, just a little concerned about what the community is now for them. There were a couple of kids I sent here. They got in, and they didn't go. [00:11:00] They end up going to Yale, and there's been a turnaround in Yale's culture. A community is built there. Very interesting, we have a couple of – my colleagues, alumnus here whose kids are at Yale now and opted not to come to Brown. And they did not feel that same sense of community that we felt, and I'm, you know, I'm going to do a little more investigating on that in terms of what –

MM: Was there a flashpoint? That you're coming – you don't have to discuss, but –

KM: Right, I think there is. And I get it, but I think there is, yeah. You know, parties for colleges shift, and I think sometimes in a world you may lose what made us great, and some people said, well, we need to be as good as. We need to be as good as Harvard. We need to be as good as Yale. But Brown had – what was interesting about Brown, they had a special place because they had a niche. And like I said, calling it the people's Ivy was more so the niche. You had to have the academics to get [00:12:00] in, but you could be whoever you wanted to be to be here. And I'm not quite sure if that messaging is still the message.

You know, so we're, you know, we're here. There's buzz words. We want to talk to students. You know, we have very – the diversity is what makes, I think, any university special, even academic thought processes being different makes a university special. You don't have to agree to think the same way, but you need to make sure that people are thinking and people feel as though they are being heard and that everything is important. And this was always a safe place for that. And I'm just wondering, and I have to make sure that as we're here that we are – you know, we're wondering. We just want to make sure that the thing that made it special for us, having this alumni reunion with 600 people plus registering means that everyone had these good feelings. [00:13:00] After the walk out and even with – and the academic integrity was still intact. And you know, we are a force in the community, meaning the international community. We want to attract those same types of students from all over.

And you know, I'm not – I'm a little concerned. And I will do some investigating these three days that I'm here just to see, you know, what can we do? I mean, you can't put everything on the administration all the – you know, you really can't. You can let your needs be known, but

in terms of rallying folks to make sure that the students that are here are feeling the same thing we felt is very important to me, very important.

MM: Yes, this weekend is a primetime opportunity.

KM: Very much so.

MM: To begin a conversation.

KM: To begin a conversation and just, you know, where do we go from here, and when you're, you know, when you're sending me, when you're asking me, you know, to give money; I need you to do this. I need you to do that, you know, yeah, and in return I need you to check on this. I need to do a check on these students that I bring, and [00:14:00] I think too because of the climate of the world right now, you know, you want your kids to be safe.

MM: Yes, yes.

KM: That's all. You just want them to be safe. It's not going to be perfect, and everyone's not going to like that, but at least, I need to know that you're going to be safe and you're going to be respected. And that's all. I mean, anything else, a disagreement on how you get there is totally OK with me, totally OK.

MM: So let me take this conversation to more of your personal experiences when you were here. So let's talk about some high moments, and we can talk about some low moments if you want too as well, if you have them, snap shots.

KM: Yeah, high moments, I believe really was the sense of community here and the fact that I could basically be a part of several organizations, several groups of people.

MM: And what were some of those organizations?

KM: So I was a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority, which is over 100 years old. There are seven black Greek organizations, and [00:15:00] at that time Brown had all of them on campus. So I was a member of that, and community service is a big thing for us, and so that allowed me to get into the community. Organization United African People, that was something I was in, and more so just making sure that I knew what was going on on campus with everyone. I mean, I remember the Third World Center, and it was always a place in between, places where you can stop in, do a check in, find out what was going on, rights and reasons. Things that you felt were important to you you could find out about. So that was a high.

And then you know, I guess graduation too, you know, that I accomplished that I went to college. Those are things I remember, bringing my grandparents here who, you know, only went up to eighth grade, and my grandmother was in love with the Kennedy family, so I had her stay in Littlefield because that's where John John stayed. But that was a high moment for me, for her [00:16:00] to be able to say, "Look at my daughter there." You know, we're all the same, and so that was important to me, so that was a high for me.

Another high moment was watching – I remember my freshman year when I was in Littlefield my counselor was – family was from Israel, and her roommate was Lebanese, and during that time when it was the war they lived – they were roommates. And watching them being able to watch on television what was going on over there and still remain friends and having conversations, and for me at 18 years old that was a teaching moment. I was like, wow, I mean, this is really diversity at its best. This is really being able to be different, but understanding and being respectful when something happened to someone in the Lebanese community and when something happened to someone in the Jewish community and for both of them to have the empathy for each other. So that was really, my freshman year that was something that was [00:17:00] like, wow, you know.

MM: Do you remember other moments of the world coming in, the moments that were happening in the nation?

KM: Yeah, well the Divesture of having, you know, of having that protest with South Africa and wanting Brown not to really support that regime, you know, protesting, talking about that, that was important to me, and it was something that made me feel as though my voice counted. So

that was definitely something that I felt. I mean, Brown also had a way of cocooning us, and you know, we were here to study and to learn. And so I think it was a healthy balance. You could be as involved as you wanted, but there was a vehicle for you to be able to do your work and be a part of what was needed in terms of your voice being heard. So during my era that was the big thing in terms of what was going on in South Africa and you know, where money was being sent to support that regime. [00:18:00] So that was a big deal for us, but for the most part, I mean, just relationships on campus.

I mean, just things that were going on day to day also we would discuss, and we would have long late night conversations about – I mean, I remember talking to – we would talk to a group of students from a political standpoint as, you know, the whole, do you support people who are in need, and does taxpayers money support those in need? And me really trying to convey, you know, you have to take care of those in order to raise them up, and I remember those conversations, and even though someone may have a different opinion, it was still educational. We were still learning from one another, and we would have these conversations and go back and think about it, and then come back and have these conversations and then go back and think about it. So it really kind of helped shape us.

MM: Do you remember where you were when you were having these conversations, in the quad, in your dorm?

KM: In the dorm room.

MM: And which dorm were you in? Do you have any memory of that?

KM: I don't know. And it wasn't my room, but it was a dorm. Yeah, so I don't remember. [00:19:00] It was a dorm room, and we would just have these conversations, and Sarah Doyle, Center I definitely remember. I used to work there.

MM: Oh, OK.

KM: Yeah, work study, and I used to work there. And I remember being a part of some of their programs, and I do remember too when we used to have the pre-med fair, and we would have it every year, and representatives from the medical schools would come in and try to recruit. And students put that on. And I remember the Sarah Doyle Center being a part of that, letting us use their facility for that. But the Sarah Doyle Center too, a lot of conversations going on there as well.

MM: Talk to me a little bit more. What was your first connection to the Sarah Doyle? Was it for the pre-med fair?

KM: You know it was work study. No, it was work study, and I was looking for a place to work, and you know, I worked at the library my freshman year, and I was like, I don't want to go there, do that anymore. And then they had an opening, and I just say – I looked at what they were about, and I was like, OK. I'm a woman, and you know, they seem very [00:20:00] progressive, so I can work there. I wasn't answering the phones. Working on something, projects and some job description. I had to interview, and I got the job, and I worked there for a year and a half.

MM: Oh OK.

KM: Yeah.

MM: So tell me a little bit about your academics. Yeah, if you have strong memories of that part of it.

KM: So you know, again, with the community I got a lot of support from, you know, a lot of pre-meds at Brown. You know, we would do group studying. I got a lot of support, but I will say, from time to time when I would maybe struggle with chemistry or something of that nature I would go to the professor. I found that, you know, as opposed to hearing, "Look, let's figure out what you're doing wrong," it was like, "Well, maybe you shouldn't be pre-med." You know, "Maybe you should get your PhD. Maybe you should – " And I'm like well that, no, no. It's just a bump in the road. I did find that.

However, [00:21:00] we did have Levi Adams. And Levi would talk to us and push us and really said, "Hey, you know, nobody else is – you need to do what you need to do," but he would be there to hear what our concerns were. And sometimes I'm sure he would kind of check stuff out, you know. Like, "What's really going on? These are the complaints I'm hearing." You know, grown up stuff he would do, but he was extremely helpful of keeping all of us on the path and making sure that we did not falter and that we met our dreams.

MM: How many women at the time, do you remember, being –

KM: There was a lot of us.

MM: A lot of women.

KM: – that were pre-med. Yeah, oh yeah, I mean, so oh my god. I mean, throughout the classes in terms of the people that were in front of me, the people that were behind me, I'm saying at least 10, 15, and I [00:22:00] mean, we're here now, and I use them as referrals. And you know, I just talked to some woman that I want my mother to be able to make an appointment to see her. And I call – we're definitely calling each other –

MM: Remain connected.

KM: Remain connected, and again it was because of that sense of community. And then all of a sudden it started dropping off. But definitely in the '80s, large push of female STEMs, computer programming, two that I know of, one is deceased.

But definitely strong STEMs, and I think some of that was due to the push in STEMs in African American communities started in the '70s, that was federal government money coming in with these Explore programs and programs that would just introduce you to it, and then in the engineering, strong numbers in the '80s, and then I don't know what happened after that. I think it kind of tapered off. [00:23:00] But there was definitely support there. Not saying it was a struggle and not saying they didn't feel as though they were all really "I can do this too," but it was visible, you know. You could see them. Oh, you majored in engineering. It wasn't as like

really – it's like, yeah, OK, you know. I think because of the numbers. If we didn't get as much support as we could have gotten from faculty we definitely got it from each other.

MM: That's fascinating. That's fascinating. So on the flip side, your time at Brown, is it is in the early '80s, which is late '70s, early '80s, and that's an interesting time in the country. But let's do talk about things that maybe were more difficult for you on campus if you are comfortable sharing.

KM: You know, and I have to be honest, I mean, truly [00:24:00] I think because of my solid foundation coming here I witnessed people having some difficulties more so than myself. I mean just, you know, you're at college, and just you know, you're trying to balance your dating and your school work. I mean, that kind of stuff but nothing in terms of the university's effect on me I would say that was really considered difficulties. I mean, again, we just had people in the right place. We had support systems. We had outlets. So I really, I mean –

MM: There are things that I often like to ask when I'm doing these – not like to, but, of course like women on campus, there are always issues, or we live with sexual harassment and assault as part of our lives. So if there were moments on campus where that was an issue either politically or [00:25:00] culturally at the time, or tell me about that.

KM: Yeah, sexual assault, no, I mean, in terms of for what I heard, what I knew of. I mean there was one incident I remember when, you know, there was a little hostility going on in terms of fraternities on the, you know, and then being vocal and whatever. And but it was discussed. You cannot do that anymore, and it never happened again. So again it was because of, I believe, the numbers of underrepresented minorities we had and because of the community thought process, even, you know, that you have to respect us. We're here, and you have to respect us.

So for us and for me in particular, and again, I really do think this has to do with how I was raised, and my senses were pretty keen at that time, you know, kind of staying away from any situation that did not smell right to me or [00:26:00] having my back, somebody always having my back. And I felt that way about the men in the community, you know, the African American men in terms of African American women. I really felt like they had our back, and so

it was like then another layer of bubble around us. So for me, that may not be everyone's story, and everyone doesn't like to share those things. But that just wasn't my story. I was very fortunate with that. Aware of, heard of, but you know, the things that are coming out now, I'm like going, OK, I missed that. You know, some things you just miss. Doesn't mean it couldn't happen to you, but I always say by the grace of god it did not, and that's just grace, but I don't think that it did not happen. It's just that I missed it. Just didn't –

MM: And in the early '80s were you feeling women's movement on campus? Did you identify with a feminism, [00:27:00] a type of feminism? Did you feel –

KM: Well I'll tell you. For me, being an African American female and coming from a household where my mother always worked, where my mother had voice, I have to tell you, for me that was not something that – I was like, OK. What's new? I mean, it was not anything to me that – I was like, OK. For me the race thing was much more something I paid attention to as – than anything else. So no.

Track 2

MM: So here we go again. So OK, so pausing as we put the topic of feminism, women's movements and, or the relationship, and or the relationship to race, really race relations on campus, let's move forward to as you come toward the end of your time at Brown. So bring me there. Bring me to your senior year and what's that like and what happens next.

KM: So senior year was, you know, interesting because everyone's trying to get into professional school. Everyone's kind of realizing, oh, there's a life that has to occur after you leave the safe cocoon, and how do we prepare? I do believe that at that time, you know, it got a little bit more intense for everybody, I mean, every graduating senior at Brown university because the '80s, that [00:01:00] '82, '83 stuff was shifting then. And so jobs, the economy, stuff was shifting, and fortunately for me I kind of new myself, and I said, you know, am I really ready to do professional school? What's going on for me? And so I came back home, and I did a post back year to increase my science GPA at Harvard University. And so I was there for a year and really

got to kind of see that life for a year, and I got to do a true comparing and contrast. But really just kind of saying, OK, you know –

MM: That's fascinating. So what did you – what were your take-aways?

KM: Yeah, so definitely I found that the professors had much more of a – they had more skin in the game. So if you, you know, if you did not score a grade that they [00:02:00] thought you were capable of scoring you would get a like, "Hey, what are you – how are you – what are you doing?" And you didn't even know that, you know, like, "Me? You talking to me?" And so they had a lot of skin in the game with their students under the pressure of making sure that when they graduated they could get into graduate school and they would be looked upon as as bright as anyone else. So I just felt like they had a lot of skin in the game.

I also felt – I mean, socially it was social, you know, it was great. It was kind of also nice seeing the intellectuals and they all look like you. So anything you might have, any perceptions you might have had were totally shot because you're running into people that, you know, their engineering department, dah-dah-dah, just like at Brown, who were intellectually ready and also may have a social side to them as well. So that was, you know, it was enriching and you know very proud moments. For me with my sorority I was also able to connect with [00:03:00] soros from another chapter or Alpha chapter, first chapter, and so knowing that, you know, that bridge was being crossed for me was a really nice experience to kind of that balance. And so, OK, I've done this, and I've also done that.

And feeling as though I can speak on certain things because I experience them, not just because I think or I heard. Any misconceptions about my experience at Brown University I could say, "No, you know, Ivy Leagues are cool, you know, we got our work done. Dah, dah, dah." I had support. And I can only speak for Brown, but that was really a good time for me to kind of get my head together and decide what I'm going to do and use everything that I was taught here to go out in the world. And part of it was feeling empowered to speak. I have to say, that part of me has never been stifled, even here. At Brown it hasn't. At work it hasn't. I'm just still speaking, what I believe is my truth. But with that [00:04:00] you hear too people respond about things that I never thought about. I said, OK, and I put that in my brain, and you know, so OK, let's all move a topic forward. So Brown was really a good place for me to learn the other piece

of it, hearing it, incorporating it, and moving the whole group forward as opposed to just one group or leaving the group behind.

MM: Where did you go next?

KM: So then after that I end up getting my master's in hospital administration at Central Michigan University, and then I ended up going to Temple College of Podiatric Medicine and doing a residency program of podiatric surgery and practicing in Texas in private practice. And then I moved to Chicago and worked for – I worked at the County facility hospital clinic, and then I [00:05:00] also worked at Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine, and now I'm an associate dean of clinical experiences at the college. I practice one and a half days a week, and married, raised my kid, my daughter. I have a 14-year-old, and I'm kind of at a phase now where I'm like there's something that's going to be next before I finish.

I want another tenure at academic medicine I like, academia. I'm surprised that I like it like I do, curriculum, policy, strategic planning, all that stuff I end up liking. When I was in school that's what I never thought, you know, that I would have an interest in, but policy shaping and using my experience to say, you know, this could make an experience better. Looking at society and what society needs, understanding that it's important to keep track of both, not necessarily that you got to throw out something because society has changed, but you may have to incorporate things. [00:06:00] I don't necessarily think the things in the past are over. You know, a lot of times I hear people say, "Oh, with these younger students you need to do things differently." I say, "No, you can do some of the same things. You just may need to add something." But if it worked for me why wouldn't it work for them? Certain things you just may have to add more technology, but there are basic principles that are basic principles no matter what, no matter the era. It doesn't matter. They're basic principles.

MM: As you meet and you work with young women in medicine, do you think that they face a steep climb today? It sounds like you felt you had a lot of support.

KM: It's almost like full circle. I think, you know, my support, now my support in podiatry is a little different. Not a lot of women, not a lot of underrepresented minorities at the time. So

opposite of my Brown experience. So I think for – it depends on where they go to medical school. It depends on where they [00:07:00] train. There's still places in major cities that, say for example if you want to do orthopedic surgery, you just don't have those numbers, and you don't have that support, and they have to support each other. I mean, it really varies now, and so it really depends, and I think it's come full circle. I really think it's come full circle. I think there are more barriers there that got put back in. And not just this year. I think it was built in. I think it's just now more obvious. I think before it was more micro aggression type of things and now it's just blatant.

MM: I feel like across the country you can –

KM: Yeah, you can feel it, and so you know preparing your kids differently and being very honest and open about, you know, it doesn't mean you can't. It's just that, you know, the barriers are different. You have to just be aware of it and not get frustrated by it. Just find a way to get around it. That's the history we have. That's our history. From the beginning of time we just [00:08:00] had to find a way to get around it, but you got to have the drive. You got to have the patience. You got to have the tenacity to not succumb to the negative stuff and just, you know, do what you do and then not get bitter about it either, you know, because you got to enjoy your journey. Not matter how hard it is you got to find some joy in it. You really have to because I would say for anything that I felt was not working for me, I have to admit, finding joy in it and keeping moving, when I went through the other side I was like, yeah, it was a piece of cake.

But maybe that's why Brown – I don't really feel anything that was like, "Oh, this is so – " I don't feel that because I just always try – whatever setback I might have thought I had, I just said, OK. And I sat in. I enjoyed, learned something different and used it for the betterment of myself, which in turn will be better for someone else because I can share that testimony to someone else and say, "No, you can do it. Don't worry about it. I had the same issue, and it's fine. Look at me now." So that's all, but again, I really do believe it has a lot to do with how I was raised. [00:09:00] I really think so. I think if I did not have the parents I had, if I wasn't raised in Washington DC some of the things would have really maybe been more of a stumbling block for me.

MM: We have just five minutes left. Final thoughts that you'd like to share or things that are on your mind today as you think about legacy? Anything you'd like to share that you want our research to be able to know?

KM: Yeah, in terms of legacy I really hope that in trying to keep up with academic rigor and really you know, progressing, because every place has to progress, that the foundation of what made us a university as it relates to, I'll call this, you know, the people's Ivy, I'm hoping that that stays. And I'm hoping that administration understands how important it is and finding [00:10:00] your niche. That's a nice niche. And it's enriching, and it really kind of represents the United States from that perspective, and so staying the course of that and being comfortable with that and not trying to be something else.

I just hope that – I mean, that legacy speaks for itself if you look at the past. I really think it does in terms of why we're here, why the application, the amount of students applying keeps going up. Not just because they can get the money. I mean, I'm sure that helps too, but I mean, because this is a place where I think people felt that they could be free thinkers and where they can – you know, not just because it was in the core curriculum, but you can be a free thinker here. It was acceptable. So I'm hoping that –

MM: What could Brown do? What do you think that they need to really keep doing or do more of?

KM: I really think they need to widen their net. I think they really need to. When you talk about first generation college, that's socioeconomic. Let's talk about thought processes. Let's [00:11:00] think about someone who thinks differently, someone who has done different things, some – you know, really kind of going back to grass roots thought process, and I, you know, I think for administration purpose, I don't know. It just, I mean, it just seems they've been pretty flat lately, just business as usual. I don't want us to be business as usual. Keep getting our hands dirty. Keep looking at like, you know, with first generation college students with immigrants, fine, but I want to make sure it's not just being said. You know, you're doing it. Here, we did it. We're done. We did it, but now what are you going to do for those students that are here to make them go out and do the same thing that you did for them? What are you going to do to enrich

their lives? What are you going to do to you know, include whatever they know to get them here to be that strong to get in? How can you include that into their environment so that we all are breathing the same air? [00:12:00]

So I don't know how they're going to do it. I mean, I would love to have a conversation with the president. I would just love it. I mean, you know, seriously, say, let's brain storm and including alumni in that brainstorm, different alumni. Not just because you gave money – but just to broaden the net and have the think tank think about – even some type of think tank and not just board members but a think tank of what we can do at – what are some of our issues, and what can we do to help bring us back to where I think we were 30 years ago?

MM: You think that they could do that?

KM: If they wanted to.

MM: We have the Pembroke Associates Council, right, it's like Friends of the Pembroke, and we sit in this room three times a year, and it is a free space. I mean, I have to attend them for my job, and like that is kind of a space, and you think that maybe Brown would try that using maybe this reunion [00:13:00] as a launch point to build a community.

KM: It would be nice, and what my fear is is that I don't want to go away and have all this and business as usual Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday morning is what my concern is. So you know, you need certain people to do things and to have things done, but I think you also need to have those that shake the tree a little, just a little. I mean, you can shake the tree. Now, when I shake the tree and you ask me to do something I need to do it. I can't just shake the tree and leave either. So I understand that, so once I shake the tree I need to say, OK, you shake the tree. This is what you can do for me. OK. You shake the tree this is what you're going to do for me. OK. You know, a constant pouring in and pouring out would be great. And actually as you get older it keeps you connected in doing so. I mean, as much as my daughter's mad at me right now. Later on [00:14:00] I think she'll be happy I (inaudible).

MM: That's right. So I'm going to end the conversation here.

KM: Thank you.

MM: Thank you so much for joining us today and for taking an hour out of a very busy weekend to sit with me and the Brown Women Speak Oral History Project. Thank you.

KM: Oh, you're welcome.

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