

Transcript – Paula Robinson, class of 1999

Narrator: Paula Robinson

Interviewer: Amanda Knox, Pembroke Center Assistant Archivist

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Amanda Knox: Good morning. My name is Amanda Knox. I am the Assistant Archivist here at the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women at Brown University. It is about 10 am eastern time here on April 19, 2024, and I am here with another interviewee who has signed up to participate with us in honor of her 25th reunion year coming up. Paula, would you like to introduce yourself?

Paula Robinson: Hi. My name is Paula Robinson. I initially came in as class of '97. I ended up graduating class of '98.5 and walking class of '99, so they deem me as class of '99. And I, I lived primarily on Pembroke my whole time there, in Andrews dormitory, and except for one year, I was on, in Harambee House. Is there anything else you'd like me to add there?

AK: No, that's a great place to start. I guess if it's okay with you, I first like to ask a little bit about [1:00] kind of your childhood, maybe early education, and how you came to find Brown.

PR: Okay. So I'm not born in America. I was born in Jamaica, and for, until about 11 years old I was there in school, and then I came to America, living in New York City, in Queens and Brooklyn, and I went to public school there. I did all my public schooling in Queens. And it was in high school, I was a senior, and you know college, well, back when I was young, college applications, those little brochures came to your house. I was a good student. I was top of the class in high school, so all this stuff kept coming in in envelopes, and I didn't know what to do, because I'm a first generation college student, too. So I came home one day from basketball practice and this big package from Brown with the brochure and all this information was on my my, my mom's bed, and she's like, "This came for you." And I'm like, [2:00] Brown University? I don't, what's Brown University? I had no idea, because in my mind growing up Harvard, Princeton, and Yale were the only ivy leagues right? So I didn't know there were eight. And I

kept asking family members, I said, “Have you ever heard of Brown University?” They're like, “Yeah, yeah, yeah.” But what they were confusing it with was Moses, Moses, not Moses – Morris Brown, Morris Brown, the HBCU [historically Black colleges and universities]. So they're like, “Yeah, it's a great place.” Blah blah blah. And I read the package, the pamphlet. That was in 1992 when it came actually, junior year, like end of junior, summerish, beginning of senior year. And I looked at it and I was like, okay. And then I took it to my guidance counselor at school and she's like, “Yeah, that's a really good university. It's an Ivy League.” I was like, “No, it's not.” And she's like, “Yes, it is.” I was like, “Okay, I want to learn more.” And then I just really read the brochure. It felt like my heart kind of sang a little bit. It looked like an ideal place.

I knew [3:00] I wasn't going to stay in New York City. I knew that it's not somewhere I wanted to go to school. And I was invited to what was then called Third World Weekend. And I went to campus, and it was just like, this is where I belong. You know it was, it felt like home, and I felt very comfortable, and it was very welcoming. And, and, and that's pretty much how I learned about it. And when I went on that trip I asked a lot of the students that I interacted with, “What's it like here,” you know? And then I learned about all the different things, and the campus was just great, and I was like, I don't ever want to go back home, you know. And then I went home, and I told my mom, “This is where I want to go.” And that's where the journey started.

AK: So was Third World Weekend kind of like an accepted students day for students of color or was it, was that similar to the Third World Transition Program?

PR: It's different from TWTP. [4:00]

AK: Okay.

PR: TWTP is the accepted students. Third World Weekend I believe it's, it used to coincide with A Day on College Hill, but now they don't have that. Then it was Black, something, Black, I forget. They changed the name to some Black something something, and then I believe they no longer offer that Third World Weekend. Right? So, but it's like A Day on College Hill, where

everyone came on campus that were interested in looking at the school and stuff like that. So that's what that was.

AK: That's so interesting.

PR: Remember, this is the early '90s.

AK: Right. Right. So that's where I'm kind of processing. So like, what were your next steps? Do you remember anything about you know, you've officially chosen to go to Brown, like the application or interview process, or getting the acceptance letter? Do you have any of those memories?

PR: Well, after I came home I filled out the the paperwork, [5:00] and you know they gave you the, do you want early decision or early acceptance? And I, of course, went to my guidance counselor, and she was talking me through it. And I said, which one is it? Early decision is the one I chose, and, and I felt very at peace with it. The application process wasn't so bad, you know. I was a student, so it was like you're filling out paperwork. So it's like it wasn't that bad. And I asked people in my circle which, what to do because they've gone to college, you know they know more than my my family did. And then I got the interview. I was nervous. I was nervous. Because actually I was interviewed in New York City at, an alumni interviewed me. There were two women who were from the same class. They were older women, older white women so, and they lived in the Tony part of Manhattan. So it's like, how do you dress for this? And you know, what do I say, and what are they going to ask me? So all these questions [6:00] came in. I felt like a fish out of water because one, I've never had practice before, and I was going to the rich part of New York that I've never entered before, in a building that's like security guards and everything in front, and then being buzzed up, and then sitting in a room waiting for these two women to show up, and just the anxiety built. But you know, after my interview it was kind of, I was, I was nervous throughout the whole thing. And after the interview I was like, I am not getting into Brown. You know what I mean, and but you know we talked about my, my schooling and, and what I'd been doing in my life, because I played basketball, did volunteer work, I was valedictorian, you know. I was on that track. And and I wanted to be a brain

surgeon, believe it or not. So all these things we talked about. They talked about my childhood and ask questions, and I guess the interview went very well, because then I got, by December, by December I think, December/ January, I got my acceptance letter, and that was like whoa! [7:00] Because, you know, they tell us if the letter is big, or if the letter is small, it tells you what it is. So I was nervous, and you know, they said it was coming in December, so I just went to school, tried to put it out of my mind, but my counsellor, guidance counsellor, was like, “Did you get the letter? Did you get the letter?” I’m like, “I haven’t gotten the letter yet. Leave me alone,” you know. And then it came, and I was so scared to open it. I asked my mom to open it. And then she smiled. I was like, okay, I could look at it now. And it was just a great feeling to know that I got in. And and it’s not be, I, I literally didn’t know that much about it, you know. I just knew I felt comfortable there, and it didn’t matter to me that it was Ivy League. When I told people I got into Brown University it was like, “Oh, my gosh! Do you know?” I was like, “What it’s, you know, it’s a school. It’s a school.” And I, and I didn’t come to really understand what that meant until I got there, until I furthered my education while I was there. But yeah, it was very exhilarating. And it was like a weight was off my shoulders, because for the [8:00] rest of the high school year I was like, I’m in college. I’m just going to finish my class work, you know, I still stayed on track because I’m one of those people.

And then I, when we got, when I got the acceptance we had, they had – accepted students came on campus and I toured the financial aid places, you know the usual, the high ticket items on campus, and got to meet a lot more people, and I still felt comfortable. So I was like, very happy with my decision.

AK: That’s amazing. Do you, what are some of your earliest memories of your time on campus? Do you remember, like –

PR: Oh my goodness.

AK: Move in day? Just, yeah, tell me about that, those first moments.

PR: Well, my basketball coach drove me up from New York very early in the morning, because, mind you, I never knew – Rhode Island? What’s Rhode Island? You know, it’s like, never,

because I never went past New York, or even into Connecticut. So it was great. He drove me in.
[9:00] It was in August, and drove me right to the parking area right behind, I believe is it, it was marbel gym, it was an old marble gym. I forget the new name of it.

AK: Is it the Smith-Buonano building?

PR: Now it's that. That's what it's called, now.

AK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

PR: It wasn't called that before.

AK: Right.

PR: The, the actual marble gym was, you could still see the gym in the bottom floor, and there was a parking area right back there near Andrews, and there was a group of kids there, "Welcome!" And you know it was just such a festive atmosphere, and I was excited and nervous at the same time, because this is the first time I'd been away from home for any extensive period of time. Like, this is life changing. All my little belongings coming with me, and you know, and my basketball coach dropped me off, and they just welcomed me, and they said, "Oh, what room are you in?" And they took me to my room, and they just made me feel so welcome. I was like, Okay, this is going to be fine. And then when we did, [10:00] that was when I arrived for TWTP and everything was happening in Andrews that year, which was great because I lived in Andrews, you know. And just that whole experience, meeting all the students from all over the world, from all walks of life, and just being with them for that time before everyone else got on campus, that was amazing beause you formed friendships, you figured out things you liked, things you didn't like. I learned a lot about the history, but that history was primarily focused on the Black and brown experience at Brown, you know. So I learned a lot about the walkouts, and and you know, it was just like amazing. There were talent shows. It was like, it was so great. And then we got to tour the campus, you know, and things like that, and some of the people in the, in the class of '95, they were pretty much the mainstays of that program, and so they gave us a lot

of the history and what their work that they were doing, and their fight for having Harambee House [11:00] become a real entity on campus, and it was just, I'm getting goosebumps right now. And then we, we met some of the professors and that just hearing them talk and just talking about their experience at Brown, and of course the students themselves talked about it. So it was just, that right there was like, okay, this is amazing, you know. And it was, it was great. That was the most, when I felt the most like, okay, yes, this is definitely where I belong. And then it hit me kind of like this is, my life is going to change a little bit, you know? It, it kind of really resonated. My life is going to change. It's no longer, I'm not just going to be Paula from New York City, Brooklyn, in the ghetto. You know, I'm going be able to learn. And my thing is learning. I love to learn, and there was so many opportunities to do that. That's, that early, that most pivotal moment for me. [12:00] Yeah.

AK: So this would have been '93. Is that correct?

PR: Yes.

AK: Okay. And when you came in, what, I mean what did you end up concentrating in and what if, if that changed at all, what were kind of the concentrations you explored?

PR: Oh, it totally changed. When I came in I was going to be a brain surgeon, so I was. I was pre-med and I was focused on neuroscience. And so, you know, I don't have any guidance, so of course, I sign up for classes right? Not knowing that, don't sign up for 100 level classes as a freshman, you know. And so it's like, when I signed up for classes I took a mixture because I liked, I like all subjects. So I took English, I took my my pre-med courses, I took bio, and I was like, Oh, my gosh! There are a lot of people in this room. I took neuro-one and it was like, there's a lot of people in this room! And it sounded, you know, it was kind of overwhelming at first, and then my freshman [13:00] year I kind of, I stayed on that track for a little bit, but then some family circumstances, and I had to take, I, I had to leave because I, I started failing classes, and I'd never failed a class before in my life so I kind of had a nervous breakdown and because it was, it just didn't resonate for me. I was like, I don't understand why I'm failing, you know, but that's because I just didn't know, I didn't choose my classes wisely, because I didn't know coming

in, no one's ever told me. And I wasn't sure yet, like I learned later that oh, you have an advisor, you know I, because I'm so used to doing it by myself I didn't think, oh, do I have an advisor, you know? And if the advisor was introduced, I completely forgot about them. And so after I took a year off, I reapplied to get back in, because that's the process. You have to write this whole thing to get accepted again. At least that was my understanding of it. So I was there '93, [14:00] I had, I came back, I came back '96, that I remember. I came back '96, but it was only like one year that I wasn't there, and when I came back I was still on that pre-med track. But then I was like, okay, I had a better understanding of when to, what classes to choose. So I was still taking neuro, I took cog-sci – it was cog-sci 129: The Human Brain, and Computers and the Human Brain. And that class, I was like, okay, maybe I cannot do this because this computer stuff is bothering me. But I stuck it out and I took neuro, up to, up, I took neuro up to neuro 92 at that time. I don't know what it's called now. And, but I was still taking my English classes and my other classes that were, I took sign language, I took every, yes, I took Spanish, I took, I took a mixture of classes which made it easier for, more palatable for me.

And I had to work. So I was on work study. I worked in, [15:00] I worked in the Ratty, I worked in the VW. My favorite job was working at the Gate, at the time. They no longer have the Gate, which is, that broke my heart when I came back to campus, because that was the place, that, that's a second pivotal, that's that, that huge part of my experience because me and my friends, we'd all gather there. I was interested in the basketball, so I was doing basketball stuff and all, you know, at the end of the day you come in, The Simpsons was always on that TV so you had to rush to get there. It had pinball machines. It had all kinds of stuff, sofas just to hang out. And I worked there pretty much throughout the end of my time at Brown. I was a supervisor eventually. And it's like, it was just, we had these great conversations, you know, like actual intellectual conversations that you'd never dream would happen. Well, it would never have happened if I'd stayed in New York. So I was able to expand my mind that way.

And then after talking with different people and then [16:00] I was like, okay, you know what, I love English and literature so, and I because I was, I love British literature because in Jamaica we were being taught, you know, that, the British system was what we used, and I just love that. And I started focusing on that more. And then I switched my major to English and American literature. Yep, I took Middle English, I took Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* in Middle English, which was interesting. It's like learning a new language right? And one of my

professors, Professor Dr. Rhoda Flaxman. She was head of the Writing Center at the time she really poured into me. And it was just great, that relationship. And then I found key teachers that kind of helped me along the way and gave you the push and the support that I needed. And in just being, having the opportunity to just study whatever you know. And the open curriculum. I didn't understand what it meant until I got further in and I was like, okay, [17:00] I understand this open curriculum thing, you know. And I was able to just experience so many different things as a result, you know. And then I, and I, finally, I graduated with BA, or AB, in, in English and American literature. But I still had all my, I took, I needed orgo-two to finish out everything, but I didn't take it because the orgo-one was enough. And I was like, I'm not going to medical school, anyway, you know? But yeah.

AK: When you came back to campus, did you feel like the resources that were available to you were clearer, or that there were resources to help you kind of get back on track and understand the system?

PR: Yes.

AK: Or, it kind of sounds like you sort of had to find those connections with your professors on your own, too.

PR: I kind of, I kind of found them in, in, in, yes and no. I did, because I wanted [18:00] to be successful. So when I came back on campus, you know, I reunited with my original class of '97, you know, got along with, with everyone, and so I asked them questions. And hearing their conversations, they're like, "Well, you know, you have an advisor. You can go here. This is where you," – you know. So just to hear from the, the students themselves, and, but the, the university itself didn't say, "Well, Paula, you have an advisor," you know what I mean? You get those, "You are on warning," or you know what I mean? You get those, those emails or those messages that that's what's going on. So honestly, I don't even know who my advisor was. I found them, you know, with people I felt comfortable with and safe with. So yeah, and then I just went on my merry way. You know, I knew that, I knew that I could do it, and I just put myself, my mind to that. You know, this is what I'm here [19:00] to do, and I had a lot of support in my

friends and in the basketball coach. She was amazing, Jeanie Burr at the time. And she would also pour into me and tell me, “Hey,” – because the team had an advisor, and then you know what I mean. So it was just like spiraling from there.

AK: So were you on the, I don't have vocabulary for the athletics. But was it like an intramural team, or you were on Brown's women's basketball team?

PR: It was Brown's women's basketball.

AK: Oh, that's fantastic!

PR: Yes.

Ak: Can you tell me a little bit more about that experience?

PR: Yes, it was fun. Well, I didn't do anything my freshman year when I got there, because I promised my basketball coach because he's like, “You don't need a basketball scholarship, you, you just focus on your studies.” So I did that. And I had written the coach that summer after, before I went back in '94, like, you know, the end of '94, yeah, '93/ '94, then, the spring of – the fall of '94 [20:00] I was there, and I left in January of '95, so that, it's coming back to me. And I wrote her a letter when, that summer, and I said, “Coach, my name is this. These are my statistics, blah, blah, blah, you know, how many rebounds, you know what my points are, and and I'm interested in, you know, walking on.” And so I went in when I got back to campus, like she had, she had contacted me, “Yes, I'd love to meet with you.” And she met with me, and of course I had to try out. So I tried out for the team and I had gotten hurt, though. So that's the sad part. I, I tore my hamstring, which was fine. Yeah, it was awful. It was the worst. But it was okay, because I could still play a role. Like I tore my hamstring, I had my name plate and everything. She called me into the office to say, you know, “You did a great job. [21:00] You made the team,” and I tore my hamstring and, but I stayed on in a managerial practice player role. And that's, that was my function with them. So I went to all the games, practiced with them, all their practices, filmed their games, filmed their practices, gave, you know any insight I had.

So, and, and just traveling with them, too. That's how I learned the other Ivies, what their campuses were like, how far they were in the middle of nowhere for some of them, and you know, and just building that kind of support on campus, too, helped to kind of broaden my network and just interact with different people, you know. And so that, that was, that was a lot of fun. And we still communicate now. We're in group chats. We're lifelong friends, you know, 20 plus years later, and we still get on Teams, Teams, Zooms, group chats, Whatsapp. And we, we just catch up that way, including the coach, you know. So it's like there was a little family. It was a little family. [22:00] And I knew that if something happened I could reach out to any one of them, and even the coach, and I'd be okay, you know.

AK: That's fantastic. These are all really wonderful high points. Do you have other kind of like, what we often call like polaroid memories, these like snapshot moments of your time on campus, high points or low points that really have stuck with you through the years?

PR: My hanging, hanging out at what was called the Third World Center, the TWC, and finding the hidden ways and passages in that building was fun and just hanging out there. I did a few all nighters there and stayed there. You're not supposed to do that. But it was fun, and just, it was always a bunch of people, you know, because there's a kitchen. It was a great place to study, so my time hanging out there was great. My time at the gym is always great. [23:00] With basketball it's always great. That's, that's just what I love to do. Let's see, when I moved to Harambee House, that was, that was really good. That was a great experience. It was just, you're a part of history here, not really realizing you're a part of history here. I didn't really do many extra curriculars, most of my time was, it was with basketball, you know, so that, those are the most pivotal polaroid moments for me.

Some, oh, maybe I had a, I was in the valley, in the valley means not on the mountaintop, if you know what I mean, and not happy, but in a lower state. And when I started failing classes, and I actually ended up having to go to the hospital, and one of my professors she was my Shakespeare professor, she'd reached, she reached out to me, and she would still continue pouring into me and saying, "You're going to be fine. You're doing a great job." And just to have that kind of support from a professor [24:00] was good, especially one that doesn't really know me-know me, you know? Just to see that she cared. And I had a few professors like that who

cared about the individual student. While I was doing neuroscience, I really loved going to the office hours because the TAs were amazing. And they were just very helpful. Yeah. Going to the hospital, I think, was, was the low. And then having to go to Psych Services at the time. Yeah.

AK: If you're comfortable sharing, even generally, what were kind of mental health resources like on campus at that time?

PR: Oh, they were awesome, like they were awesome, I thought, because you had Psych Services right there, so you had counselors available for the students. The sad part is a lot of my negatives happen successively because I had my low point. I had a therapist, and Dr., Dr. Toni Texeira, [25:00] she, the, I took my time off. I, when I was coming back it was December. The December I, I was coming back from Christmas Break in December and she was taking a trip with her whole family, and they all died. The plane crashed. So I, I was, I was stunned because now what, what do I do now? So it's like all these negatives happened. And it was just weird. I was like, I didn't want to go to Psych Services, but they kept reaching out, you know, because I would have to see her office, and even they, the whole building, they were kind of grieving cause she'd been there, you know. If I remember her last name correctly. But yeah, her and her family died in that, and I was like, what am I gonna do now, you know? But I was able to find a colleague of hers who also worked there who helped me through that process because I had to process that and find another space [26:00] to, to have that mental health service that I needed, you know. And there was no shame in going, you know, and just knowing that someplace was there for me to go. And then the health services was, is not where it is now. It used to be on the other side, and there was my physical doctor, my PCP, as we would say in the civilian world. They, they were very good, too, you know. They, I could talk to some of them also about mental health stuff, which was good, you know. Of course, and then they'd say, "Well, you should go to Psych Services," and you know what I mean, not pushing me away, but also kind of emphasizing, you probably need a little bit more than we can give you here. We can give you needles. We can give you breathalyzer treatments, but you know – nebulizer treatments sorry, and any other healthcare thing, you know. And then Dr. Eckerley was my, my doctor there, and she was in charge, and [27:00] when, and she passed, I know she passed. She didn't pass in my time there, but I know she passed, and, but she was also one of my main stays there. So, yeah,

but I thought it was, it was pretty good. It was very well, it was advertised, you know, you can go and see. It wasn't like, "Psych Services!" But you know, "If you need help, call extension blah blah blah," you know.

AK: That's fantastic to hear. I'm also kind of thinking about these other moments, you might, I don't remember the exact year, the takeover of University Hall for need-blind admissions. Were you on campus for that?

PR: No, that was a little before I got there.

AK: A little before you came.

PR: That class of '95 was involved in that.

AK: Okay.

PR: I believe. Because they got their early nineties, I want to say, so they talked about that. We learned about that at TWTP.

AK: Oh, cool. That's interesting.

PR: Yeah, because they were part of that thing.

AK: Right, right. [28:00]

PR: That process, I believe. If I remember correctly. 20 plus years ago, so.

AK: Do you have any memories of like student activism on campus?

PR: Definitely. My, before – while the class of '95 was there there was always student activism especially since they were trying to get Harambee House to, to be there. I believe there was something about need-blind admissions. I remember being at the main campus, that quad, Not Wriston, but you know, right in front of Wilson, Solomon, Sayles?

AK: Faunce?

PR: By the Faunce arch.

AK: Yeah, yeah.

PR: That quad right there. And they were marching with signs and stuff like that. I don't remember the exact particulars of what it was. But I remember feeling like there, this energy in my own, my own body, and I know that they were looking for equality and [29:00] equity and everything like that, the big premise of it, yeah.

AK: What are, before we kind of move on to –

PR: Oh, sorry!

AK: Yeah?

PR: And Take Back the Night. That was a big thing. Take Back the Night.

AK: Oh, can you tell me a little bit more about that.

PR: I actually had a friend, she was a freshman when it when it happened. I, she, I was the only person she told that, that she got assaulted. She was she was a soccer player and she was coming home. And, you know, there are tunnels under campus, right? So, oh, yes, there are tunnels. They might be sealed off now. That's because when it's, it's snowy and cold out there, we found our

way through the tunnels. It was always warm down there. We walked from Pembroke to the main campus. Yes, yes, they connected.

AK: I have never heard of these. I, I've got some student workers in my office right now. I'll be following up with them about this.

PR: Well the thing is I don't know if they're still open. Yes, there was an access, I don't know if I should share this, [30:00] I'll share it with you offline. But there were a few access, we know, we found them, and while she was going back to campus, because she was leaving from my side of campus back – sorry, my side meaning Pembroke to, because I lived on Pembroke – to her side, and she actually lived in, I believe it was Keeny, right. And while she was doing that she was assaulted, and she called me, and we talked. And I think a couple of nights after that they, she didn't share her story. She packed her stuff up and she left. She never came back. She left the school. She didn't want to report. And a couple of nights later, because I believe around the different college campuses, a lot of this was happening and the big Take Back the Night Movement started and was more, more visible on [31:00] campus. And that's when they emphasized the blue lights, and then they give out a lot of whistles. So, back then it was whistles to blow if you were in trouble. And they really, we had more blue lights, many more blue lights on campus by the – “this is the phone call to,” you know. And that night, just watching the candle light on campus and the signs and people's talking and sharing their stories. That was very powerful, you know, and you know that was very powerful. It was just, I, I have goosebumps right now, because I'm, I'm seeing the picture in my mind. But yeah, that was very powerful and just being able to be a part of something like that. I didn't organize it. I was just a student on campus, female student on campus and then this happened to my friend. Just going to learn more, you know. And then, you know, so then the buddy system became a big, don't go anywhere by yourself, you know. So we moved in crowds, you know. [32:00] We tried to move, and we, we moved with a mixture of of genders, too, so no female person was walking by themselves. So that was very powerful.

AK: I'm getting goosebumps just hearing your stories. Any other memories of your time on campus? But if not, do you have some memories of graduation day and kind of preparing for the next step?

PR: Oh, my goodness, graduation day! I thought it was never going to come. No just kidding. No, there was just this buzz in the air, you know, it was very exciting, because well, the thing about is, I knew what it was going to be like, because I had friends in the older classes, so I had gone to a few graduations already since I was already there. I wasn't leaving, you know, and I didn't really go back and forth to New York a lot. [33:00] I, I really did not want to be in New York, so when I left New York I kind of left New York until I had to go home for that year. But I got to see how everything unfolded already. So I kind of knew what was going to happen. I knew when to go, where, where to, when to go to the gates, and you know what I mean and and what's going to happen. Party over here, party over here. And so when it was my turn I was excited, but I wasn't like, "Oh my God, I'm going to graduate!" You know, because I kind of knew what was going to happen. So I was very methodical. I was like, at 9 o'clock, I'm going to go here, at 10 o'clock. I'm going to go here. And, and I knew where I was going, but just to be with everyone and just hear like the buzz in the air, it's just, it's an amazing, it was an amazing feeling. And then to hear the speakers that, I wasn't aware the honorary doctors were going to come, and you know I, I they probably printed it. But you know you're, who reads their email in college, you know? [34:00] But that was, that was really good.

But prior to that, just finishing up my courses is like, I, I need to make sure I am good. I need to get through these classes, or I will not be graduating. You know what I mean? So, but my senior year wasn't really awful, because I wasn't bogged down by a lot of classes, because I'm one of those students who took too many classes before they should have, even after I got back. But once I changed my major it was easier for me, because English is English is English and I took fun classes, too. So it's like these aren't necessarily for the core, but it's like electives, you know what I mean? So I had a lot of electives towards my senior year and that whole year was great. I worked more. I worked at the Rock, the SciLi, the Gate, and did whatever I could, you know, cause you know, who doesn't want to make money? Because I was – and at the gym, at the OMAC, [35:00] I, I got people to put, sign in to use the gym, and you could do homework while you're doing that, you know. So all the jobs I got I made sure I was able to do work.

Working at the Rock was the best, though, because I love books, and I'd just find a little corner, you know. Don't tell anybody that I – I did my job. I just did it really fast, so I could do what I wanted to do.

But yeah, just, just getting ready and ordering the gown and the cap, and just, it was just, it's, it was all, it was new to me, but it wasn't new to me. New to me in the sense that I'd never gone through something that big before. Like high school, yeah, you get a cap and gown blah blah you have, you know. It's like it's, it's, it's a given that you're going to graduate high school, for some, in my mind. Nowadays, maybe not. But college, and, and it's like I'm leaving Brown. So part of it, too, yes, there was excitement, but there was sadness because I was leaving a space that I felt very comfortable in, very welcomed in. And even today, [36:00] when I go back on campus, that same sense of okay, I'm home, takes over, you know, and it's just like when I went back to the Brown Alumni Reunion I was just like, Oh, my gosh! It's the same feeling, like I don't want to go home. A lot has changed since then, but it's still Brown, you know, and just, I felt like, I felt like I belonged. I told myself, if I ever had to go back to New England I would want to work at Brown, you know, and because that's, that's my life. In my mind, Brown is my life, and it helped to form who I am, you know, it's an intrinsic part of me. And not because it's an Ivy League school. It's just like, I felt like that's where I grew up. Does that make sense? So, I hope I answered your question. [37:00] I don't remember.

AK: Yes, no, absolutely. Do you, with some of our remaining time, would you like to share anything about your life since Brown, professionally, personally, kind of what the trajectory has been like for you?

PR: Yes. So when I left Brown I taught at the Wheeler School under, I was a teaching coordinator through Summer Bridge at first. I believe it's still called Summer Bridge, I'm not sure. But I did city – Americorps for a year there, and I taught there. Then after that, I only stayed a year. They, because teachers don't leave Wheeler, so there's no spaces open, and I actually ended up working at a boarding school in Connecticut, at a junior boarding school in Connecticut, in Pomfret, Connecticut, and that was really great. I taught like primarily English, like I taught Spanish. I was the World Languages Department Chair. I taught reading, I taught math, you know. It's a junior junior [38:00] boarding school, so like junior high schoolish, and

up to ninth grade, and I coached basketball. Basketball is part of my life. I did that at Wheeler as well.

I left there and moved down to Florida, where I currently am, and I taught for a little bit, but then – and I coached for a little bit, but then my heart leaned to counseling. So I started doing some mental health counseling and now I'm, I'm a mental health therapist full time. And I also kind of, while I was at Rectory they, they tagged me and I, I became an interviewer for students who wanted to go to Brown. And I did, I was an area chair for that for like I want to say 2 years, and then I moved, and then I, I'm still kind of, I still kind of interviewed students while I was here. And now I'm active in calling accepted students. [39:00] So I still do that. I still have a lot of connection with Brown. And I try to go up as often as I can. When I lived in Connecticut it was easier because I would take my boys that were in my dorm to basketball games. We go to Wings To Go on Thayer Street. It's no longer there. Then we'd go to the basketball games just so they could see what college was like, because I mean, they're, they're going to be ninth graders. And it's a, it's a little farther ahead, but this could potentially be a place, you know, and just so they can experience what the college atmosphere might be like, even though Brown's atmosphere is a little different, it's still a college experience. And just to go to the games they're like, "Oh, my gosh! This is what, this is what basketball is!" You know. "It's not what we're doing," you know. So it's just, you know, Brown is still a huge part of my life. It's still a huge part of my life, and I talk about Brown a lot. And when I taught and people were looking at schools I was like, you know, you probably would be a good fit at Brown, [40:00] and then I'd tell them about my own experience. I talk a lot about the open curriculum because that was a huge thing. Once I realized what it was, it's a big deal to have an open curriculum and have the ability to navigate and create your own path. Most schools don't have that. Yes, they have their pre-med track, they have their specific subject area. But still, you're not just bound to that. You know what I mean? So just to explain life that way. And it's just, it's been a great, it was a great experience. And even like after today, I emailed two students today that I need to contact that were accepted. So I'm going to talk with them soon. Hopefully, they reach out to me. But yeah, so I still try to give back in some way.

AK: That's wonderful. Before we officially wrap up, are there any other thoughts or memories that you would like to share for the historical record? [41:00]

PR: Gosh. This is –

AK: And it's okay if you don't, I just like to hold some space at the end.

PR: Yeah, I'm trying to – I don't, I can't really think of anything else right now.

AK: Well, I just want to thank you so much for your time and sharing this story today. It's been really great to talk with you, and to hear about your experience on campus in the '90s.

PR: Thank you.

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