

**Interviewee: Carrington, Ray**

**Interview Date: August 13, 2010**

**University of Houston**  
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Interviewee: Ray Douglas Carrington, III

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Interviewer: Ezell Wilson

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Abstract:

This interview with Ray Douglas Carrington, III, a photography instructor at Jack Yates High School, both recalls the struggle for Civil Rights in Houston during the 1960s and calls for continued awareness of community building to combat issues facing African-American communities such as in Houston's Third Ward. Carrington uses his personal experiences in Houston, as a student on a Tennis scholarship at Texas Southern University during the 1960s to illustrate a diverse range of issues such as institutional racism (through the TSU riots), the importance of family and community building (his experiences at Jack Yates), and the importance of financial and personal responsibility – pulling oneself up by the bootstraps (much of his focus in the last half of the interview).

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EW: Alright I'm going to start out by asking you your full name and position.

RC: Okay. My full name is Ray Douglas Carrington, III and I am the photography instructor at Jack Yates High School. I've been at Jack Yates High School now on 18 years.

EW: Where and when were you born?

RC: I was born in Austin, Texas...

EW: Hold on let me do something; let's try that again I'm not sure this is even on here.

RC: My name is Ray Douglas Carrington, III. I was born in Austin, Texas in 1948. I am presently the photography instructor here at Jack Yates High School for the last 18 years.

EV: You were born in Austin, Texas. When did you come to Houston?

RC: Well I came to Houston as fast as I could but I made another short trip. I was born in Austin in 1948. I moved from Austin when I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. My family moved to Corpus Christi, Texas from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through high school I was in Corpus Christi. I graduated from Roy Miller High School in Corpus Christi in 1966. In 1966 I came to Texas Southern University and took my undergraduate degree there in 1970.

EW: I'd like to go back just for a moment to growing up in Corpus Christi. You grew up during an era that was just prior to the civil rights struggle and in the era of segregation. What experiences, if any, did you have of any of that growing up?

RW: Fortunately for me, and I think it was more of a blessing, Corpus Christi was not one of those cities in America that went through a lot of turmoil with segregation. The community was, of course, de facto segregated. We had a black part of town basically.

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We had a white part of town and being in Corpus there was a brown part of town. Some of the communities overlapped, not that much but there were some overlapping in the living... the housing situation. However, in Corpus there was not the experience that I ever had of prejudice, of denial of services. I went to a high school in which blacks, browns, and whites got along I would think tremendously well. From 1963 approximately until I graduated in 1966 there were no incidents where any, there were no racial incidents that ever came to my attention. My high school was one that was more than 4,000 students so if there had been, that it would have been well known but the high school, the times were, you just grew up. You grew up as a kid. You did those things. We went to the football games. At the football games the football team was integrated. Now there were some schools, Roy Miller was an integrated school. The others were integrated in terms of the law but because of de facto segregation you would have a preponderance of whites that went to W. B. Ray High School. As a matter of fact my sister was one of the first blacks to go to Ray. W. B. Ray High School was another large school. So you would have teams that were predominately black or mixed. When they played a team like Ray is maybe the equivalent of now playing Bellaire. That even though you have students of all races there, the school is basically in a white neighborhood so the majority are going to be Anglo white. But even at that there was nothing; we just played the game. I never went to a store or to an amusement park in which we were denied services. Unfortunately enough for me, that came later on in my life toward the end of my being in Corpus, being on the tennis team, I was a tennis player. We visited Midland, Texas and that was my first incident of segregation or racial prejudice, I would say.

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EW: So you came to Houston to attend TSU. Why TSU?

RC: I came to Houston to go to TSU because I got a full tennis scholarship. I was a tennis player in that time in which there weren't any other blacks playing that level of high school tennis. My high school team played tennis all over the state of Texas. We played everywhere from Harlingen, Edinburg, San Benito, San Antonio, Austin, Houston, Midland, Odessa, just everywhere. It was very unusual and I was the only black person on that team. In my senior year I had played on the Junior Davis Cup team and I was anticipating enrolling at the University of Houston. The year that I graduated, the month that I graduated, the head coach at the University of Houston tennis team, Coach Hoff died and it was unexpected. I was supposed to be going to University of Houston and at that time you were either in college or you were in Vietnam. So not to my knowledge, Coach Herbert Provost was at Texas Southern during that time had seeing me play tennis and started making end rows into trying to get me to come to TSU which was not on my radar at all. But that is how I got to Houston, was on a tennis scholarship. Eventually he got into contact with me, brought me to Houston to see the facilities. I saw the facilities, I came up and played some of his players, who he had on the team at that time, beat them all and it was... then it was, "When are you coming?" I literally graduated one day and the next day I was in Houston playing tennis.

EW: So would you mind telling me a little bit about Coach Provost who actually facilitated your coming to TSU?

RC: Coach Herbert Provost was like no other man I've ever met in my life before or after. He was a very unusual man. He was a man who had seen and had done so many different things. He was a businessman, he was a world traveler and he taught me some

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of the things that even at 62 years old as I am now, I still do every day. He gave me a sense of doing those kinds of things you need to do in order to become recognized and to become the best. He always strove to be the best. He was one of those kinds of people who cut roads for people that they don't even realize that the first person who cut that road was Herbert Provost. Mr. Provost was unusual. He had been in the navy so he had a lot of military background to him. He was very outspoken. You could not do something to him and he was going to accept it if it was unacceptable to him. He strove for being the best, not only the best amongst his race, the best period, whether that was being a photographer, or whether that was being head of a tennis team. He would go get a young man and it didn't make any difference to him whether he was black, white, purple, or pink. If he thought he could get him and get him to come to TSU he was going to go get him. That's why if you look through his record of students, of people that he had on his tennis team they were Chinese, they were Nigerians, they were white, they were black, they were from the Netherlands. There was an assortment. He had a multi-cultural tennis team. If you were a good tennis player and listened to him, if you listened to him, you was coming to TSU. He was going to get you to come to TSU some kind of way.

So for that reason he won championships back to back, 17 years of winning Southwest Athletic Conference Championship in tennis. He had doubles teamed at one NCAA Division 1 tennis titles. He had schools such as Rice University that did not want to play him. They did not want to play him because those boys hit the tennis ball. John Wilkerson came at him and if you know anything about tennis John Wilkerson developed Lori McNeil and Zena Garrison. There would probably not have been the level of play

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even amongst the William sisters if it had not had been for Herbert Provost because even though we had tennis organizations in America, the ATA is the oldest black tennis association in America, more than 100 years old, there was not anyone out there who was black who was pushing the development of black tennis in terms of teamwork. I mean, you had individuals who would do it good, you know, I can't think of his name right now and I know I should but you had individuals who could play well, but no one that was developing teams. He not only was developing professional tennis players, he went to places like Southern University. He went to places and laid out tennis so that you could go indoors and see the kind of talent that they had. Arthur Ashley is the person I was trying to think of I don't know, rest his soul. He encouraged Arthur Ashley to come to TSU to sponsor to be the head of one of his tennis camps that he had for boys from all over the world. He was a visionary. There is nobody that I ever met before him, nobody that I met since his passing that was even quite like him. He was just multidimensional-business, his own personal appearance, his own business sense, his coaching, tactics; everything about him was unique and not even ... he was like Eddie Robinson. He was like Bear Bryant; he was like, you know, the best in other sports.

EW: So obviously Coach Provost had a profound effect on you. What was your experience in other avenues at TSU and did any of your... did your matriculation at TSU have a profound effect on you as well?

RC: Well yes, Herbert Provost to me, like I say he lives with me every day. I don't do anything that is not basically a reflection of what either he and I experienced together, we became like father and son, or that he taught me. He taught me so many things that my father, my step-father didn't teach me because he was around me at that critical time in

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my life when I was going from a young adult into becoming a man that you could actually talk to him. We would make long trips from here to New Orleans, from here to Kansas City driving. He was the kind of person he only drove the best of cars. So we would be out on the highway in a Cadillac or Lincoln Continental or something like that. He would teach me about driving. He would talk to me about human nature. He would talk to me about what a man should do and what a person will do in certain situations, how a business man would respond when he really wants to give you business.

I mean he was the kind of person that during segregation he made a lot of money. He made a lot of money because he serviced segregated schools, segregated black schools throughout Texas and throughout Louisiana. When integration came and the white businessman came back into the black schools he lost a lot of money. He had to fight for those schools because the schools that he had were now being absorbed by white companies who said, "Ok, we are going to go get the money." He had to teach me the dynamics of what a person thinks about when they really want to give you the job but they want to make the money, that extra money or whatever. In his heyday he probably made more money than I can even imagine. Because he was not just stuck in the mode of being a photographer; he was a yearbook representative. He sold caps and gowns. He sold rings. He did everything he was talented in to make money. He knew the value of money. Without money in America you are just another person on the street.

So yes, he is always going to have a profound effect on me and I guess transcendentally he has an effect on the students that I teach because I just can't get him out of my system. I can't get the lessons that he taught me out of my system. So that the students that I teach they get a little bit of it coming through me from him. The TSU

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experience was something else for me as well; in the fact that I really didn't want to come to TSU. My expectations of TSU was so low because to be very honest, coming from the school that I came from, I was a little white boy in a black skin. I had been the only person on the tennis team and God in his wisdom said, "Okay we are going to shake this boy up and bring him and let him see what he is." Not only did he shake me up in that point of not going to the University of Houston, not thinking that I was still back in high school but he brought me Mr. Provost and then brought me to a black school where at a black school, at a black school in America, school that I was familiar with, my sister had graduated from TSU before so it wasn't that I didn't know anything about TSU; it was that I didn't know enough. Here you come to a black school where you've got the very best in many degrees, students who have come from all around the country, California, New York... I've had friends that I made from all over the country that were black who were very smart. You know, culturally they were advanced. They were more advanced than me because many of them had experienced things that I had never experienced. Some of them had experienced prejudice and segregation to the degree that it was negative, whereas I had not experienced it at all. So you know the conversations with them ... with ... you kind of gave you an insight into what it means to be a black person in Chicago who is not the best, you know didn't grow up on the right side of town or whatever have you.

So vicariously I learned a lot about America by listening to my students, listening to people in classrooms, listening to teachers who would also give you the benefit of their experiences who were trying to motivate you because of the fact that they could see something in you. When a teacher sees something in you that they think they can



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develop and foster, make it better, that is a whole lot, the dynamics going on that just don't exist anywhere else. They take, if nothing else the mental interest in you to say that "This kid is good and I'm going to make sure that he is prepared for what..." and sometimes the preparation is pushing you. Sometimes the preparation is denying you some things that, you know, to make you motivated to the point to make you want to push yourself. The value of TSU is that there were faculty at TSU pretty much like Mr. Provost in their own field. I'll give you an example. I graduated with a degree in history and I was taught by Dr. J. Reuben Sheiller. Dr. Sheiller was the best. He was a researcher. He didn't take anyone's answer for anything. If he wanted it done he did the research himself. He had visited courthouses studying the migration of blacks in America, the treatment of blacks in America so that now listening to someone who had actually gone to courthouses and dug into records and given you basic facts, giving you the empirical data on what happened to us after the Emancipation Proclamation. Then that ran a gambit through every teacher that I had at TSU. Do I think I could have had the same kind of education somewhere else, even the University of Houston? No. Does that say that those are inferior schools? No that's not what I am saying. I am saying that as a black man in America at that particular time in my life I needed someone culturally sensitive to where I was to give me the other part of the story.

Not just the history part of the story, or as we sometimes say the "his story" but the true value of what really happens in major things that we hear about that we read about, that someone else's interpretation of what is going on. Who can better interpret the TSU riots than somebody who was there, like me? I was there. So nobody can tell me what happened the night of the TSU riots. It was not a TSU riot; it was a Houston

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Police riot. The gunshots that I heard that night sounded like Vietnam. It was a “rat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat” for hours. And it’s amazing; it is truly amazing that a whole bunch of kids did not get killed that night. I went to jail that night, so I know what I’m talking about. I went to jail. I spent the night in jail. I heard the man telling they were going to charge all of us with second degree murder. I know I hadn’t done nothing. I was just trying to be a student that night. I got taken to jail about three or four o’clock in the morning and a lot of others of us. I got swung at five or six times by billy clubs by police men. I was trying to do what they said. They said, “move left” and I got to move left and somebody swung up at me on the right side. I’m not talking to you about things that someone else told me. This is something that I actually went through. I mean it’s a whole bunch of things about the TSU riot that... I mean a lot of people don’t discuss it. A lot of people don’t really know. One person was killed that night and that was a policeman off of a ricocheted bullet. I mean nobody had no guns. Nobody was shooting back at the policemen. They were shooting at us. It is just amazing that nobody got killed. It is amazing. That next day you could see bullet holes in the walls in the dormitory in Lanier Hall for men. You could see the destruction that was made on the private property of students because the policemen had rioted. That’s not to say, you know, that was a solo incident.

Houston is a... I love Houston. I wouldn’t live anywhere else. Houston has been very fortunate in not having some of the pains that other towns and cities have had. But Houston has had its incidences of things that, you know can’t be talked about in the Citizen Chamber of Commerce. You know whether it is Ida Delaney, Joe Campos Torres or what happened with the Black Panthers up on Dowling Street or a whole bunch of

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other things. Houston is a good town. I love it. Like I say, I wouldn't live nowhere else. I've grown up in Houston; I love Houston, I think it's probably the most dynamic city in the South. Atlanta coming in second, in my mind to Houston, but Houston is still my choice.

EW: OK. I'd like to ask you in light of the incident at TSU, the police riot, and your being involved, what was the climate on campus after such an incident where students were fired upon, unarmed students were fired on by the police?

RC: Well, one would be disbelief. The aftermath of the riot nearly 400 young men who lived on campus being taken to jail, locked up, finger printed, that next day was just totally disbelief. I thought this just could not be happening; that something like this could be happening. But if you go immediately before then for some months, some days before that actually happened; you almost want to believe that it was not an accident. I'm going to give you an example of what I'm saying. Previous to that ... or let me start off by saying that one particular time, Wheeler Avenue was a through street. It is now a closed street. But at one time, you could go and be at Main Street and on Wheeler and come straight through the TSU campus, no stopping. At one time, you could be on Wheeler Avenue and come through TSU without having to detour or stop. There was a stop light in the middle of the campus but that was through traffic and that was traffic basically coming from Main Street going to the University of Houston and vice versa.

Something that had happened and I can't give you the exact details but I think the general consensus was that somebody had come through the campus waving a Dixie flag and shouting epithets and oh, whatever have you, and the students took offense to it. And got mad and you know, this is at the height of black power. This is Afros out to here, this

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is people standing up and saying, "I'm black and I'm proud." You know, I don't know whether James Brown is saying in his song but was during that same time. And what had happened was some students took offense to this and picked up some bottles and some rocks and had really rocked some cars that were coming through. And basically, the cars they were rocking were ones that were driven by whites. As a matter of fact it even said where when a black man came through, he was a soul brother and he would go through. I mean, it was a very destructive situation, I mean to the point that basically from Tierwester to the old railroad tracks, the day after that had happened, the street was filled with glass, broken glass, I mean full of it. I mean I'm not talking about one spot here, I'm talking about full all the way down. And I think someone must have said, "We can't let this happen." almost baited to the point that something similar if that had happened again and immediately after it had happened, there was a convergence on the campus of the police officers. Prior to that, I had noticed the convergence of the police officers, I had noticed 5 and 6 police officers, you know, over at the old Jefferson Stadium, which is now owned by the University of Houston down to Sears, all around the community, so it wasn't like we were wondering why are all these police officers in the neighborhood. And so at the second incident, it was a convergence.

The night of the riot, I literally was down at Provost Studio, Mr. Provost had a studio on Wheeler Avenue on the 2700 block, I think it was 2711 and I had been down there until about 7:30, 8:00 at night and I got up to walk back to the campus, a distance of about 4 or 5 blocks and when I got on campus, I heard all of this shooting. Well, I wasn't as wise as I am now about hearing gunfire. I was curious; I wanted to know what was going on. And like I was saying, it wasn't just a one two shoot, shoot, shoot; it was like a

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machine gun fire. And I went to where I lived on campus in Adalady dormitory, I went to my room and literally from my room, I could see the officers taking over Lanier Hall for men, floor by floor, room by room, turning on lights, Junior and Senior dorms, room by room, floor by floor, and then to the Adalady dormitory where I was. So, all that happened at the same time. When they converged and took us to jail, basically what had been done before then, I think was the seed that created the riot, that they had decided that they weren't going to let this go unpunished and that was the manifestation of what had happened, where there was a riot, luckily no students were killed, unluckily that even the police officer was killed on that ricochet and it changed the tenor of the school.

There was some who had had their property damaged who were called to Washington D.C. to testify. There was one young man from Philadelphia; I believe he was who at that particular time, most of us dressed in coat and tie to go to school every day. All of his clothes had been damaged, bleach thrown on it, shoe polish thrown on it, he wore his clothes damaged like they were for the rest of that school year. There was some discussions on the campus about what had happened but the major thing was nobody could believe that this had happened to us on the campus, for whatever reason. That as a wholesale, "Let's kill as many of them as we could." That 400 men went to jail one night, scared to death, I never thought I was going to see my mama again. I was that scared, that even though now I'm in jail, I didn't think I was going to see my mama again. I mean the attitude down there was, "You know, we're going to get them, we're going to get them back that night." Cause we heard that the officer that had gotten killed while we were in jail and everything, so most of us were very, when we first went down there, that male chauvinistic kind of stuff everybody was popping around, you know,

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come on in here, do this, whatever, but by the time it has sunk in that you're in jail and you don't look like you're going to get out by that morning, that was about 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, about 10:00 that next morning everybody was quiet, everybody was solemn, everybody was pensive about what had happened. What is going to happen to me? You know, and luckily there was not very much done after that in terms of all those individuals that had gone to jail but the whole campus changed and I think it brought to some degree, a realism about racism and the advent of institutional racism home to me in terms of what had happened.

My ideal of America started swinging while I was at TSU, just before I came to TSU; I mean it started way back when President Kennedy got killed. I couldn't imagine, you know, the President of the United States had got killed. And then when you go to the TSU situation, what do you mean, well even before then, "What do you mean that Dr. King got killed?" "What do you mean that we getting taken to jail and we haven't done anything?" You know, all those things just bring you to the realization that this is America and maybe some of the things that we've learned, some of the things we've learned about the Constitution and freedom and stuff like that may not be what they really are.

EW: So then, these sort of incidents that were happening kind of changing your view of things, had their own mark on your later life, post graduation and what you've done since then?

RC: For sure, the TSU situation which I think was bad, but it's not like the Mississippi boy that got killed, thrown into, you know, when you analyze it in terms of what else is happening in America during that time, the killings, what was her name Viol Louis, she

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was down there at that same time, the way that the, and this was before then, the Little Rock students which just wanted to go to school, when you analyze it, compared to other places, not as bad, bad, but not as bad. We didn't have anybody that lost their life that night. TSU that experience just put inside of me to say, "Always try to be the very best you can; don't depend on anybody else. Be able to tell your own story, be able to defend yourself in terms of what actually happened, the truth, you know, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." You know, that's what, that's the only thing you can depend on and hopefully, there's enough common reasoning in what can happen or what should happen that if you're not doing anything, you know, nothing will happen to you. Nothing should happen to you. Now that's not to say that there are not some fringe elements of people that live in America who just defy all logic, you know, whether they're the Klan, or the Skin Heads, or whatever have you. They're hopefully the fringes but TSU kind of brought me to the realization that you've got to be up on your P's and Q's. That a lot of the things that you were taught when you were in elementary school about the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, it all depends on where you are, what your circumstances are, where you are in that place in time. If you're in the wrong place in the wrong time, you're going to be denied access, institutionalized now, you know the institutions we have now in terms of financial institutions probably have become insidious with their prejudice and stuff like that and so you've got to get smart to know the system.

You've got to demand freedom for yourself. Freedom is not to me, something that someone is going to say, "Here it is. You've got everything you need right here." You've got to say, "No!" Sometimes you've got to stand up and say that's not right.

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Sometimes you may do it just for yourself and sometimes you just have to be a part of that voice in America that says what happened down there is not right. When we were all concerned about what was happening in East Texas with the dragging and the slaying of that man; that was not right. And you can call it whatever you want to but it was murder and it was not right. And there are other things all around. And there are other things all around, not only Texas but all around the country that are happening that are just not right.

I am still personally ... give you another thing, that has personally affected me since it happened, and this is more recent history, there is nothing that you can tell me to justify why after those hurricanes in New Orleans, we let that many people sit in New Orleans and not get out of that city. We have too many helicopters, too many boats, too many somethings to get those people out of there. To me, that was just blatant racism, that if we got that kind of resources, those people should have been there maybe a day or two days and if they heard helicopters coming in and going out all day long, 24 hours a day, that if America was America, something like that was happened like that in New York, no, they're not going to let that many people sit in one place and don't get them out. Here this is New Orleans, the majority of us in New Orleans were black and I don't know nothing about bombing the levies but what I've heard, I'm seeing babies, and I'm seeing mothers, and I'm seeing little children in squalor conditions in America and you can't get them off an island, you don't have enough helicopters to put 10, 5, 4 at a time, and all night long, you're just taking them over to Baton Rouge and putting them down where they can get off that island. They were locked on that island and dying. I don't understand that. I don't understand that.



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EW: I'd like to talk to you then something what you've done since TSU, because you went to school here at TSU in 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward and now you work here in 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward, historic Jack Yates High School, so would you like to tell me a little bit about your work here at Yates?

RC: Sure, since I graduated from Texas Southern, I graduated from Texas Southern in 1970. Immediately upon graduation, I started working at Texas Southern. I worked at Texas Southern from 1970 to 1982. In 1982, there was a call for someone to be a photographer for the Port of Houston and I worked at the Port of Houston from 1982 to about 1986 or 1987. I got fired from the Port of Houston and started working as a photographer for the Houston Defender Newspaper where I stayed for about another 6 years. Sonny Messiah-Jiles is the owner/editor of the paper and immediately from leaving the Defender and freelancing for Houston News Pages and just freelancing in general, in 1992, I came to Jack Yates. I came to Jack Yates not realizing what I was getting myself into. I knew I did not really want to come to Jack Yates because I was one of those people who had swallowed the myth that young black kids were unteachable, hard to deal with, whatever and whatever, and whatever. And I am so glad to say that 18 years later now, it's probably the most enjoyable work experience that I've ever had.

Each day, these young black minds come here, really, really wanting to be strong but they're not. They'll put on a façade that I got it going on, I know what's going on, I'm in control of my destiny, this that and the other, but when you break them down to their knees, they want someone to help them be prepared for what they're going into for the rest of their lives. And it's the motivating factor for me because there are so many things that I know that they need. Their backgrounds, and their educational levels, and

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their knowledge needs to be increased because I really still do and it shouldn't be like that but I really do believe that we've got to be more prepared in our counterparts for everything that we do. That's sad to say in 2010 and we got a black president of the United States but to me, that's really still the situation and what motivates me here at Jack Yates is that we see so many beautiful, strong minds who don't have a clue as to what's ahead of them, in terms of reality. So a lot of times I push them to become better than they probably should be in high school, hoping that the expectation at that the next joint, venture in life that they're going to go to at the college level, that that's going to get them even more prepared so it's not unusual for me to be able to keep up with a student who's been here with me and gone on to the University of Texas, gone down to Sam Houston, gone to the University of Houston, gone wherever and keep up with them to see how well they're doing.

Now the kind of barometer of what we're doing on the high school level in a minority school situation, because we just got to work harder with our kids. They come with special needs; they come with dreams that have to bring them into reality. You can't be a nuclear physicist if you don't like math. Someone have to talk to them about the realities of life. You can't get to the next level in your own personal development if you don't think nothing of riding 4 deep in a car with the music going on and somebody in the car got a joint. You're going to get stopped and eventually, you're going to get put into what? The legal circus, you know you're just going to be spinning round and round. So the smart thing to do is to avoid those things that even potentially are going to get you in trouble, are going to take you off your mission, because you're going to have it hard enough as it is now, if you have everything going for you. Going back for myself, I had

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everything going for me, I had everything. I had school, made good grades, scholarship, whatever have you and I had still had to learn about the realities of America to learn what it was about to be a black man in America. I don't consider myself as having been, everything from I don't think I was a radical or the other end, you know. I was just trying to be all that I could be in America and still had to go through some of the things I went through. Luckily, through the grace of God, I made it. I made it without getting killed, beat up, abused, misused, but there was still a development there that we need to talk to our kids about. Some of them are not going to listen. Some of them are not going to listen to what you are going to say. Some of them, experience is going to have to show them what you're talking about but some of them will listen. Some of them want you to talk to them, even if they want to be, you know [LOST TRANSMISSION] 43.33

EW: OK. So then, you were just talking about your students and your work with your students and experiencing some of the things that you came through in the late 60's going into the early 70's and coming to where you are today. What is your personal take on the near future, what's needed for, say, the students coming up through your class and coming up through Jack Yates here? What is needed for this next generation of students to move things forward?

RC: Having come through what I've gone through, personally, I can, you know, my experience is, my readings, my research, my observations of America, the world and what these students may have to go through, what are we going to have to do for them? First thing, we are going to have to take that old African saying that it takes a whole village to raise a child. There are too many of us, too many black men in prison. Rightfully or wrongfully, they're in prison. They're not here. There are too many

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fathers, black fathers who are not living up to their responsibilities of being a father. Too many of them! There are too many of us who are strung out on things we shouldn't be strung out on. So all of those things come together to diminish the reserve of what a man should be in his family. Our family structure is suffering, probably suffering more now than it had ever suffered before, suffered before when slavery was in vogue and they broke up families and that was a part, that was one of the manifestations of splitting up families and the fathers were here, the children go and whatever, but we going to have to step up to the plate and say that nobody is going to solve this problem until we solve this problem.

I personally, call every one of my students son, every one of my men, I call them son. I didn't realize what that meant to them until one kid just broke down to me one day and said, you know, how much it meant to him that someone would call him son. We've got to go back to the old wells that had clean, cool water in them. We got to quit making new things that we haven't experienced we haven't dealt with before, be the panacea, the thing that's going to get out. We got to be men, got to be men; they've got to step up. We got to quit turning our heads when we see our kids doing something wrong, whether it's wrong and illegal or just wrong. Whether it's abusing black women or any woman, to be truthful, it's wrong! Whether it is taking something that doesn't belong to you, it's wrong!

This is not a socialist country and I'm glad. I'm glad that America is a capitalistic country; that you make what you earn, what your potential is. I think to some degree, personally, I do believe that having so much of the government participation in what you don't have hurts us because it causes crutches for those kids who are coming up behind

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them and seeing that this is ... they think that this is what you're supposed to do. You know, welfare lines, whatever, now don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that every now and then that somebody doesn't need help but when help comes to be the norm, when help comes to be, I don't do nothing else but wait for that check to come in, that's wrong. I believe any man who's worth his salt can get out there and do some kind of work to earn a living for himself and his family without having to stick somebody up, rob, and I don't care whether you're black, purple, pink, white, whatever have you, it's just wrong. I think it's wrong when we just pass kids along and they're not prepared educationally for the next grade. They got to stay there until they get it. Because the world is not going to be accepting of them. I mean, we're just leading them for the next disaster. Men got to be men, women got to do what they got to do. Too many kids in our neighborhoods are basically on their own. I think we got to be responsible. I think parents should show up in schools to find out what Johnny is doing today. You know, don't be so concerned about his grade at the end of the year when you haven't come to school at all during the school year. Yes, you got to work. We all got to work. I got to work. You know, I have children. I got a grand child. But on those times when it's time for me to go up there and find out what's going on at that school, I got to go. I can't depend on that child coming and telling me I flunked the class because either I didn't know, I wasn't prepared or I just didn't go to class enough for me to pass. You got to know what your kids are doing 24/7, 7 days a week, 12 months out of the year. I mean, it's just that critical. You've got to know your child; you've got to provide for your child, you've got to be trying to provide for your child. You've got to be doing something. It's not magically going to happen. I watched and seen things like in elementary school, black families are supportive of those

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kids, they come to the functions that we had, to the programs that we have, they come. In the black community! I've seen auditoriums full of parents and teachers and family.

Middle School, it starts falling off. And to me, I believe, we start losing them in Middle School. We start losing our kids in Middle School because we've said, "Oh, we've made it!" No! They're a little bit older, they know how to ... give them the same kind of ... they need more care. High School, shoot, drop them off, they get here the best way. Don't know whether they came or not. I've seen kids who come in the front door and leave out the back door before Mama can get down the street. They actually need parental guidance, supervision more in high school than they did in elementary school. And I think we need to turn it around and say that you don't have the authority to do anything that I don't know about, that I don't approve of, that I don't think is to your benefit, whether that's on the phone late at night and you should be asleep, or in front of a television when you should be doing your work. Please tell me this, and this is way off but it came to my head. Please tell me how foreigners can come to this country, don't speak any English, no English, they don't have no history with us and they can become valedictorians, salutatorians of our classes, sitting right there with those same kids we've had those things. They can't speak any English. Their parents still can't speak any English. It's because the attitude about education is what we used to have but blacks used to have about education years ago. Them same Little Rock students who were going there, they were going because they wanted to get a better education. You know, and that's not to say that we don't have intellectuals, we don't have, we have people who are brilliant, we've got brilliant people but where we've come from to where we are now, they should be popping out of here like popcorn. They should have 3.5, 4.0, whatever

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have you, because too many people have died. Too many people have been spit on; too many people have been killed for our kids to have the right to have a better education. You know, when you come from people who, you know, have to borrow books to get an education, to now, you're on the internet and go anywhere in the world on the internet and all they want to do with the internet is download music and movies and Facebook and all this other kind of crazy stuff, that's just unacceptable and if we don't have enough wherewithal to say, "Hey! This has got to stop. You're going to do what you're supposed to do in that school and I'm going to make sure."

I would love to come into a class or come into a school where, like in New York, the two brothers, the two principals who've taken over their community where the kids are lining up for weeks and weeks at a time to get into those two schools because they have said, "We're going to take this back." And that those parents are angry because they can't get their kids into those two schools in New York, and if these two schools are guaranteeing that, "If they come to this school, we're going to get them into college." Now if everybody in America, not only just Yates, but any school had that same kind of commitment, whatever it takes to get this kid and those kids are graduating and going to colleges at the rate of the high 90 percentage. You know, there's just no reason for it. This is too far after Emancipation Proclamation, Bill of Rights, whatever far back you want to go to for black people not to realize that you're only in your best or one of the best ways for you to get to the next level is that you've got to be educated.

You know, Ben Carson is no joke. Astronauts that we've had, those are people who dedicated themselves to get to the next level. Even here in Houston, Barbara Jordan, you know, these are the kind of, these are role models that we should have, yet and still

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we got role models, we allow our kids to have role models that are not, you know, uplifting to what we got to go do, you know. You, you ask ... I imagine if I asked my kids who your role model is they might not even know who Ben Carson is. They might not even know who, you know, if you go back into your black history, I hear this all the time, "Oh Mr. Carrington, we don't need to know that. That's old timey stuff. We don't need to know nothing about Marcus Garvey, we don't need to know nothing about, you know, we don't need to know nothing about the Niagara movement. We don't need to know anything about" ... come on. We build ... this is a foundation. Someone has laid the foundation, like I say someone has died for you to be here. Somebody literally died for me to have the position of teacher at this school. Somebody got hung. Dr. King and all those civil rights workers whatever they did to get us here, for us to just sit here and turn ... you going to turn in, it's not, you can't go to the next level if you're going to turn in stuff to me that's not right. That's got chicken grease on it; that's crumpled up, that you haven't done any research. We're setting them up for failure. I am so glad that I had the teachers, both in High School, all through my education, career, and in college that pushed you to the point where you got to get better. "Yes, you did real good, yes you did real good but you got to get better." It's always improve, improve, improve, improve!

Sometimes when I just wanted to just stop and say, "I've done enough," now I look at my students and I say to myself, "If nobody tells them," I don't want them to come back to me and say, "Mr. Carrington, you didn't tell me it was going to be like that," because then it's going to be on me. So I'm going to take the opportunity that every time I get a chance, I'm going to tell you. That, what you're doing, is going to get you an F in college because you're playing; you not doing what you're supposed to do.



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And the ones that are very, very sharp, I tell them, "Baby, keep on working, or son, you're doing great." That's what you need to do when you go to the next level. Don't go there with your head down when you are good. You go there saying, "I'm good, I know I'm good. I know I'm good. You don't have to tell me I'm good. I know I'm good. And I'm going to compete with you on any level that I need to compete with you to get what I need out of the situation."

You know, what happened when our kids go off and they are not prepared? They come back with their heads down. They come back disappointed because we build up the necessity of where they need to go but we haven't given them the reality of what they're going to feel when they go there. When you go there and you're not prepared, when you go there and you have no study habits, when you go there and you want to go there and party more than you want to go to the library. When you go to more parties than you go to the library, something is wrong with that picture. When you don't know how to do different kinds of foot notes and things like this that are in the system because eventually I not only want you to work with somebody else, top 10 in the country, I want you to own one. I want you to run one; I want you to say, "Okay, well my company is going to be based here in America or maybe we'll be based out of Nigeria, or maybe we'll be based out of France, I'm going to have an international business and I'll probably employ about 3 or 4,000 people. My scope is not only going to be America only; my scope is going to be somewhere else, as well."

Everywhere else in the world wants to come to America for what we have. There are some countries that don't even produce shoe strings for their shoes. There are some African countries that they don't know what clean water is. You know, so if you had the

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wherewithal to learn how to dig wells like I know this one young man is doing that all over in Africa, digging wells in Africa to bring them clean water. He might not get rich for it but you should probably be a whole lot better settled and your synergy is going to be a whole lot more focused than someone out here trying to be like one of these rap stars. You know, it's just ridiculous. And there's probably other things you can do in life or do around the world that would make you rich. I mean, and you know, and our concept of rich ... sometimes it kills me too because there is rich and there is rich. Our rich is "I got gold around my neck; I got gold in my teeth," you know, and don't even know how much an ounce of gold costs. Or don't believe, don't know that 14 ounce ... or 14 karat gold is nothing but in America they laugh at it. You know, our concept, we need to read more, we need to understand more and we need to do more.

I need to do more as an individual; I need to do more to motivate other people and I need to applaud people who are doing good things, those agencies in any community that's trying something. Shape Center, you know, Road Houses, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward Multi-Purpose Center, people that have gone before us. Moses, Roy, and I can't think of her name now, Lord, bless my heart, who ran 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward Multi-Purpose Center for many, many years. They talk about people who were motivators who were, who were way far ahead of their time when they were here, such as Mack Hana, Dr. Ford MacWilliams, John Chase, Dr. Edith Herby Jones. These are people who in their field are great. Chase Architect, Dr. Edith Herby Jones, the first licensed out of Arkansas, Medical Practitioner, Mac Hana, a millionaire, those people came from here! You know, they came from 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward or they left from 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward, you know. Barbara Jordan had an association with 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward through TSU. Dr. T.F. Freeman is recognized all over the world as motivating kids to speak well,

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you know to do well, to think, you know, philosophy and debate, so much that he goes all over the world. I mean, from 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward, from Texas.

I could go on all day long about what images we should be trying to put in front of our kids that this is what you need to try to be like. And we defer to letting them listen to that music, spending a God awful amount of money for iPods, music, that doesn't uplift. I go back to a song that Quincy Jones had the lyrics that says, "What good is a song, if it doesn't inspire, if it doesn't, if it has no purpose?" you know, and a lot of this stuff that our kids are listening to is junk in and it's going to be junk out. It brings down women; it's vulgar; it has no purpose and the people who are backing it, I bet if you really, really research the people who are backing that kind of music, they don't look like us. They don't look like us and it's no accident that they don't look like us. I bet if I just sat and found out who the producers were, who the marketers are, they doing it because it makes them money and it makes them millions of dollars. You want to do something, you want to do your music, develop your own label, be the MoTown, you know? MoTown had music that may have been considered out in the fringes but it wasn't like it is now. I mean, you can still listen to all of those stars on the radio. Our kids are listening to people that the music doesn't play ... you can't play it on the radio. It's too bad, they can't play it on the radio. Every other word would be beeped out, so the kids know that you got the radio version and the what we listen to version. Come on!

We got to say, it's not the government, I don't care ... we have ... if we have 14 more Obama's coming after him it's not at that level. It's at the level where I live, at the level where me, I'm the father of this house, you going to do what I say to do in this house, you going to do it right each and every time and the next person next to me and

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the next person next to me, we going to not do this kind of activity in this house. You not coming down my street with all that noise; you not rolling up in front of my house and bumping your horn and my daughter runs out of the house. Those are just basics. I mean, those are just basics we should have had or that we had at one particular time and we lost them. Why did we lose them is a whole another thing? So many men locked up, so many men killed, so many men strung out on different things that we just lost that. We lost that and until we get it back, everybody else got to step up to the plate. And I believe that so much that sometimes around here at school and I see kids doing something wrong, I say, "Come on, what are you doing?" "You ain't my daddy." "I'm going to be your daddy today!" See what I'm saying? That's why I'm going to be you daddy today because what you doing you need to stop doing it right now. And as long as we start turning blind eyes to what we need, then we not going to make any progress.

The numbers are just not on our sides. Three hundred million people in America, we represent a portion of that and until we get ourselves right, we are not going to expect the rest of us are going to get right. And when we get them right, we are going to be in good shape. When we teach men how to be men; how to take care of their women; how protect their families; how to provide for their families; how to go to work; how to go to work; how to teach their children to go to work and if you can't find work, find industry. Design something, build something. How to take care of you own stuff, how not to take somebody else's stuff. Because you know, if you get down on you luck, yeah, you been out there trying to work and had an accident and need help for a year or two or whatever have you, I understand that. But not to just sit back there and say, "Okay well, I'm waiting on my check." You know, that's got to be hard because I understand

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that there's going to be some people who are going to get caught up in that thing of "I just can't do no better right now." And there's sympathy but maybe not the government need to do that. What are we doing with these churches that we got? What are we doing with these churches that we got that take money every week and we got parishioners who need help and some of these preachers are riding around in these great big old Cadillac's this long? Ok, I think some of that could be there. You know, I don't have a solution to everything and I'm not trying to be an authority on everything, but we got to rethink about we're doing. First amongst our own families, second, amongst our own community, then let that spread.

I don't worry about what they're doing up in Washington D.C. You know, we survived all of them other presidents, whatever they was doing. I don't worry about Washington D.C. I just worry about that address that I live in; the family that I got to take care of. My conversations with my wife, my conversations with my son, my conversations with my daughter, and now the conversations I've got to have with my grand daughter, trying to prepare her for where she needs to be because to me, it's like what everybody should be trying to go through. She's the next step up and if you treat your children like they the next step up, I don't think you have any problem. If you prepare them for the next step up, so cut the TV off, go to do and then if you have a little time, you might get a chance to see it. If not, it stays off until that stuff gets done.

You don't need that, you don't need some shoes that cost \$2.16 to make and I got to pay a hundred and something, almost \$200.00, you don't need no tennis shoe like that. I mean, come on, we don't make enough money to keep investing our resources into tennis shoes, telephones, and stuff like that that we not making anything with. Until you

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get to the point to where “I can afford it, Mr. Carrington, I buy these shoes because I got a good job.” “You’ve got a good job? Fine, buy them. But you going to have on some \$200 shoes and you ain’t going to have no food in you house.” That don’t make no sense. You know, you going to be somewhere where you say for instance, like at Yates as a title, I forget whatever Title 13 or whatever that title is.

You going to be in a situation where you can get an education free and you’re not taking full advantage of an education and the next level, when they leave here, they going to have to start paying for it. So if you are not prepared for here, you’re not going to be prepared there, you going to run somewhere and have to pay for an education for about 2 years before you realize that I wasn’t prepared. So you are either going to have to go back and start all over again or you just going to stop. Doesn’t make any sense! I wouldn’t do it. I wouldn’t do it. I’m not going to do it. When as a little poor nappy headed boy from Corpus Christi, Texas, I got a scholarship, I had older brother, older sister, I had two younger brothers, and a younger sister and I knew how hard my momma had worked to get us to where we were. And I said in my mind, I’m going to get that education, I’m going to get a degree in 4 years. Period! I not going to make it in 4 ½ years, 5 years, cause the 4 years that I’m going to get this scholarship is FREE! F R E E. It’s free. I didn’t have to pay any money for it. All I got to do is go to school and make good grades and I’m going to get a diploma that’s going to maybe make me some more money, then you learn if you get another diploma, you get more money. I mean that’s capitalism. Okay? I can’t fault it.

Yeah, sometimes many people, me included sometimes, want stuff that we can’t afford right now but that’s a learning process within itself when you start learning that, “I

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can't afford this right now. I can't afford a Mercedes Benz and I'm making Volkswagen money. If I want a Mercedes Benz, I got to do those things in between a Mercedes Benz and a Volkswagen that will allow me to buy it. You know, I didn't say I got to go get my gun and go jack somebody to get that Mercedes Benz. You know, an affording it means more than, okay a Mercedes Benz costs \$95,000 a year. That's how much the car costs. What are you going to do about tune ups and tires and insurance? You know, that's the part of the conversation that we got to have with kids when you say you can afford something, you got the money for it, it's a whole lot of other things involved in it. When you say you got on some \$200.00 shoes, that means okay with the \$200.00 shoes you've got but now we don't have enough money to buy some food for a week. Now when you get sick and need to go to the hospital, we don't got it because I had to spend that \$200.00 for them shoes you got on. I literally took tennis shoes, and I was a tennis player, took tennis shoes and took tape and wrapped it around my toe when I wore out a hole in my tennis shoes but being able to do that got me the scholarship, that got me the free education. So I wasn't ashamed. I wasn't ashamed. That was where I was at that time in my life. I had to wrap my tennis shoe to cover up the hole. Was I the only one out there doing it? Yep! I didn't go steal somebody else's tennis shoes, you know, and there are many, many more stories that when the black elders sit and talk with their kids, have either similar stories they could tell kids, that might make a difference. It might make them appreciate what you got, what they've got to go through, what they've got to do in order to get to the next level. And let them know, "I'm expecting you, I don't want you to be as good as anybody on this earth right now. I want you to be better than they are. I don't want you to be as good as the principal of the school or the man who teaches

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chemistry, I want you to be better than he is. In order for you to be better than he is, you've got to study what he did to get there. What did he do in order to get that degree, to get this job, to teach chemistry? What did Ben Carson do to be recognized as one of the best surgeons in the world? You know, even if you want to go back in history, let's talk about George Washington Carver. What did they do? They knew what they was talking about. W.E.B. Du Bois was an intellectual. Don't be ... don't be equal to them, be better than they were, which means that you got to achieve more than they do. You know, we just got a long way, we got a long way to go and I think that 90% of where we got to go is on us. It's not on nobody else. It's not on the Federal Government, or Housing Authority, what it's on is us, starting with your family first, the community next, and then let's go from there.

EW: Well I want thank you so much Mr. Carrington for sitting down and talking with me and once everything has been uploaded and that sort of thing, then you'll be able to see your link interview and I want to thank you so much for talking to me.

RC: I appreciate the opportunity. It's not often that the common folk, I don't consider myself anything but a common person just trying to make a living, just trying to pay my bills, trying to grow my family, trying to do those things that I think are positive for our neighborhood, I mean, there's many opportunities. I probably could do a lot more in terms that I've been asked to participate in but I believe that this become, this, this class room, these teachers become, these students, become my chance to do the thing that I think we need to be. I touch probably about 600, 700 students a year. And I try to keep up with all of them. I'm getting older now and I lost my memory some time ago when I lost my hair but most of them, they make an impact on me, I make an impact on them.



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They say, "Mr. Carrington, you still here?" I see kids every day and kids, you know, kids want that! Kids want someone to be involved in, to feel that they were important, that they made a difference. Yes, I've had to be real tough with kids sometimes. I've had to give away some, "Son, you didn't earn that. You made an F." And stand your ground! To let them know that this is life. This is nothing compared to what your going to have to do when you leave here. There are going to be a lot of people, there are going to be some people who are going to want to advance you, just because you're black. So get used to it. Get used to it. If you don't want to be denied something, be prepared to take it. And I almost mean TAKE IT! You know, TAKE IT! Take that degree, take that job, take that position, take that business that you want to run and then make it work.

End of Interview