

Interviewee: Lee, Elwyn

Interview Date: October 26, 2011

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON  
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT  
*African American History*

Interviewee: Elwyn Lee

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**Abstract:**

This interview with Elwyn Lee, the current Vice President for Community Relations and Institutional Access (as of Fall 2013), recounts his roots and subsequent return to the city of Houston, especially focused on his involvement with the birth of the African American Studies program at the University of Houston. Lee, who first came to Houston less than a year after his birth in 1949, recalls growing up in the Third Ward during the increasingly racially polarized '50s and '60s. His experiences at Yale during the Civil Rights era (such as seeing the rise of an African American studies program, and being influenced by the Voting Rights Act) would inspire him to return to his hometown, where he was instrumental in getting the African American Studies program off the ground as one of its first directors.

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EW: Give your name and position?

EL: My current position?

EW: Yes sir.

EL: Alright okay. I'm Elwynn Lee and I'm the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs University of Houston System and the Vice President for Student Affairs University of Houston.

EW: So when, and more importantly where, were you born? Are you a native Houstonian?

EL: That's seems like a straightforward question, but I was born March 4, 1949 in Portsmouth, Virginia at least that's what they told me. I wasn't born in Texas but I got here as soon as I could because I think I was less than a year old when we arrived in Houston. So I consider myself more or less a native because this is all I knew in my early years.

EW: So what brought your family to Texas?

EL: My parents were coming here to work at... well my father was coming here to work at Texas Southern University and my mother was following him because they were well married and she was going to use her skills as a secretary to try to find work, which she did, in the school system.

EW: Okay well can you describe or elaborate briefly on the world in which you grew up here in Houston during that time period?

EL: Well you know in the early years I saw the world through the eyes of a child and I grew up not far from where we are sitting right now in Third Ward. I grew up right near the railroad track. I grew up probably less than 200 yards from Texas Southern

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University across the other side of the track was the Cuney homes which was a, you know, a project so to speak. It was a ditch between my house and the railroad track and I lived on a dead end street. So my world revolved around that dead end street, Cuney Homes and TSU. It was a segregated situation. Everybody in my world was black. My parents had one car which I never got to see much of so we went everywhere by foot. And so from a geographic standpoint our world was very circumscribed. In some sense that is very protective because in general you were always dealing with African Americans, you go to school your teachers were black, your life as a child revolved around your school.

You know, we had issues that people had. You know the Cuney homes had a gang which you had to be careful of because they were pretty violent and I remember that as being a dangerous situation for you as a child. You didn't want to be caught outside at the wrong time. There were times these people would literally come and attack people's houses. You rarely heard of them killing somebody but they could beat people up pretty bad. But in general I recall enjoying the neighborhood because it was a time when kids actually would go out to play and we had lots of friends and then we went to the black elementary school (which is still there) and then junior high school which is a little further away, not much, but you could walk there. Then we moved, ironically, right across the street from the junior high school on Wheeler still in Third Ward here. My junior high school was had been a white school and I marveled at the fact that it had a pool in the basement, because black schools didn't have such things. So that was a pretty enjoyable time.

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It was only a little later that, only once or twice did I have bad experiences because it was a segregated town but when you, you would go downtown and then there were places you couldn't go and the way that some people looked at you. You know we had a little black theater down on Dowling Street that you could go to. I didn't know that you couldn't go to the white theater downtown because I couldn't get down there on foot. I do recall once trying to go across Main walking and the cops pull up to you and say, "Where are you going boy?" which was very clear that they expected you to get back across Main. It's a funny thing in Houston some of the streets changed the names when you crossed Main. So someone could tell if you were black or white based on what streets you were in. So if you said you were Elgin, well that tended to be a black street. You know and if it's Westheimer, well shoot you just crossed Main.

So you know I went away to school after my 10<sup>th</sup> grade year and I had gone to Jack Yates which at the time had roughly about 2,700 students (it has about 1,200 now) and it was the premier at least in my view the premier black high school at the time. It was a big rivalry between Wheatley in Fifth Ward and Yates in Third Ward and a lot of the noted black individuals in Houston at the time came from one or the other schools. You will see a lot of pride in Fifth Ward. People like Barbara Jordan and Mickey Leland came from Fifth Ward. There are other people of some note that came from Third Ward, Debra Allen, Felicia Allen and there are others I can name. So it was a nice rivalry a nice competition both in terms of that kind of success but certainly in terms of athletics. I do recall they had the largest high school football rivalry in the country and they used to play right over here on Scott Street on what is now the University of Houston Stadium but at the time it belonged to the school district and we played both our junior high school

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games and our high school games, like I said that high school game between Wheatley and Yates was a huge thing. They would have parades on both sides of town and it was usually in November around Thanksgiving. It was such a thing that when integration came, and it came grudgingly to Houston, it almost seemed like the people administering integration were real punitive and vindictive and they took away that game which didn't make any financial sense and then some of the better teachers got moved from the black schools to some of the other schools. So from an interesting point of view it seemed like integration might have become a mixed blessing or maybe not a blessing at all it's unclear. But we were so segregated I didn't even know you couldn't go to McGregor Park which is right over here near down the street here. When I was living here as a child I didn't know you couldn't go there. I was away in prep school which I went to for 2 years. I was in my senior year in prep school when I read an article where it said they were going to integrate the McGregor Park and I didn't know we couldn't go to it because I lived on foot and I never could walk all the way over there. But had I gone I wouldn't have been able to use it. So that's basically...

EW: So then from there after completing high school and everything how did you come to attend U of H?

EL: Well I didn't really attend U of H as I said I grew up in Third Ward, I went to Yates, I left in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade and I spent 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade at Phillips Academy in Andover. Ironically I got there in part because George Bush, not the last one but the one before that was an alumnus who recommended me and so I ended up in Phillips Academy in Massachusetts for 2 years and that was quite an experience because as I told you I was in this sort of protective black world and I went up there and in the history

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books they will have you believe that New England is the home of abolitionism and everything was fine. Well I discovered the world was quite different than that. There were only 5 black people on the campus, students. There were no black staff whatsoever so that was a pretty trying time for me. I learned a lot about you know people having biases and prejudices and things of that nature. I did learn educationally but it was very, very difficult. But nonetheless I did graduate. I had to work a lot harder than other people and I got into Harvard, Princeton, and Yale and decided to go to Yale which is interesting. I went because I was... I had a lot of admiration for George Bush. He was someone who kept up with me and I admired him and he had gone to Yale and you know it was a pretty good school in addition to that.

So I got a scholarship and went to Yale and you know spent my years there, graduated, went to law school at Yale Law School and somewhere along the way I made a decision I wanted to come back to Houston. So then I had to work my way back. I was married and I went first to Washington, and as you know I'm married to Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee but at that time she was just Sheila Jackson before I married her. She was from New York and New Yorkers love New York so you can't just yank her from New York and put her in Houston. They don't even know how to say Houston. There's a street in New York called Houseton but so the first part of it was to get us to Washington D.C. kind of and we spent three years there and then I did some research I was doing a case dealing with the Voting Rights Act and that spurred me on even more because you learn at that time that the Voting Rights Act was really going to open up the State of Texas and the City of Houston to opportunities politically and what have you and I reasoned that, "We need to get down there to become part of that and get involved in

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politics.” And so I set about a plan to do that. I applied for teaching positions at a number of places but really my heart was set upon coming back to Houston. My original goal was to teach at Texas Southern and unfortunately the University of Houston told me I could come and TSU was kind of silent so I came committed to U of H. Somewhere before I got to U of H TSU said, “Oh yeah by the way we want you to come.” But I had already given my word and my word you know has to mean something. So I came and started teaching at the University of Houston so that’s how I got back to Houston and at the University of Houston.

EW: Okay well as you were here at U of H, were you aware at that time during the late 1960’s going into the early 1970’s of the campaign for the African American Studies program?

EL; I, you know I came back to Houston in January 1978 and I graduated from high school in June of 1967. Now between ’67 to ’78 you know I’m going back and forth and of course I had friends who were here on the campus so I was loosely familiar with what had been going on round about ’68 and what have you but not directly. I’m familiar with the story and I’ve talked to some of the people like Gene Locke and you know I knew many people I had gone to school with many of the people at Yates. Because when you go to Yates you really had gone to school with people for many years before that because the world was small back then. So I kind of knew with what had gone on and, and that kind of thing was going on all over the country in many ways.

When I got to Yale, before I graduated, you may not know this but there was a really massive effort on the part of the black students to bring in the African American Studies program to Yale and it was successful and I came in, in the middle of the

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planning and wasn't a key planner but I got to see how they did that. I got to see how they persuaded the Yale administration that there was academic merit to African American Studies and Yale, in fact at the time it was so controversial. They put on this conference and some of these administrators from across the country had to sneak into New Haven to listen to the presentation that was orchestrated by these senior black students. But I was there to see all that and it affected me greatly. And Yale with a grant from I think it was Rockefeller Foundation or whatever started an African American Studies program. And before I was to leave Yale, and keep in mind I was at Yale for basically 8 years, I got an opportunity to work in the African American Studies program and indeed be an assistant to the Director so that was very instrumental in my you know knowing a little bit about African American Studies. Of course Martin Luther King's death helped too, in a strange way, because when he died I shifted my focus, I had been majoring in English and I shifted to Urban Studies and in addition to Urban Studies I took the opportunity to also take more African History and more African American History. So his death prompted me to study urban life and things and then I got involved with the African American Studies program. So even though I segued through law and got here I had some background in African American Studies because of that experience.

EW: So then how did you come to be part of the African American Studies program here and I know when we had talked before you were saying that you may not want to say everything about that.

EL: Well let me put it as politically correctly as I can. It was the program the people who pressured the University have very strong individuals. Some of them have gone on to run the S.H.A.P.E. Community Center, Deloyd Parker, Gene Locke is a stellar lawyer



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and just recently ran for mayor, there were other people and there were some strong women like Lynn Eusan, who unfortunately was murdered. There were some strong people and the program was very strong when they started. I mean they did the political thing and got a line item from the legislature that went straight from the legislature to the program. The legislatures fully supported the program and it had been very strong. Some of the papers that I saw at one point they had 60 courses in that program. They had adjuncts like Reverend Bill Lawson (because they had to have a lot of adjuncts because you didn't have many black faculty here at the campus). So what happened was I was at the law school and once I got tenured I got involved in committee work across the campus because prior to getting tenured you are too busy trying to get tenured. But I threw myself in the committees and I was on the committee for minorities. I was on the equal opportunity committee. I was enjoying doing that kind of stuff and then they...

What happened one year was that Endaqua (16.59) who had been the head of the African American Studies who was from Africa, he went to Africa and didn't come back and they needed to search for a director. They actually searched for two years and during those two years they actually locked up the doors, put chains around the doors. Lawrence Curry who happens to be Caucasian, a good friend of mine was like Assistant Dean and he was running it out of the fourth floor of Agnes Arnold and the offices were on the third floor. So, you really didn't have much of a program and these committees were trying to find a director and I was asked to join the committees, which was a real eye opener for me because two years they were failed searches. What would happen is that the committee would find someone they wanted and the Provost or whoever charged the committee wanted the new person to already be tenured and the reason for that is

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anybody been around here knew that black folks and even Hispanic folks at the time, they would have a hard time getting tenure, that had been the history so if you want someone to be here for a while they wanted them to already come in tenured. So the committee would find someone and then there was no Department of African American Studies so they might be in History/English so they needed to be tenured in History and English. So the committee would propose and send the dossier to English or History or wherever the case may be, or Music or Sociology, and then that department would come back and say, "Well they're not good enough to be tenured."

And that's why the searches failed for two years. At least one of those, one or two of those people were already tenured at other schools but somehow they could not be tenured here, so said the department. So you know it was a situation where it looked like the thing, the program was going to die after that illustrious history and so at that point having been aware of the original history, having been part of a program in Yale, having been thoroughly convinced of the importance of these kind of programs and what they could do not just academically but in terms of recruitment, in terms of retention and in terms of inspiring pride there's so many multiple benefits to such a program if done properly, it seemed like a shame that the program should die because you know these departments wouldn't accept someone. So then the Provost at the time said that well, he said, "Well let's try and find an interim, you know maybe somebody who was black who was already here who could at least for two years, maybe could run it and then we start fresh."

For some reason it fell to me to go around and try and find someone to be an interim. So I went around to all the black faculty that I knew about who were in the

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Humanities or in the social sciences and for various reasons none of them wanted to become an interim. And to be honest I could understand why they might not because it was not a prestigious program it didn't exist at all. It wasn't a department and while it had an illustrious past, the present situation was if you were to become that, it wasn't going to enhance you with your colleagues in English or History, or nationally or anything like that. There may have been other reasons, but you can see from a professional career standpoint it wasn't anything that was going to give you a boost. Indeed I was in the law school and when I told people I was considering doing this they looked at me like I was crazy because it has very little to do with your law background, it's not going to take you this way, you know so you lose a little prestige by doing that.

So I offered my services and once we negotiated my salary which didn't go as smoothly as I would like but in the end they saw it my way and I took over in about '89, 1989. The sad part about it was you know the office had been locked up. It literally had cobwebs, dust, and dirt and the other sad part about it I only had about \$25,000 worth of programmatic money. So I negotiated some money to renovate the offices and make it an office but after that I only had \$25,000 but I inherited some of my father's creativity and he had a lot of it. He was a Hampton-Tuskegee man, so he knew how to work with his hands, all that so I had them renovate a small space outside the offices for a kitchen. They didn't want to do that. The man who is over there at the time told me, "Why should we renovate, this program is not going to be here long, it's not really an academic program?" His job was to renovate stuff but he was telling me that and he literally told me that. So it was a real political thing just to get them to do the small kitchen. And I needed a kitchen because I didn't have money to afford a lot of catering and if I was

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going to have programs and receptions I needed a way to do it on the cheap. So that was going to be helpful. Then we renovated the rest of it again being efficient and made it very thematic, spent a lot of time selecting furniture that was flexible so you could use the one big room in multiple ways. I spent a lot of time on the art, tried to find art that would both inspire and was thematic in other ways. You know things that were historic, some that were artsy, and some that talked about, you know we needed to cover all the aspects not just history, but social science and art. So I tried to do art, created a library and put materials in it. So it was really a labor of love. I spent, I spent a whole day just looking for hinges on the doors because I felt, I firmly believe this that if people are in a place that is classy and exceeds their expectations they will feel important, especially when they know you did it for them, that you were preparing a place for them and because of that you made it especially nice and especially appealing with them in mind. So I spent a lot of time on that.

Then I had the challenge with of how to breathe life into a program that was... barely had a pulse and no visibility and so like I said once you get through with the renovation money and staff money, \$25,000 you had to kind of coerce and persuade people to even associate their classes with the program. Again, a very low prestige at this point and to build... because someone could teach a course in English and it could be co-listed in African American Studies and English but you know you need to get their permission. So you know you had to do that and then students, just like everybody else, "What am I getting involved in?" You can minor in the program but you had to make them think that's a positive thing. So we had to woo the students, get them involved and give visibility to programs so people will want to be associated and I saw the role as

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bigger than just the students and class. I saw that we should take a lead on Black History Month, because if we don't try to educate the larger community, I mean the campus community, whose going to do it? So many of them they don't know much about black history or black art or all kinds of things that you might take for granted if you have just a little bit of interest in the subject, the average person. So we are at this school that is allegedly diverse but that doesn't mean the people over here know anything about cultural life and that sort of thing. So you want to bring it to them, bring it to people in the classroom but also wanted to bring it to them in a larger sense. So the way we stretched the dollars and to make it seem like we had 5 or 6 times more than that was to partner with people, and I got very adept at that.

We had a very exciting year and a half. Kids got really invested. They felt like you know when Dr. Lee's program was their program. I mean, I lead it, but they felt at home. They started a newsletter called The Black Exchange. I think I had a copy here somewhere which was at the time computers were not the things they are now and this is kind of an example of it. Which I thought, if you can't even remember what computers were like back then, but this was actually very creative and the thing about this, this newsletter was lead primarily by the black male students. They were the leaders of this effort which was a tremendous thing to have the black male students, who often lag behind the female students in terms of getting involved, take the lead on a newspaper. But it was a great, you know, both males and females, we had fashion shows. We had, during Black History month I remember we had a big art exhibit in the University Center. Some of the art was so valuable that we had to have guards watching it. I borrowed some art from some friends I had locally it was really good stuff and we had panels on blacks

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in the military and we had films on that. My father was one of the 10 original Tuskegee airmen so I grew up knowing about that particular situation and so I felt a special pride in educating people about that and bringing some of the Tuskegee airmen who live here in Houston and collecting some of the memorabilia that we did. We brought some people from the military. I think there's a female general, the first female general in the Air Force or something, who was from Houston. She came down to speak. We got on television to expand the larger community about that. We brought the play Camp Logan here, I don't know where I got the money for that, which is about the ride I think it was 1917 right over here in what was Fourth Ward, that took place over in Cullen Performance. Then one of our professors here, Dr. Brown-Guillory had written a play and we produced that like it was a major Broadway thing and she didn't have a great name or anything like that as a play write but students got to act in it and then we PR'ed the hell out of it which was really difficult. At University of Houston getting people to come to things is very difficult. It is very difficult to do. We filled E. Cullen Performance Hall which is an amazing thing to do, it is very difficult. And the reason why it is to fill things in University of Houston is because 70% of the students work 10 to 30 hours per week so they go to class, they go to work. If they are not getting credit it's got to really be something exciting or famous for them to go. So it is very, very tough. But we managed to pull it off and I'll never forget the Dean of the College was like, "Wow, wow!" He was just so amazed that we could fill that place. We brought Lerone Bennett and we paid him. I will never forget that, because remember I only had \$25,000, we had to pay him \$5,000. But he was a name, he came, he spoke. That was good, that was very good. So then I hired an assistant early on who had a degree in counseling and

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he was like the Pied Piper. He had a counseling degree. He was very good with students. They rallied around him. He did a lot of mentoring and that sort of thing. So it became a program that was achieving in a lot of ways. It could help with recruitment because it was something positive where people cared about students. There was both individual and group counseling going on. There was academic stuff going on. So it was really exciting. I thoroughly enjoyed my little year and a half. And they wanted me to stay longer but at some point I felt I needed to go back to the law school. If I kept doing that I would end up never leaving.

EW: Absolutely, so then so it sounds as though the program had a lot of activity going on in this early inception then was shut down for two years essentially and then there was a renaissance during your two years, what happened with the program after your years ahead of it?

EL: Well after I left we had with Dr. Brown-Guillory took over and I'll give the short version and a little bit longer version you can cut me off. The short version was Dr. Brown-Guillory took over but she didn't stay in the position, it was less than a year and then subsequent to that there were other people who were interims and then there was some turns, you know it kept turning over. We had a little period in there where Dr. Linda oh my goodness the name escapes me, Linda from History, she was there the director for a number of years and they had a little bit of stability. I'm trying to... I don't know why I can't think of her name. But anyway...

EW: Dr. Reed.

EL: Dr. Reed, Linda Reed. But in general if you want to take the short version after I left they kept changing directors and when you don't have that stability you can't have a

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consistent focus and not everyone there who was in the position was adept or cared about politics. And when you talk about resources and you are involved in politics someone will take your money or your money will dry up. I considered that a part of the job and wanted to protect the line item money and over time with people being in it who was changing out and not being political they lost the line item and those monies started shifting toward Mexican American Studies and that kind of thing. So that's kind of what happened in short.

I think one of the ...I had hoped that Dr. Brown-Guillory would build on what we had but when she came in she kind of I guess saw it as a blank sheet of paper and like, "How do I want my program to be?" and we had all hoped that she would build on the strength that had been developed, and because she changed some of the things that were going on and because the students had developed a sense of ownership they developed conflict between her and the students and at the end of the day as a result of that conflict she stepped down. And then we went on this period of other interims and instability and then Dr. Reed she added some stability but she went on leave. She's a true academic, she writes books. I think at least a couple times in there she had to go on leave for a year to go do research. So and again not everybody who took it on even as an interim had the focus that I had developed which was a broad focus that involved not just the courses but one that involved being retention in that it would be a home for particularly African American Students where you could nurture them and inspire them, also a focus of trying to educate the larger community and also trying to help participate in the recruitment of students as well, get involved with the enrollment side. That was a broad agenda.



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If you want to see what that's like the current Mexican American Studies program does that very well right now and one of the reasons they have been able to do it very well, number one you had that focus and number two, they have had consistent leadership for over 20 years. So when you have one focus a consistent focus, and consistent quality leadership you can, you can develop it and it's grown and what have you. So, some of the people who took over and I'm not naming any names. It was so many after a while it's almost like everybody got a shot at it. You know define things a little bit narrower in terms of weren't as interested in the non-strictly academic things, you know courses and so you know when you're not, if you don't give that attention then that kind of drops off. Some people weren't as interested in the students being as at home. You can do things that make it less comfortable. For example the newspaper was essentially published. They started it, it wasn't our newsletter. It was their newsletter and at one point that got put out of the offices. Well, you know that will put you in conflict real fast especially if they feel a sense of ownership. But it became less of a place where people were welcome and so some of those non, I wouldn't say non-academics, some of those other benefits began to go up and down but the general trend to where they were not being input into that.

Then the current head of it has more of an Afro-centric perspective and to be honest when that search was going on it got down to two candidates one a very traditional guy from a tier one school and Dr. Conyers who, you know was dashiki wearing, comes from temple, Africana Studies and the administration was having a hard time choosing between the two and there was a group called Sankofa at the time that was dominated by several very strong African American females and they kind of [REDACTED] (37.48) the

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situation, you know went up to the president's office and you know all of that. To be honest I think that swayed him to nudge the decision in the direction of someone who had more of an African perspective. So Dr. Conyers came on, and he does have that perspective in Africana studies and you saw that language creeping in sometimes when you see programs and things and not everybody agreed with that focus because that meant that there were fewer African American courses or the things that you do, one of the things that he did was to immediately start trying to figure out how to go to Africa. You know, Africa... Africa so on and so forth. And less you know not as much emphasis on African American culture, the arts, or even African American history. Although that's not a very intense conflict I think if you would have talked to a lot of people they would probably feel like the balance should have been struck somewhere else, some people do and some people are just fine with it as it is. And then a lot of those other things again, the recruitment aspect and heavy retention things are not anywhere near where they were back in the day when people started or even when I was there. So that's kind of where we are. There is some stability because you have a record of a director who's been there and so that's a positive. So there you are.

EW: Well I just have one final question then having been involved with African American Studies program for as long as you have, even though you haven't been the head of it you have seen where it has gone over all these years. What do you think is the future direction or what do you think is the future of the program here? Does it seem positive, does it seem there are certain things are destined to take place or needing to take place?

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EL: Well you know my job's been really, really busy you know over the years I've had you know less and less time to devote to African American Studies because it is a huge job. When Dr. Conyers came on there was this group that was you know really aggressive about the situation in terms of an African focus and subsequent to that the same group and others were talking about how we've got to make it a department and make it a department and that's been articulated by Dr. Conyers and want to make it a department and all that. But the reality is that departments costs money because departments have faculty and faculty lines and whole or in part before you get to the issue of if it should be. If you don't have the money it doesn't matter. So unless you're going to get the money donated it depends on the University having enough money to do that, as you and I speak now we have serious budget cuts, people are being laid off thing furloughs, so money is really tight right now and it's not a department now and money is real tight so I'm not sure when that would happen. I mean even if there were not a philosophical dispute among some people whether it should be, it's really irrelevant if you don't have enough money to amass faculty who are your faculty, because departments have the power to recommend people for tenure and that sort of thing. So I don't see that happening anytime soon because of the budget situation is tight and will be for the foreseeable future.

But that doesn't mean you can't strengthen the program. I think Mexican American Studies is a good example if you look at the number of faculty who are Hispanic, much of that is due to them bringing in visitor scholars, letting them be here for a year and then so doing the department where they are it kind of gets comfortable it gets used to them, then it's easier for them to vote to have that person come on board, much

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less threatening decision they know who they are voting for. So they have used that technique and the number of Mexican American and Hispanic faculty have grown and far exceeds the number of African American faculty and I think you could do that without it being a department and in fact I would venture, I would argue that that's a precursor to you even ever getting there because you need faculty here and they don't all have to be African American, don't get me wrong. We've had some Anglo professors that have taught African American History, Africana History very good. But I'm saying to the extent that you want to have a department you need to kind of get people here and then move that way as opposed to like the carrying I have a department and now I have to go hire people. You have to have real money for that.

So anyway, I would like to see a greater focus on some of these other things. I would like to see a greater focus and involvement on some of the recruitment efforts because we need all the help we can get on that. I'm not over recruitment now. I was over it for 9 years but I think that would be a good thing. I think some greater involvement collaborating with other folks who are dealing with retention would be a tremendous thing. And I haven't done a review of the courses to see where they tilt toward but as someone who has taken African History and traveled to Africa but also dug deep into you know the history of the African Americans here and culture I really think the program has to be all of those things and not tilted towards so much to one but again I haven't done an inventory recently. It may be perhaps more balanced then I think as we sit here. As I say my job keeps me real busy so I haven't done a recent review of that. But from time to time I get students coming in here who constantly going to Africa as part of the program. And it does make me wonder whether they take some trips down

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south, go on the Pettis bridge, and go to Atlanta and talk about some of the things that went on there and you know those kind of things, or go to Detroit and see where Martin Luther King got shot and talk about urban renewal and why was he up there and whether it had to do with Civil Rights and unfinished business you see what I'm saying all those kinds of things.

EW: Alright well I think you answered these questions and then some and inspired some more actually and some more research but I do want to thank you.

EL: Well it's my pleasure.

EW: Yes sir. Thank you so much for your time.

EL: You're welcome, you're welcome. Good luck.

EW: Yes sir.

End of Interview

