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## **Fred Lakey (November 1, 2021)**

Jai Battle

NARRATOR: Fred Lakey  
INTERVIEWER: Jai Battle  
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PROJECT: Black at Whittier College

JB: **[1]** Rolling. Alright, so I'm here with Mr. Fred Lakey, and this is a oral history project for Our Story, Racial Justice and Equity Project. Okay, so to start can you tell me your name?

FL: Fred Lakey.

JB: Great. Alright, and can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up. Like, what do you consider your hometown?

FL: My hometown is Compton, California. I went to elementary, junior high, and high school.

JB: And can you tell me a little bit about your childhood and your upbringing? Did you have any siblings?

FL: Yeah, I have three brothers, two of them had passed, so there were six of us. Mother and father, Clarence and Jessie Lakey, they met in San Pedro.

JB: Oh, cool. So, they're California natives?

FL: They're not California natives. My mother is from Arkansas and my father is from Louisiana.

JB: Oh, okay.

FL: And so, the great migration, some went north and thank God my grandparents came west.

JB: Yeah, yeah.

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FL: And so, they ended up in San Pedro.

JB: Cool, awesome, yeah. My mom is—we have family in Alabama, so we've been to, like, kind of Louisiana and stuff around there before. Alright. What level of education did your parents or caregivers have?

FL: My parents did not finish high school.

JB: And how did that affect your choice of going to college? Did that impact your decision at all?

FL: Um (pause), I guess yes—yes, because my parents, well they always encouraged me to do well in school, and they were very proud of how well I did. When I was in the ninth grade I came home and told them that they told me that the ninth grade was the beginning of the process of getting into college, and their eyes opened wide, the opportunity that their son would be able to go to college. And so, yes, they encouraged. They didn't know the whole process of getting into college.

JB: Right.

FL: But they said whatever it took for them, for me to go. They were very supportive. (clears throat)

JB: And so, what made you decide to attend Whittier College, specifically? Like, could you pinpoint a specific moment or anything—like, when your decision was absolutely sold on Whittier?

FL: So what happened was—I don't know—Whittier had a pipeline to Compton High School.

JB: Okay, okay.

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FL: So, the class of 1968, before I graduated, they must have had 20 or 25 students from Compton go to Whittier.

JB: Wow.

FL: And then, in my class it was about 25, 30. There were a bunch of us.

JB: Really? Okay, okay.

FL: And then the class afterwards. And I never understood that. So, when I was in high school it seemed like I was steered to Whittier, yes.

JB: How did you feel about that?

FL: I didn't really put it together until later.

JB: Right, okay.

FL: When I look at it, I think our counselors did us a disservice. Don't get me wrong, I love—  
—Whittier was best for me—

JB: Right.

FL: —and I really enjoyed it, but some of the students from Compton probably should have ended up in Ivy League schools.

JB: Mm-hmm.

FL: They were super sharp.

JB: Totally.

FL: It seemed like we were just funneled to Whittier.

JB: Completely. Yeah, like that was like almost like the only direction it seemed like?

FL: Right. Right.

JB: Yeah, or like the right direction.

FL: They didn't give us, the group that we were in, a lot of choices.

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JB: Right, right. So, when you went to Whittier, because so many of the students were from Compton, did you feel more comfortable going in because you knew people?

FL: Definitely.

JB: Okay, okay. Cool. So, you attended Whittier from 1969 to 1973.

FL: Correct.

JB: And you majored in economics. Is that correct?

FL: Business.

JB: Business, okay. So, is there anything specific about business that drew you in, or like why did you decide to choose that as your major?

FL: Well, I started off, I was a math major.

JB: Okay, okay.

FL: And then it got to a point that I wasn't thinking about going, being an engineer, going into engineering, and then I'd switched over to business, which helped me a lot, and with an emphasis in finance. And so, the math really came into play.

JB: Got you. Okay, perfect. Okay, so in my preparation for this interview, one of the things I had to do was research the moment that you went to college. So, that was from the years 1969 to 1973. And so, what I found out was so much happened during that time. We had the Cold War, the Space Race, Vietnam, Watergate—the list goes on. So, do you remember hearing about any of these events, like in the media or during your time at Whittier?

FL: The first year—the first was very turbulent because it was the Vietnam War and it was almost like second semester things almost shut down.

JB: Really?

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FL: Because people were protesting. They almost set up a war room in the CI just to find out what's going on. And then Kent State, Jackson State. And then, for us, the BSU, you know, it was Malcolm versus King; the Black Panthers; it was a lot going on. And you have to remember the Civil Rights Act had just been passed, the Voting Rights Act. So, there was a lot coming at us and we're naïve freshman.

JB: Yeah, yeah.

FL: For me, I didn't know what was—you know, being pulled—it was exciting.

JB: Right. How did you navigate that? Did you just kind of—it was almost like fight or flight, like you just kind of had to do it?

FL: Well, the good thing about Whittier, it was small, and the Black students rallied around to help us.

JB: Okay, yeah.

FL: You know, the ones who had been there and went through what we're going to go through. And they were very helpful. They pointed out professors, classes. They even set up tutoring sessions for us. So, that support was key. And even the administration. Because it's a small campus, the professors were accessible. You could go and sit and talk to them and they would point out things to help you. So, I saw, when I was there, that Whittier really tried to help us, everybody, succeed.

JB: Right, right. Great. So you would say there was almost like that sense of community between the Black students—

FL: With the Black students.

JB: —and the college, yes.

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FL: Well, there was tension between the Black students and the administration. Things were going on, just at the time. You know, instants of people who weren't as sensitive to other people's needs and that type of thing.

JB: Mm-hmm, okay. So, was there a specific moment when the media and the world news, kind of, were addressed by the college? Like, do you remember them putting out any specific newsletters or anything like that that were addressing the current events in the news?

FL: You know, they had the student newspaper, but [2] most of it came from the students themselves. The student body, they were self-motivated. They were on the phones talking to other schools, other campuses. When Kent State happened there was protests and they even had an anti-war protest walk from the campus down to Whittier City Hall.

JB: Wow. Were you a part of that?

FL: Yes.

JB: Cool.

FL: Yes, and we held signs.

JB: Did you want to talk about your experience with that? Like, how did you get to be there, I guess?

FL: Well, so the Black students, we came for a different direction, and it was such that we're over in Vietnam and there's a lot of soldiers, Black soldiers, that they were sending over, and a lot of us were dreading to be drafted. Okay, before you had the student deferment. Then they did away with that. Then they went to the lottery. And nobody wanted to go to Vietnam. They heard the war stories and so that's one reason why we marched. We held signs. They weren't profane signs we were walking, but yeah. (clears throat)

LAKEY

JB: So, the *Quaker Campus Newspaper* and the *Whittier College Acropolis*, which is the yearbook, as you know, have now been digitized, so I also incorporated some of that information into my questions for you today. So, with that being said, can you describe any extracurricular activities you participated in while at Whittier?

FL: I participated in the BSU.

JB: Right.

FL: And intramurals—they had flag football, and then they had basketball. So, when I was a freshman I was on the JV basketball team.

JB: Oh, okay. Cool.

FL: Yeah, and I started to pledge Penn—

JB: Okay.

FL: —but as I got into it, I realized that wasn't for me.

JB: Too overwhelming, or just too—just not your thing?

FL: Too not—I couldn't relate.

JB: Yeah, I totally get it. (laughs)

FL: (laughs)

JB: So, yes, you were a member of the Black Student Union. So, could you point to any moments that could accurately describe or characterize your experience and your time as a member of the Black Student Union.

FL: I was elected president of the BSU my junior year and the school had—they gave us a building. It's been razed since. So, we set about to make it like the BSU cultural center. And so, what we did in the summer is we called all the Black students and asked them if there were old books that they weren't going to use, and we created a library.



LAKEY

JB: Oh, cool!

FL: And we had like a room for us to get together, have parties, and just discuss different things and different issues on campus.

JB: Cool. And that was what year? Sophomore?

FL: That was my junior year.

JB: Junior year, okay, so you used it for junior and senior year? The building?

FL: Yes. Yeah, right. So, my sophomore year I was the head cheerleader. (laughs) I was hoping to avoid that.

JB: (laughs) All good. No, all good. All good.

FL: No, the reason why I'm laughing is because I had a birthday party, and it was a roast. And I have my son Chris, he graduated from—he played basketball, and so the coach from Whittier invited him and they were talking to him, trying to get him to come, and they told him that they had a picture. He thought he was going to see me in a basketball uniform, but there I was as a cheerleader. (laughs) And he told all my friends that. And they still roast me on that. That's not funny.

JB: (laughs) No, I love that. That's hilarious. That's literally hilarious. Oh, my gosh. Alright, so why did you choose to join the Black Student Union?

FL: It was because I could relate to the Black students, and it was informative. I learned a lot and they were helpful. It's like you said, it was the community and we felt safe.

JB: Right. Yeah, got that. So, how would you describe your participation or your activeness in the BSU. You were the president so, obviously (laughs)—

FL: I was very active from freshman year and probably to the end of the junior year.

JB: Okay.

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FL: Senior year I would attend, but mostly I was trying to figure out what I was going to do after Whittier.

JB: Yeah, so senior year was more focused on just after college. I totally understand. Alright. So, to the best of your ability, can you run me through a typical club meeting or, like, just one of your group—just a club meeting, basically. Could you run me through the processes? Like, what were the goals and ambitions of the club?

FL: So, it depends on what year. My freshman year—so, Whittier, the sports team you couldn't recruit.

JB: Right.

FL: But they'd get athletes, and they'd give them financial aid. A couple of the athletes that they brought in, you know they had their tuition paid for, but they didn't have food or room and board. And so, the BSU met with the administration and said what's up with that? And then—so, Whittier is a small campus surrounded by the neighborhood, and so there were incidents with the people in the neighborhood, and so we would address those concerns and present them to the administration. But a lot of it was social and just opportunity to get together and hang out. But the good thing is we weren't isolated, segregated, okay? Say we gave a party, everybody was invited. It wasn't just for Black students.

JB: So, were most of the meetings more informal, more formal? Like, did you always have a meeting agenda with points or were they more like—did you do more like party-type things where everyone could come?

FL: It was formal; we would have an agenda that we would address. But we weren't meeting every week.

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JB: Okay, okay.

FL: Probably once a month. And then, a lot of times it was impromptu. If an issue came up, then we would circulate the word and then we'd meet to address it.

JB: Mm-hmm, great. Got it. So, what was your relationship with other members of the club?

FL: Well, I married a member. (laughs) They were friends. Most of them were friends. We would hang out. Some of them were my roommates in college. But it wasn't where we were protesting or we didn't go to class—that type of thing. Basically, the BSU, we were trying to help each other succeed.

JB: Right, cool. So, would you say that it was like kind of just a group of friends that just happened to be interested in social work, and like that friendship almost carried over into the club, would you say?

FL: I think it was the other way around. I think the students before us, they formed the BSU as more political and social in nature [3] and trying to bring the Black experience to Whittier so we would feel comfortable. Like one year Dick Gregory came and spoke.

JB: Right.

FL: And so, the leadership said it would be nice if we all wore daishikis to show that solidarity.

JB: Right, right. So, what was the BSU's relationship, I guess, with other clubs on campus? Did you guys interact? Did you guys—or was it just everyone kept to themselves.

FL: We knew people in the societies, and some of the Black students were in societies, but it wasn't that we would sit down and have a conference or anything like that. It's just our interaction. We would see the students in the class and hang out maybe in the CI or whatever, but we wouldn't have structured or formal meetings.

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JB: Right, with those—

FL: Yeah.

JB: Got you.

FL: Because I saw them more as social, anyway.

JB: Right, totally. That makes sense, yeah. So, what was the college's interest, or how would you characterize the college's interest in the Black Student Union? Did they ask you to appear in *The Rock*? Did they approach you with anything like that?

FL: I—they were—no, I think they were more reactionary.

JB: Okay.

FL: Okay, they brought us on campus and, you know, you're on campus you do what you got to do to get through, but fortunately, like I said, the other Black students saw the need and provided that support system.

JB: Right, got it. So, how would your experience, I guess, be different if you didn't have the Black Student Union? Would it like completely alter it, or would it just not—

FL: Uh, (laughs) that's a good question. Mine would have been different in that—my personality is, and sense of humor—

JB: Yeah, yeah. (laughs)

FL: When I tried out for cheerleading I did it on a lark, on a whim. I was acting silly. You know, we went one round in the second round, and then in front of the whole student body I was a clown, okay?

JB: Yeah. (laughs)

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FL: And so, when they announced—because it was a vote by the students. I didn't take it seriously, and then I got the most votes. I was the head cheerleader, or head elevator(?), okay.

JB: Yeah. (laughs)

FL: So, that caused a conflict, okay, with me. So, you had the BSU, Black students, a small number of Black students at this white college. I'm standing up there and we didn't do the typical cheers, okay? So, coming from Compton, you know, what they call soul cheers—my wife was a cheerleader.

JB: Okay, cool.

FL: So, she gave me cheers to do, and so we had routines. When I wasn't throwing up in the air we would dance, okay?

JB: Right, right.

FL: But then the whole BSU—so, Fred, what are you going to do, you know?

JB: Mm-hmm, yeah.

FL: So, if we didn't have the BSU I probably would have, I don't know, been a cheerleader for another year or so. But at some point, I just, I quit.

JB: Right, right. Got you. I understand. I love the cheerleading thing.

FL: (laughs) Please (inaudible)\_\_\_\_\_. You said the yearbook is digitized?

JB: It is.

FL: All the yearbooks?

JB: Most of them, yes.

FL: From my year? (laughs)

JB: I think so, yes. I'm going to go back and look, don't worry.

LAKEY

FL: Oh, lord.

JB: I want to find a picture. (laughs)

FL: It's funny because we got a mailer a couple years ago.

JB: Yeah.

FL: You know how they send out mailers when you're graduated, asking for money.

JB: Yeah.

FL: And guess who's on the cover? Me. (inaudible)\_\_\_\_\_. (laughs)

JB: Oh, that's too good! Oh, it's too good.

FL: And my kids saw it. Oh my gosh.

JB: That's amazing. That's actually amazing. I need to find that immediately.

FL: No, you don't. (laughs)

JB: I'm going to send it. That's so funny. Okay, so could you just, I guess, tell me more about your relationships on campus. So, with your peers, this could be any experiences, memories, with roommates, classmates, club members. Like anything in particular that you wanted to tell?

FL: My first year they didn't have a room for me. So, my first day on campus—at one point they had converted, I think the old hospital, into a dorm.

JB: Oh, okay.

FL: I had met up with the freshman, I forgot the freshman dorm—

JB: Stauffer?

FL: No. Vandenberg?

JB: Uh, Wanberg.

FL: Wanberg, yes. And so, I met the freshman and they helped me move down there.

LAKEY

JB: So, was Wanberg a freshman dorm when you were there?

FL: Yeah.

JB: Okay, okay.

FL: Is that the one up the hill?

JB: Yeah, it's up the hill, yeah. Yeah, okay. So, actually I know that they just—not recently, but they did—so, the other one on the hill is Turner.

FL: Yeah, that was—

JB: That wasn't there, right? Because I think that's newer.

FL: So, my freshman year, so I ended up in a big room, so it was three of us.

JB: Okay, yeah. Yeah.

FL: And so, one of my roommates was from Compton; we went to Compton together. And the other one was Lloyd Zemed(?); he was from New York.

JB: Okay, cool. And you said you were in a converted, what was the converted—hospital?

FL: It was a hospital, and they must have bought the hospital and converted it to a dorm.

JB: Okay, and you were there freshman year?

FL: One day.

JB: Okay. (laughs)

FL: Because I was separated from all the other freshmen. I was up there, really, by myself.

JB: Right. How did that happen?

FL: I don't know. I don't know.

JB: Okay. (laughs) I was in Stauffer freshman year, so when I moved in like the line—because obviously the parking lot is this tiny, so when we were moving in the line of cars was like all the way down Philadelphia and I had like too much stuff. But (laughs) tons of

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stuff lined up, but it was crazy. And then, I was on the third floor, so that was amazing, because then I just had to lug up all that stuff. But yeah, okay, so switching gears, I guess.

Not a ton, but more to the administration side. So, could you tell me, or was there a specific professor that has been particularly influential to you during your time at Whittier? Anyone you considered like a mentor or anything like that?

FL: Not really.

JB: Okay, okay.

FL: There was one professor. When I told him that I had gotten into Kent State graduate school he was familiar with it. I think he may have gone there, yeah.

JB: Okay, cool. Awesome. Okay.

FL: But probably the closest was probably Coach Mendez.

JB: Okay. Awesome. And he was a—

FL: But I never had any classes with him, but he really worked with the Black students. He would come to the BSU meetings. He would point things out to us, and he was there for an advisory role. If anybody ever needed anything they could go talk to him.

JB: Okay. And was he white?

FL: No, no, he was Black.

JB: Okay, okay. And so, he was the coach for—

FL: I think he was a baseball coach.

JB: Baseball coach, okay, cool.

FL: As a matter of fact, I think the field is named after him. He passed away.

JB: Oh! Okay. That's really amazing. How did you—he was a baseball coach, so how did you get in contact with him originally?



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FL: He'd just come down and talk to the Black students, yeah.

JB: Cool, yeah.

FL: I mean, men and women, and you didn't necessarily have to play, because there wasn't that many Black baseball players at Whittier anyway.

JB: Right. Right, right, right. [5] Yeah, cool. So, did you feel that the administration at the time catered toward or considered the role of Black students on campus. So, like, for instance, if a racial conflict arose or something between students, how confident were you in the administration to not only deescalate the situation, but, like, kind of act righteously and justly?

FL: I don't think they had a clue, you know? They had a few Black students. You know, they had Stan Sanders.

JB: Yeah, yeah.

FL: But we came in droves. Okay, Whittier I think had 1300, 1400 students, and then all of a sudden you probably go from—I don't know—from five to 10, and it grew up to almost 100 Black students. So, I didn't ever feel that they, like I said, were proactive.

JB: Okay. More reactionary is what you're saying.

FL: More reactionary. You know they probably thought we just should be happy that we had an opportunity to go to the college, so.

JB: Yeah. So, how did that make you feel? Did you—

FL: I didn't—the only time, really, I interfaced with the administration was usually financial aid. You know, if you had to pay or if you got a scholarship and they found out about it then they reduce your other financial aid, so.

JB: Right.

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FL: That type of thing.

JB: They still do that. (laughs) Not gonna lie, but—so, did a racial conflict ever arise when you were there? Like, that you know of, or anything like that?

FL: Not with me. I know some students had a run-in, say at one of the society parties, you know? Some people got drunk and—

JB: Yeah, yeah.

FL: —but nothing to the effect where there was like physical conflict type of thing, yeah.

JB: Right, right, right. It was just more—do you know about that instance at the society party, or no?

FL: Yeah, a guy got into a fight. I forgot, what's the jock society? Not the Saxons. There's the Penns.

JB: I, ooh, Athenians I know.

FL: Well, anyway, it's the one where the football players—and he picked on the wrong Black guy, and they got into a fight and he got beat up pretty bad.

JB: Oh wow, oh wow. Okay.

FL: But he was always getting into fights.

JB: That was a football player, you said? Football player?

FL: Yeah, right.

JB: Okay. So, did that kind of stigmatize Black students in the eyes of the football team, do you think?

FL: No, because the guy that he fought wasn't on the football team. He was like smaller than me. It was a small Black guy going against this big white guy.

JB: Oh, yeah. Do you know how it started at all? Like was it just—

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FL: I think—I wasn't there, but the football player kept picking on the Black guy and he had enough and then he just reacted.

JB: Got it. Okay, okay. So, can you tell me a little bit about your experience in the dorms? So, what was your relationship with the RA and your other floormates?

FL: The dorms were fun. You know, my freshman year we had a blast. Everybody got along well. My roommate, as a matter of fact, was elected dorm president, you know? Black guy, yeah. Henry, yeah. We formed a football team for intramurals. We had a freshman football team, yeah. And we played basketball. So, we did a lot together. We hung out.

JB: Yeah. You guys were really close.

FL: It was college life.

JB: Totally.

FL: I mean, Blacks, whites, Asians. It was a nice setting. Everybody got along well, yeah.

JB: Cool. That's good. Yeah, that's kind of—my floor, Stauffer, my freshman year they did the same thing, they made like an intramural—I think it was a flag football team.

FL: Right, that was us, yeah.

JB: Yeah, yeah. I had to ref it. (laughs) That's all I know. Okay, so what did an average day for you—any year, it doesn't particularly matter—but what did an average day on campus look like for you? What kind of things did you do to socialize while on campus?

FL: I—this is me, personally—I went to class and I studied. And people—my friend, “Why do you go to class?” I said, “Because my parents, you know, I can't fail.”

JB: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

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FL: But the thing—whatever seminar, whatever speaker that came to Whittier, I went. If a group was having a cultural festival, or the Arabs or the Jewish groups—I attended.

That's what I love about it—the Latinos—if it was outdoors, indoors, regardless.

JB: Cool. And because you were genuinely interested in them, that's why you went?

FL: It was, I was curious. That's the thing I liked about Whittier, the whole liberal arts, the exposure to a little bit of everything. From architecture to classical music, whatever, yeah.

JB: Yeah. Would you that say that kind of helped you when you graduated Whittier, just knowing about a lot of different cultures and things like that? Like, did it inform you a lot?

FL: It informed me a lot and it made me look at people for who they are and not have preconceived notions about them. I just found people from different cultures just fascinating, whether they were from Nigeria, Ghana, or somewhere from the Middle East.

JB: Yeah, completely. They still do those.

FL: I think that was probably one of the biggest learning—

JB: Points, right.

FL: —points at Whittier. The different people they brought in.

JB: Really, yeah, it's so true. They just did, actually, yesterday was Día de los Muertos, Day of the Dead—

FL: Oh, okay.

JB: —and they had free tacos in the quad. (laughs) So, you know what I mean, they just do random things. Like the whole thing was decorated and everything. They just do random things like that, like cultural things, which is really good.

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FL: Oh yeah, and then they brought great, I mean, The Friends of Distinction.

JB: Yeah, yeah.

FL: Great music, yeah.

JB: Yeah. So, my research shows that in 1973 there was a new president elected at Whittier. I think his name was Frederick Binder, if that rings a bell?

FL: Mm-hmm.

JB: But were there any notable, like, sentiments regarding this? Did you guys know that a new president was elected or—

FL: Yeah, we probably knew, but I don't think it was anything big or had an impact.

JB: Okay, cool. Alright. So, I found that that same year there was a bit of, kind of, controversy over the student senate, and kind of like the legitimacy of that organization and their ability to kind of adjust school policies and anything. So, [6] was there any, I guess—what was the nature of the student body during the time that you were there? Like were people more receptive to change; were they not, like with school policies?

FL: Honestly, I don't know, because I lived off campus and I just went to and from. I didn't really get involved that much in the school politics at that point. Yeah, I was trying to—

JB: So, you lived off—

FL: —graduate. Yeah, I lived off campus. And then I had—my roommate left, and so I had to find another place to stay in the second semester.

JB: And this was what year?

FL: Senior year.

JB: Senior year, okay. Did you work at all in senior year?

FL: No.

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JB: Okay. Or any years, actually.

FL: I worked in summer. I didn't work during school.

JB: Okay, cool. Okay, lived off campus senior year, okay, cool. And so, you're a member of the intramural football team, which you talked about. Can you tell me about your experience, I guess, with that? I know we talked about how it was with your dorm, your floormates and stuff.

FL: So, yeah, freshman year, the freshman dorm we had a team. My sophomore year, the BSU had a team. We were the BSU Panthers, and we went undefeated.

JB: Oh, okay. Okay. (laughs)

FL: My junior year, played intramural football, we came in second. And then my senior year the BSU formed another team and we won.

JB: Oh, wow.

FL: Yeah.

JB: Did you play football in college—or high school, I mean.

FL: No.

JB: Oh, okay.

FL: I was a quarterback all four years, but I didn't play in high school, no.

JB: Okay, cool.

FL: Yeah.

JB: You're just athletic then. (laughs)

FL: (laughs) Yeah, I'm intramural champion. I couldn't get to the next level.

JB: Yeah. No, I get it. So, during the year 1973 the college was inaugurated into the NCAA division three athletics.

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FL: Right.

JB: So, during that time did you see a shift in the athletic department's attitudes toward intramural students, like were they treated with respect for the most part, or just kind of—

FL: No, we were in intramurals; they didn't come down—I don't think they were scouting anybody to see if they could play, you know?

JB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FL: We were just out there having fun.

JB: Right.

FL: Now, my sophomore year the Black students boycotted—the Black players on the basketball team, some of them, they quit.

JB: Mm, okay.

FL: Okay, because the coach was playing white players that weren't as good as some of the Black players.

JB: Mmm.

FL: And so, the Black players quit. And so, our BSU team, a couple of the players would have been playing varsity basketball. Because normally if you play varsity sports you can play intramurals.

JB: Yeah.

FL: So, that's why they were on the team, so.

JB: Right. So, they quit? That's really interesting.

FL: Yeah, and they had a loaded team. Now, some of the players, Black players, stayed.

JB: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

FL: But the team—

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JB: So, how was that handled by the college? How did they deal with the—did the coach get any reprimand?

FL: No, no.

JB: Oh, wow. Wow, wow, wow.

FL: Yeah, eventually they realized it was a problem. But the BSU rallied around those players and supported them, because you could see with your eyes—

JB: Right, totally.

FL: Right.

JB: That they were—

FL: A lot better, yeah.

JB: And that was before or after they were brought in for—like, before or after it was division three?

FL: They were still NAIA.

JB: Okay, okay. So, they weren't like brought in on athletic scholarships or anything like that?

FL: Well, no.

JB: No, right? Okay, that's what I—okay.

FL: Because even division three you can't get a scholarship.

JB: Yeah, true. True. Okay. [pages flipping] So, did you ever experience anything that could be deemed racially insensitive, or even racist, while playing athletics at Whittier, or did you ever witness anything like that, because obviously we just talked about that instance, but did you ever notice anything?

FL: Not me personally, because, like I said, I only played the JV basketball for the team.



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JB: Mm-hmm, right.

FL: And it was, you know, there were no issues. As a matter of fact, we had a Black coach, Hugh Fenderson.

JB: Oh, cool.

FL: Yeah, he was the JV coach, so that was cool. And even on the intramurals there were no issues or anything like that.

JB: That's good. Okay. Alright, so I actually couldn't find diversity statistics, like for that specific time period. So, how many, I guess, Black students did you see on campus on a day-to-day basis?

FL: Which year?

JB: Um, I guess, all four. (laughs)

FL: (laughs) So, my freshman year I would say, 25, 20—I think it might have been 60 or 70. By the time I was a senior it might have been up to 100 or so.

JB: Okay, okay.

FL: Yeah.

JB: And you said that a lot of them came from Compton.

FL: Compton, right.

JB: Okay, cool. So, how would you, in general, how would you characterize the diversity of the campus when you attended? All races.

FL: It wasn't that diverse at all.

JB: Okay, mm-hmm.

FL: No, I wouldn't think it was that diverse.

JB: Yeah. Did you notice—like did the college advertise that they were diverse, at all?

LAKEY

FL: I don't think that—no.

JB: Okay, okay.

FL: No. I chalk it up that there was the push to get federal funding—

JB: Mm. Right, right, right.

FL: Yeah.

JB: Because I know that like a big thing these days is for—well, that's part of the reason I'm here is because of the Scott grant was kind of—so, MacKenzie Scott, Jeff Bezos' ex-wife, she gave Whittier twelve million dollars and a lot of that money is being used for diversity, inclusion projects like this, so.

FL: It's just remarkable they have to do that. If you look at Whittier and (pause), and how many Rhodes Scholars has Whittier had?

JB: I want to say like three to five.

FL: They had three.

JB: Three to five, yeah, something like that.

FL: And they are all Black.

JB: Yes.

FL: Yeah.

JB: Mm-hmm. Exactly, exactly. So, I guess kind of building off that last question, could you recall some of the day-to-day challenges, or maybe struggles you perceived being a Black student at Whittier during this time?

FL: I think the biggest struggle is the, sometimes the attitude that came across that we were there because of affirmative action.

JB: Mm, mm-hmm.

LAKEY

FL: And that quote, we may not have been qualified, okay?

JB: Yeah, yeah.

FL: Until I sat in the classroom with my fellow students and you can feel, well that's not the case at all. But they would still try to hold that against you, you know it was a constant pushback.

JB: Yeah. Can you think of like an example of like when that attitude may have come across, like that you were only there for affirmative action? Like, did anyone ever say anything to you or did you just—like, how did you get—

**[Missing segment?]**

FL: [4] I never thought about it until I retired and my wife and I started travelling.

JB: Yeah.

FL: And when we were overseas in Europe and stuff. When you travel, you know, when you go to a different country where do you usually want to go? It's to the museums and you look at certain buildings and architecture. And I got that from Whittier.

JB: Yeah.

FL: That whole liberal arts, the exposure, so I'm grateful for that.

JB: Yeah. I agree. So, when I graduated, like my graduation present was a trip to Italy and Paris.

FL: Good for you.

JB: Yeah, and that was the first time that I went out of the country, so I was like super culture shocked, I guess, at first. So, I was with my mom, and it was just me and my mom. My mom had been out of the country; she's very well-traveled, so she kind of knew the gig of travelling, right? But this was the first time that I had been out of the country. I was like

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freaking out, like not sure what to do, like really—I don't know, I felt like, I almost was like homesick in a way. I was just like longing for home. I didn't appreciate being there. So, as much as I—and obviously this was before I started college, so now I look back at that experience and I just like want to hit myself in the head, because I'm like, hello?

FL: No.

JB: No, I know, I'm like, oh my gosh, I would have done things so much differently, you know? Because like I have that perspective now. Like I just think I would have appreciated things so much more. Because I was super focused on like—I didn't have internet on my phone, so I was like, I'm lost, like whatever. But now I feel like if I didn't have internet or anything I would want to be lost. Like I want to kind of look around.

FL: That is so funny. My wife and I were in Venice and we got lost.

JB: Yeah.

FL: Seriously, I'm looking at Google Maps and it says go east. I don't know where east is, you know?

JB: All the streets are in different numbers, yeah.

FL: Yeah, right. Yeah. But that's good for you. Take advantage. When I travel, I just get a different perspective.

JB: Totally.

FL: And I get a different perspective of myself.

JB: Yeah.

FL: And I come back more enriched.

JB: Right. Completely, yeah. Yeah, exactly. And so, I'm going, I hope—Covid permitting—to go to London for my study abroad in May, so I think—I'm really excited because I

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kind of just want to like put that to the test, you know what I mean? Like really engulf myself in the culture and stuff.

FL: If I had a recommendation, if a student has an opportunity—because when we're at Whittier they had the exchange in Copenhagen.

JB: Okay, okay, yeah.

FL: I don't know if they still have that.

JB: They do actually, yeah.

FL: I couldn't afford it, but I know a number of students, Black students, who went.

JB: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

FL: And they just loved it; it was great.

JB: Yeah. And that's funny because it's Copenhagen, of all places. Like the whitest place.

FL: Hey, they said it was cool.

JB: Yeah, exactly, exactly. They do the Copenhagen one still, but they're doing a Madrid one in Spain.

FL: That's great.

JB: Yeah, it's really cool; it's a lot of travel opportunities, which is cool. Okay, so wrapping things up, I just obviously wanted to reiterate the stories you have shared with me today will be archived in the Whittier College library database under student research, so they will be accessible for future students. So, is there anything—my last question—(laughs) is there anything that you would like to share or any advice that you would like to give to future Black students of Whittier?

LAKEY

FL: I would just say, take advantage of every opportunity that you have when you're in college, no matter how small or trivial it may seem. At some point in your life it may come back and be a benefit. And I think the most important thing, build relationships.

JB: Yeah, completely.

FL: You know, whatever you do once you get out of school, it's going to be about relationships and how you interact with other people, yeah.

JB: Great.

FL: (inaudible)\_\_\_\_\_.

JB: Yeah. (laughs) Great, thank you so much.

FL: You're very welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW