

Dear Future Friars Oral History Interview

Interview Subject: Earnest Earl Smith Jr.

Interviewer: Nahyr Morales Lugo

Date: December 5, 2022

Time: 10:16am

Transcript:

Nahyr Morales Lugo 00:00

Hello, this is an interview for Dear Future Friars Providence College's project to interview alumni and document their experience. Today is December 6, 2022, at 10:16am My name is Nahyr Morales Lugo and I'll be conducting the interview today. Can you please state your full name and your graduation year?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 00:25

Sure. My full name is Earnest Earl Smith Jr. My friends and family and all fellow Friars refer to me as Earl and I graduated from Providence College in May of 1992.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 00:38

Perfect. Where are you from? And where do you currently live?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 00:43

I was born and raised in Elizabeth, New Jersey. I currently reside in Livingston, New Jersey.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 00:50

What did you study at Providence College, your major and your minor?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 00:55

My major at Providence College was political science. And I also minored in religious studies.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 01:01

What did being a POC college student mean to you?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 01:07

Great opening question! Being a student of color at a predominantly white institution, it it gave me a sense of pride in myself and my community that I wanted to always put my best face and my best foot forward to be a good example of who, who I am and my family and my culture and might have other people of color. So I guess it gave me responsibility, and also gave me responsibility in two ways. One to always be my best, to be a good example. And also responsibility to share about who I am. By what my family, my culture, people will look like me to hopefully disavow any kind of stereotypes or any kind of prejudged feelings towards people will look like me. So I guess I took it as an opportunity to educate and as well as to to show people what kind of person I am not just me, but people who look like me. So I guess like, I guess the word that keeps going in my mind is responsibility.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 02:14

And just going off of that, I'm just curious. Were you a first generation student?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 02:22

Yes, my mother went to nursing school, but she never went to college. My dad got his start at school, but he had to stop. So he received his associates never never went the full four years. I have older siblings, four sisters who all graduated from college, but I'm the first, I guess, in my family in regards to my parents. Yes.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 02:43

Perfect. And did that also have a big impact on how you wanted to represent yourself? How did that impact how you navigated your way through PC?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 03:03

The thing that keeps that ended pop into my head was my father, my, my parents were both raised in the Deep South and a segregated Deep South, they both migrated to the north, for work and to get away from segregation and discrimination. It's funny how they both moved in with their older sibling. First before they got on their own two feet, and then they met got married and had children, so forth, and so on. So they both left the South for a better life. They, my dad knew he didn't want to work in a factory, you know, he didn't work and want to work in the fields. So he came North looking for other industrial opportunity. My mother came up here to help her oldest sister take care of her two young sons. So she was part babysitter and also she was able to go to an integrated high school. So they both left this out at a young age in their teenage years, looking for opportunity. So I always looked back at them. And so what they sacrificed leaving home at a young age to come North, and that kind of work. And my dad always said to me, it's okay, I don't if you're the worst thing you can do to me, disappoint me, don't disappoint me, because I'm disappointed in you trust goes out the window. So I always made it my business to make sure I didn't do anything or say anything, or put myself in a situation that was gonna bring shame or disappointment to my parents, because I know how much they sacrifice for me. And not only for me, but for my four older sisters. So coming to PC, I wanted to make sure that when they saw me, they saw my parents now that raised me and the values and morals they gave me, and I wanted to be a shining example to them. So they didn't have to get that call from the police or from the Dean saying that Earl was involved in so and so and so on. So I always that was always in the back of my mind. I got me out of a lot of situations where, you know, as you know, being a fellow college, college student peer pressure, even as a college student, it's very strong, and you can be torn in different directions but that little voice in my head and a little angel on my shoulder was my parents saying don't do that. Well, mother and father gave me the kind of pride at what you're about to do. And I stopped me from doing a lot of doing a lot of things and being in a lot of places I shouldn't have been. And I just wanted to be a good example for them.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 05:12

In what ways did this identity influence your everyday life during during your college years and continue to influence you now?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 05:22

It just reminded me every day that well, there's old quote by a famous, I'm a baseball player, I played baseball at Providence College. For years, I played baseball through my upbringing, all the way through college. And there's a baseball player who played in New England played for the Boston Red Sox, his name was Ted Williams, and a commentator asked him a question one time. He said, Hey, Ted, how do you want to be remembered. And he said, when I want, I want to remember when I walked down the street, I want people to say, hey, there goes the big greatest hitter who ever lived. So I kind of took that quote, and kind of made it my own. And I want people to see me, whenever they saw me, I wanted them to see the best in me, and I always want to put my best foot forward. And so they can say, hey, there goes that guy, Earl, he might not have been the smartest, or the best looking, or the fastest, or whatever the case may be, but we always knew he always gave his best effort, and we

always knew he was sincere, and honest, and truthful, and, you know, a person of high character. So that's kind of how I try to live my life. And the example I try to give to my three kids as well, that, you know, you're now you know, always gonna be the smartest person in the room. But don't let anybody outwork you, you're not always gonna be the fastest person on the team, but don't let anybody out hustle you. You always be willing to learn and to share and to give of yourself and to, and to make yourself open to meet people where they are. And not to prejudge people, and not to have any kind of preconceived notions of how a person is, accept people who they are. And, you know, I always tell my kids, my children, sometimes you have to cut the fat, you take people you take the good and the bad, and people, you can take the good and people you move along. And the negative you cut the fat is that along and don't accept that negativity. So that's kind of how I try to live my life. And I have to say, there have been some bumps in the road and not always been perfect, but for the most part it that that that cradles were pretty good for me.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 07:12

Um, so just a little bit about your involvement at PC. What activities, organizations, clubs were you involved in on campus?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 07:23

My activity and my involvement were driven by a couple of factors. The most overriding reaching factor was I didn't have any money. Now, I thought I was always broke. So I didn't get the socialize that much because sometimes you need socializing, you need funds. So I found ways to entertain myself. And I've made friends who are like mine who didn't have a lot of money, but we made our own entertainment. Freshman year, because the hockey games were free. And we still go to hockey games and just hang out there. And that's how you knew it was both hoppin' the jumping off the rest of the evening by being at the hockey game, and socializing. A friend of mine who was a DJ on WDOM said, hey, you got a great voice, you should go over there and see if you can get a show. So I did that. And that's how I spent my Friday, Saturday evenings and sometimes Monday evenings on WDOM. Like I mentioned earlier, I played baseball for the Friars. So that ate up a lot of my time, and also the same, you know, group of guys every day. We practice early in the morning, we practice in the afternoon, and we had to study together in the evening. So that ate a lot of my time. And also I was actively involved in the affinity groups there, BMSA, African American Society Afro Am, SOAR, Students Organized Against Racism, and the NAACP. So we got together and we and we were actually socially actively involved that way. So that's kind of how I got down my four years there, either by the social clubs, baseball or being on WDOM. And that's how I I, my activities there. And that's how I kind of made my friends and made my relationships that way.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 09:02

And going off of that, what did your roles in these organizations mean to you, and what made you want to become involved?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 09:13

This is gonna sound like a stone age. So whoever watches this in the future, you're gonna probably get a chuckle out of this, but you wouldn't believe it, but back in the late 80s, early 90s, there was a great big push for, I guess, for lack of a better word, political correctness. And for before, it was a whole diversity inclusion of what's called PC be politically correct. And as much as we all love Providence College, even Providence, even PC had a deal with that being politically correct. And there was a group of us who, after freshman year of Western Civilization, we realized that, you know, we're doing a lot of talking about other civilizations and other groups have made contributions to making the world the way it is, and specifically Western Civilization. But we felt that we weren't, the people of color, weren't given their proper weren't given the proper, I guess, representation in the class, and their respect and their history, their context, their contribution to history. So a bunch of us began saying how, you

know, PC has to realize that, you know, it's nice to have all these Black faces and these brown faces on campus, but you got to tell our story too. So we got really actively involved in and promoting diversity. And like I said, we call the back then political correctness and say, hey, we have a story too. We, and one of the one of the phrases we used to say was, we know your story, now hear our story. It's one of glory, hear our story. You know, and we, we really push that, and we pushed to the administration, and we pushed to, you know, the teachers and those college students. Hey, you know, it's great, we understand that you have a history to tell, but we have a story too and we're more than this, Dr. King, we're more than this, you know, George Washington Carver, we're more than this, you know, Rosa Parks, there's more to our story. And we really tried to promote that. And I'm very proud of the fact that we did that. And you know, some people embraced it. Some people like yeah, you're right. And other people said, well, you know, there's only so many hours in the day, and we really put impressed upon him that if you're going to make this place, you know, if you're if you're say this a Catholic institution, a Christian institution talking about love and equality for all people. You have, everybody has to have a seat at the table. And we're really impressed that upon them.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 11:25

And I feel like that involvement in that push to you know, have those stories heard of POC still impact us today? So,

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 11:34

Oh, yeah.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 11:38

I'm in love. I've loved hearing about like, the different involvement that the alumni have had on that push on administration, because that has helped like the current students, and, you know, the future students that are to come in PC. What were the resources that PC offered these clubs? And did you feel that your group was supported? Why or why not?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 11:58

Well, always clubs, I guess flowed through, I guess, back then it was the board of programmers and Student Congress. So that was a budget, of course, and we were able to allow, we were allowed to use that money to bring speakers and other make other presentations and have other events on campus, to promote what we were promoting. And also to engage other students, you know, not non people, non people, persons of color students to get actively involved and see we're all about and let them know that, you know, we're not trying to walk this road by ourselves, we want to include we want to do this, like we expect you to include us, we want to include you that was our thing, you know, we didn't want to think it's one sided. We are each story, each side, each individual has a story to tell. So if I can remember correctly, that'll be give me an honest answer. They were very helpful and very resourceful, and open to that, as far as like allowing us to do other opportunities. And, and let's be honest, when they didn't when the funds went there, we made our own. Kind of like, we made our own fun. We did our own thing. I'm sure you probably experienced that there as a present day student and when when someone tells you no, they, there's no money, we did our own thing. We did it for free. We open the doors up and say okay, we're not this is not going to be we don't want this not there's no budget there, we'll do it another way. We felt that it was that important to get things done, and to get our story out there. So they were helpful. And then when they weren't helpful, we had like we said, we did for selves, we did it by ourselves.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 13:29

How did the professional connections and personal bonds that you formed at PC affect your time here? Do you keep in contact with any of them?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 13:40

Professionally? Probably not. But personally, definitely. I have, like I said, I played baseball. So I have teammates that I made during my four years here and we we get together and we will exchange texts, or we'll talk on the phone or we get together sometime this summer at our little mini reunion. And it's like we never left each other. We had the same old stories come up the same all the funny times. We're just one big family though. They're definitely literally my brothers. Those gentlemen on the team I played with, whether it been team my teammates when I was a freshman or to when I was a senior. Those four years and then then extended family have if you played baseball PC, I consider you my brother. And we have a common bond that we that we represent in school on the baseball field. In terms of people from BMSA and people from that Martin Luther King scholarship that I had when I was there, same thing. I have members of that community I consider my brothers and sisters I and we refer to each other as brothers, little brother, big brother, little sister, big sister to this day. You're talking, you know, 30, 30, 34, 35 years ago, we still act the same way we act that we get together like one big happy family. Our professional lines that cross you know we all have our own careers, we're all doing our own things, but we discuss professionally what we're what we're doing and how we're making our way in the world. And we communicate that way. as well I'm sure if I need be if I needed some professional help, I'm sure I can reach out to one of my fellow brothers and sisters from PC. They could probably point me in the right direction if I needed some assistance in some form or fashion. But I will say it's more of a personal relationship that we've kept over the years. And how I can surely say I love those men and women that I went to school with, and we're one big family

Nahyr Morales Lugo 15:23

It's so nice to hear that. I've been hearing the little brother big brother, little sister big sister thing a lot in the interviews. That's really nice to hear. It's like a like a huge, huge little family. (Definitely - interjection). And going off of that, who or what had the biggest impact on you at PC?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 15:43

Okay. I call them my Fab Four. Dr. Robert Hamlin, Dean Wilesse Comissiong, Dean Wanda Ingram, and Dr. Neil Simpson. They were in charge of the MLK scholarship and the students of color scholarships. Dr. Hamlin was the probably the great out of three probably the greatest influence on me. He was like a father figure to me. We had a when you were on MLK scholarship, you met with him once a week just for him to touch base with you and to address any concerns you had or just to check in with him. And those that little 20 minute conversation every Monday with him, Monday morning with him, I looked forward to we had a great talk. And that's the I used to kind of, I kind of used to besides the situation, our child, he would always ask me about school and how I'm doing in class. And I knew Dr. Hamlin was a minister of music at his church and growing up in the church, I can always steer the conversation away from my academics and talk about about church so I'll get out of there quicker. But the times we did spend together, you know I got a lot of sage advice from him. Dean Simpson, because of the protests back in 1988, they formed the Office of Minority Student Affairs, which became the Balfour center, and I guess, became the office for minority students, and I think the Moore Hall now, and that's where it all came from, the Office of Minority Student Affairs. He was the first dean, Dean Simpson. And he came from Northern Kentucky. And he was a big, a big, beautiful Black man who just really loved us students and really looked out for us and he was like another he was like an uncle. You could talk to him about anything. Everything was, you know, on this table, there was no subject too small too great, he would love to talk to you and just help you in any form or fashion. And I looked up to him. The only problem with him was, when my father came to pick me up, those two will start talking about being grown up down south. And you know, how they how they came up the hard way. I'd want to go home, and they're standing in front of Slavin talking. I'm like, Okay, gentlemen, 95 is calling, let's go home. And you guys just talk anytime, I've been here all semester and I'm ready to go. But what those two got together, they start talking about the good old days and being from the south and country music, and you know, the blues, and I'm like, oh, boy, I'm ready to go. You know, like it was a great man. And when he left in my junior year, we got the

pleasure of Dean Wilesse Comissiong take his place and that seat and she became like a mom to me. That, you talk about sweet people, that was a sweet woman and I really appreciate her all the things she did for me. She was to open that office up to us, we could sit there and socialize and let her hair down and just be us in that office. And she's a great lady and I always give her flowers because she was seen though my junior and senior year, I couldn't have made it without her. She was a great resource. And, and she had a sweet voice. She never never talked above a whisper, never yell, never screamed. She gave me a look when she was a little disappointed in ya. But she was just a comfort and I love that woman. And the last but definitely not least was Dean Wanda Ingram. Again, like she was my big sister and I still call my big sister to this day. She was she always said, Hey, I'm available, come come see me, come see me, come see me. And I always go see her and spend time with her. And she was another person you can bounce ideas off. She can relate to being a student because she was one of the first students of color that graduated from Providence College. So she knew she walked where we walked and she knew what we're talking about knew where we're coming from. And she just made herself available to us. This fact those four individuals made themselves available and showed genuine concern and love and dedication to us students made me love them. That's why the my fab four. And then I would be remiss if I didn't mention again, the baseball team. You know, I never even heard of Providence College. I mean, I knew that my junior year they went to the final four and basketball so I kind of knew what where they were but I wouldn't they were even on my radar as far as thinking about colleges when I was looking at schools. And I met the coach there, one of the assistant he was assistant coach at the time. He became my head coach my four years there. A gentleman named Paul Kostacopoulos. He's the head coach at Naval Academy now. He's the one that got me to come to Providence College. He handed my father talking about the school and about the academic rigor here and how I could probably succeed here and athletically and academically and he told me about the MLK scholarship. I would not have been at Providence College was for for Coach Kost. So he has to get a lot of the credit that I'm there that I was able to go to Providence College.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 20:23

So were there any important political events during your time at PC? And were you involved in any protests or other forms of activism?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 20:33

Okay, like I mentioned earlier, the winter of '88, sort of in my senior year in high school, there was a big protest out in front of Harkins, and because of that protest, and because of the demands, the students at the time made, the Office of Minority Student Affairs was born. The board, it was called back then it was called the board of minority student affairs, which is basically what is now BMSA. That was really had been at back in the 70s, but it kind of went away but it was back. African American studies was born because of that protest. So I always give those people from that that winter, that cold January day in 88. They're the reasons why a lot of stuff you students have I had my four years because of their their activism. In my four years, they're the only time we kind of made any kind of I guess, political statement. Midnight Madness, my senior year, me and a fellow classmate, another class of 92 classmate, another MLK scholar, by the name of Michael Sims. He's from Poughkeepsie, New York. Or maybe it's Peekskill, I always forget. But he's from New York. Him and I made a banner. There was like a, we had a banner contest before midnight madness. And everybody walked around their banner, you know, basically promoting the basketball team, and how are we going to be great this year, and all the different clubs had their banner. Him and I, we took a banner, and we bought it put on our banner, history, our story is history, too. We walked around, we joined the parade of walking around Alumni Hall during midnight madness. We also had some events in Moore Hall where we had like an open forum where people could talk about, you know, what's going on in campus and be more inclusive. And so we weren't, we weren't radicals. We didn't we didn't we didn't burn or burn anything like that we didn't, you know, we didn't we didn't march step out of class. We didn't do any kind of like, any kind of political unrest. But we definitely made sure that our that our concerns are being heard. We made

our concerns known. So I think that's probably the length of my, I guess my political political protest. But it was significant because we got I got called in to meet with at a time Father Cunningham to talk about, you know, okay, we hear you what can we do? And we let them know what we're looking for. And at the time, there was no structured Black Studies Program. And I think there is one now at PC, there wasn't one back when I was there. There was there weren't a lot of classes available for students of color to learn about themselves. But there are now and I want to give also mention to, I believe, still there at Providence, Professor Eric Hirsch was very instrumental in helping us organize and make and get our and make our demands credible, he's a great man, I appreciate him, and we follow each other on Facebook, and every once in a while he'll pop up. And I always want to give him his credit, because he was very instrumental in helping us get our message out.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 23:24

Perfect, I feel like anything that can raise, how do I explain this, anything that can raise some type of conversation of progression is amazing. And it's just, it's great to do that. Even if I feel like, we may think it's something so small, but even just getting the conversation going forward for like future students. It's just, it's great.

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 23:49

One thing I realized in all my years, not that I'm so I'm such a wise old man, is that people love to tell their story. And if you're willing to listen, and once they tell their story, you can find out so much more about people and then that in turn asked you how you are, like, if we had time, I would love to hear your story and where you're from and your background, and what brought you to Providence College, because everybody's got a story. And I and I think that was the thing we were trying to prove, project to, you know, the people who put Western Civ together and some of the history classes and some of the psychology and sociology classes. The're like hey, you know, and even the English classes about this, there's so many great Black and writers of color who aren't being that can be added to the curriculum that could really tell a story and give people a better picture. I mean, let's be honest, for Providence College, at least when I was there was mostly white Irish Catholic students. You know, and you had your speckle [sic] of other ethnic groups but for the most part if you're Irish and Catholic and from the from the Boston area, that's (laughter) you went to Providence College. So when they saw people like me, the first question was, well, you're kind of short you, you know, you're barely six feet, do you play? You don't play basketball do you? So when I told them I didn't, no, they're like, oh, well, you must be here on some kind of minority scholarship. So we had to dispel all those, you know, myths and all those misconceptions and you know and, and this by sitting down with people and relating to people, you know, you learned so much and open so many doors and keep the line of communication open, you get, you get to understand people better. That's, that's one of the miracles of this talking to people or knowing people. My teammates, like I said, I was the first Black person to play on Providence College on the varsity baseball team. And a lot of my teammates they had, they all played sports in high school, and they might have had Black teammates, or they might not have had black teammates. But when they met me, I wanted to see more than a Black than in my brown skin. You know, I wanted to understand who I was when I was all about. And we had one common goal was to win, we wanted to be the best. And the fact that I was Black and they were white didn't matter. The fact that what mattered was can I contribute? Can I help us win? And that's it. That's how the bond was made. And like I said, we're brothers to this very day.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 26:06

Amazing, I completely agree with what you just said. Alright. So moving on, how did you experience that PC influence your current or former occupation?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 26:19

Like I mentioned earlier, I was a political science major. And I had aspirations for law school I had aspiration, to continue to play to play baseball at a professional level. But those things didn't workout. I think what helped me in

my professional career with my political science background was all the skills you learn in poli sci, the research skills, analytical skills, you know, analyzing things, critical thinking, all those things came into play for my present career and helped me in my career today. And believe it or not, baseball, also had a play in that, because it made me be a team player. And that's a phrase that's thrown out a lot, but you are not going to be successful professionally, if you don't work well with others. And being on a team and putting a common goal, to put forth the best effort to be successful. And being on a team member and being a teammate. And be willing to sacrifice your individual for the betterment of the team is going to help you professionally. So my baseball background, and my political science background, all the skills we learned and my old skills all played a part and making me what I am today professionally. So like I said, you're not you're not going to be, I mean, unless you want to sit in your room and stare at a screen all day, you're not going to do well professionally if you don't work well with others you have to be able to work with a group, get the consensus, you know, have an opinion, but also be willing to listen to other people's opinion and go forward that way.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 27:45

I completely agree. Okay, um, can you share any other successes or challenges you had while in college?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 28:01

As you know, being away from home can be difficult, you get homesick sometimes and you long for mom's home cooking and for this to be able to sit under your parents and listen to them talk and give you worldly advice. So that was a challenge. Being away from home for the first time. I mean, I traveled through youth group and through church for weeks at a time but never for the length of time that you're away at school. So that was a little bit of adjustment. And you know, learning how to this is gonna sound silly, but the whole concept of washing clothes and washing and drying clothes and you know, colors versus you know, whites versus colors and not not putting them all together and you know folding clothes and ironing clothes and you know, time management all those things you take for granted when you live on to your parents, that was a little bit adjustment for me, but like any other student I was able to learn and when I didn't learn I was late and it made me adjust my way of thinking to make myself available so I always try to. When I was at PC we had a coach he called it the 15 minute rule. So we were supposed to be there at 10:30 he expect you to be there ready to go at 10:15, and we'd always, he's okay, I'll see you guys tomorrow, practice is at two o'clock and we'd always say, is the 15 Minute Rule, is the 15 Minute Rule in effect? And if you say yes, we knew he meant better be there quarter of and ready to go, you know so time management's important. I guess I miss my friends growing up because where I played baseball in high school. I missed those guys and we all went our separate ways so is missing with them, but they were not replaced but I just adjust to my new friends at PC, I mean new friends that way so that was probably the greatest challenge being able to being on my own. You know, being responsible. Didn't have mom there to cook for me didn't have dad did remind me to do this to do that, just taking responsibility. But that's all part of growing up I think we all go through that. And I think I, you know, I was able to maneuver that successfully. But that's probably my biggest biggest adjustment is being on my own. And being the youngest of five and the only boy, some might say that I was spoiled. Because I have four older sisters and being a boy, I kind of got alot of stuff done for me. I didn't, I never learn how to cook. My mother always made sure I had something to eat. So being on my own, especially my senior year learning how to cook for myself and take care of myself. And that was a challenge but I was able to navigate.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 30:32

Yeah, what did you wish you knew before you came to PC?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 30:41

That's a great question. Wow. I always thought I was pretty much prepared for school. I had great school teachers in high school. I had one teacher, Mr. Raymond Akalowness [sic] was my history teacher. And we learned he taught Eastern European history. He prepared me you know, he always treated us like we're gonna treat you like your college freshmen. Because this is getting you ready for what's gonna happen. The next phase, you're not gonna treat you like seeing I mean, you guys are 18 You're young adults, I'm gonna treat you like adults. So, at the time, we thought he's been very stern, but I appreciate him for how he prepared us. I was fortunate to have older sister who was, we're seven years apart now my oldest sister to me, and she always gave me good advice about college, you know, and prepare myself how to be ready for college and what's expected of me she was an RA, and a resident director at Rutgers, well, it was a girl's, all girl's school there, the Douglas College, which is part of Rutgers University. So when I would go visit her, she would always tell me, the good the bad and the ugly about college life to prepare me to make sure I was prepared for college. So I guess to answer your question, I I guess I need, I guess if I the only thing, I thought, I thought I was ready. So I guess I have to answer your question this way. I don't think there was anything that I felt I didn't have coming to PC it was the fact of actually doing it. Being in being in it. Being being in that being in the moment getting there. Freshman year, I grew up. Real quick story. When I got accepted the Providence College you know, I'm sure your same thing happened with you. They actually brought up dorm assignments. How do you want to live Are you a comfortable living other people? Do you want to live by yourself? And they really did. I really did a number on me because when I got my thing being only boy I always had I was always used to having a room to my by myself. So of course they're like, oh, well, we have singles available if you're willing to living a single. I'm like, Oh yeah, sounds great. I have a route to myself, it's gonna be great. I ended up living in Fennel my freshman year. And I didn't realize that Fennel was on the far end a campus to where the baseball field was. So every day I get out of Fennel in the freezing cold in the winter and walk up that hill to get to Moore for Civ and go to Harkins and then go to Guzman for my poli sci courses and I'm like, Oh man, they really got me good. I knew it was gonna be like this. I wouldn't have minded having a roommate. This is too long of a walk, you know? So that that that was a that was kind of a funny circumstance I've been how's it? Oh, yeah. You're used to being by yourself, here's where you want to be and they didn't tell me that Fennel used to be a mental hospital and they were probably ghost there and Halloween came and like all the ghosts are coming out to get you at night and there'll be bumps in the night and all the fire drills. And if someone pull the fire alarm, it was a lot of stuff they didn't prepare me for it. But I guess to answer your question, I thought I was pretty pretty quick. But I think just being there and going through it. So you can't prepare for that. It is what it is you get there. And hopefully everything you learn all the value you bring with you all the skills you have to bring there and just go through the moment.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 33:47

What advice would you give current POC students, especially first gen students about navigating life at PC or college in general?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 33:57

Okay. Get a good group of friends, make some friends. I have lifetime friends because of Providence College. Find a group of people like like minded people, people where you can be yourself and you don't have to put on airs, you can really let your hair down and be comfortable with and make them your base. When we were in school, it's in syndication now, but it was a primetime show and we all watched. It was a show called a Different World about a fictional college down, down in Virginia. It was a spin off of the old Cosby Show. And we wanted to be like them so bad. And we saw how those kids on that show how they stuck together, how they looked out for each other, how they love each other, how they're critical of each other in a positive way to make sure that they're representing themselves, their family, and their culture the right way. So my advice to students, especially students of color coming in, especially first year generation students, like you said, find a good group of friends. Make them your base, rely on each other trust in each other rather become rely on each other, trust each other and be critical

of each other in a positive way. And make that your foundation and expand that group too, don't just have three or four have 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20 people and make that your foundation. Also, I would say open yourself up to learning about other cultures don't be so siloed and say, Oh, well, you know, I'm Black. So that's how I'm gonna be I'm only run with Black people. No, that's not gonna, that's not how the real world works. So make yourself available to people. And there's a verse in the Bible to be a friend you must first show yourself friendly, be friendly to people, make sure you're willing to listen to other people's stories, learn their history, learn their background, and their culture. And give it a have a bit of understanding. And if you do that, to open the door for them do the same for you. So that's, that's the best advice, I have to get a good group of friends. Make yourself accessible. You know, be, stand up proud. You know, be proud of who you are. Someone loves you, whether it be mom, dad, brother, sister, grandma, grandpa, someone from church, someone loves you, someone's praying for you, go forward, give it your best effort, be your best, and be willing, and last but not least, don't be afraid to ask for help. Like I said about my fab four, I know, if I ever got in trouble, they were going to help me, they were going to point me to the right resources to find the help I need. So find some people, whether it be your advisor for your major, whether it be your advisors for your scholarship, whether it be a teacher you felt you have a connection with, find an adult you can relate to and who will listen to you and will also give you advice and relay on those people. If you pull that off, I think you'll be fine.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 36:39

And just the last question is, anything else you'd like to share can be anything?

Earnest Earl Smith Jr. 36:47

Well, I want to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to sit down with you this morning. I think this is a great thing, that we're trying to catalogue all these different people's stories, and get a better understanding of the Providence College community. I think is a great event, a great opportunity for me, and for the school. And I hope this can, I hope this is the beginning, hope we're gonna build on this. And let these stories, let these tapes of people, these interviews, let people listen to these things that hope they glean some good knowledge from these things. And my present role on the Vice President of the Alumni Association council. So I guess I'll put that plug in for any alumni who happen to watch this going forward. Whatever your experience was at Providence College, whether it be good, bad or indifferent, you're still part of the Providence College community. We love you, we miss you, we want you to be active again. Be part of us. You know, like my dad he always say no, sometimes we don't get it right. Maybe you had a bad experience at PC, maybe something happened that has kind of left a bad taste in your mouth. And for that, I'm sorry that that have you experienced that. But I want to let you know now it appears that the school is making a sincere effort to be more diverse, to be more inclusive, to expand itself to let everybody know that they're part of the greater Providence College community family. So if you're willing to give it another, try to open that line of communication up again with us, I hope we don't disappoint you if you give us that chance. Because Fathr Siccard and the other members of the administration and the council and the board are making a sincere effort to let you know that you're part of the family. We miss you. We love you and we want you to be part of us again. So that's my that's my plug. And again, I want to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to sit with you. And I think this was great.