

Dear Future Friars Oral History Interview

Interview Subject: Anderson W. Clary, Jr.

Interviewer: Nahyr Morales Lugo

Date: April 24, 2023

Time: 12:53pm

Transcript:

Nahyr Morales Lugo 00:01

Hello, this is an interview for Dear future friars Providence College's project to interview alumni and document their experience. Today is April 24, 2023 and it is 12:53pm. My name is Nahyr Morales Lugo and I'll be conducting the interview today. And so now we're going to go on to basic questions about your experience. So the first one is can you please introduce yourself stating your full name and graduation year?

Anderson Clary 00:37

Hello, my name is Anderson W. Clary, Jr. My graduation year was 1969.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 00:50

And where are you from? And where do you currently live?

Anderson Clary 00:55

I'm originally from Newport News, Virginia. And I now live in the next city over which is Hampton, Virginia.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 01:06

Wonderful. And what did you study at Providence College, your major and your minor?

Anderson Clary 01:14

I majored - my degree is in secondary education. It was a bachelor of arts I think it was. And that's what it said on the on the sheepskin. And I minored in social studies and English.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 01:40

Perfect. So now we're gonna go more into your PC experience. And my first question about that is, what did being a POC, a person of color, college student mean to you?

Anderson Clary 01:55

Well, at the time, it was a, I didn't realize that, that was how I was viewed as a person of color - that I wanted to ask that question. When I saw POC, I didn't, I couldn't imagine what POC was. And at that time, it was it was I was in I was coming out of a segregated community segregated schools in the south.

And so coming to Providence College, it didn't really dawn on me as to, I mean, you could look and see I was a person of color. But it didn't, just didn't. I didn't think too much about it.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 02:48

Wonderful, and going off of that, in what ways that this identity influence your everyday life during your college years and continue to influence you now?

Anderson Clary 03:01

Well, the college experience in an integrated environment really enhanced my ability in college, and also after college and in my pursuits of I taught, and I work for the State of Rhode Island. And I also had a business that was located the home office was in Providence, Rhode Island. And so that environment that I came up in, in the Providence College family pretty much got me accustomed to dealing with biracial, interracial people of color, for whatever the color was. So it was it was a good preparation, psychologically, socially, politically, and also religiously.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 04:14

What activities, organizations, or clubs, were you involved in on campus?

Anderson Clary 04:19

(laughter) Basketball, that was it. I was on scholarship. And you didn't really have time to participate in a lot of other activities. You know, we did intramural stuff like softball and other you know, football, because we didn't have a football team at that time. And we didn't, we had a baseball team, but I didn't have a chance to participate in those things because all of my time, other than school time, and study time was consumed with basketball.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 05:07

And what did your role in the team mean to you? And what made you want to become involved or, you know, play on the team?

Anderson Clary 05:19

Well, I was recruited, and I visited several major colleges around the country. Both I was I was recruited as a, a merit scholar, in academics. And then in athletics, I was recruited by Providence College and others for my basketball heroics, let's say in high school. So it was the team was number one in the country. This is in the 60s, 1965-66. PC was number one in the country, one or two in the country, three consensus all American. And I think every kid would, you know, want to go to a team, where there are stars there and whether the team is at the top echelon of at that time, Big East, ACC or Southern Conference, any of those conferences that now exist, you would want to be a part of that - it was very attractive.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 06:34

Wonderful. And going off a little on that? What were the resources that Providence College offered your team? And did you feel like your group was supported? Why or why not?

Anderson Clary 06:49

Well, if I'm understanding your question, the resources that we had, were that you you had the opportunity to see tutoring for classes in subject matters, which, oddly enough, well, ironically, as it was, I was one of the tutors for other players on the team. And it wasn't anything formal, but they paired us up and, you know, I was able to, I did a lot. Yeah, I was, I was a resource, and I had resources offered to me. And all of their players had we had resources offered to them, you know, tutor, so that we could go through on the road a lot, playing, and we had a lot of weekend games, and we'd come back exhausted. And so it was kind of - and so the professors were very understanding, I won't say lenient, but they were understanding in terms of giving us help, to catch up, to stay up while we were out of out of school and on the role playing. And then, I also because I didn't have a lot of problems with education, as far as studies, as far as I was concerned, was I helped out a lot of the classmates, and dormmates, and teammates. And I helped him a lot with with literature and English classes. And I bought my typewriter, little portable typewriter to, to college with me at my mother's suggestion. And I ended up typing a lot of papers for people who, you know, had to have the papers typed. And so I was I was kind of like the go to guy at the last hour to get papers typed up. So I helped them that way, and I was glad to do it.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 09:14

Wonderful. So now we're going to switch gears. And my next question is, how did the professional connections and personal bonds that you formed that Providence College affect your time here? And do you keep in contact with any of them?

Anderson Clary 09:33

Well, it made it very comfortable, I'll say, and it gave me a sense of belonging connection. Gave me a sense of camaraderie, because you remember now, we were all male in the 60s, you know, women didn't - we didn't become co-ed until the early 70s. So it was it was a great it was, we were encouraged I'll say, not mandated, but encouraged to set the mark as a PC gentleman. And that was wherever we went we were seen as that because when we went out in public, we had to have a jacket and tie, and most of us took the PC blazer, and the PC tie, and white shirt, and we conducted ourselves accordingly. But that all started internally, on the campus and in the dining hall, and we had to wear shirt and tie, and jacket and tie to every public function. To dinner, we had to wear on campus, you had to wear your coat and tie. When we went on a roll the games, we all dressed in a blazer and tie. And so it was an image that we were projecting not only in how we dress, but in how we conducted ourselves. So that helped me when I went into the business world because one of the things when I worked in the bank, and it was Fleet National Bank, it was Industrial National in those days. And the president of that bank, and the vice president of the bank, chief executive officer was Mr. John Collins, who was a PC graduate. And so he carried that position. And in the bank, you had to wear jacket and tie. So I was already acclimated, and you had to be clean shaven. So those things that I was required to do, mandated to do in college was, you know, to my advantage when I got out into the business world. Now as far as connection. When I moved back here, I lived in Providence until 1991. So all of the people that I was associated with my classmates and teammates, etc, we kind of went our ways and you know, developed our lives, got married, had children went into jobs some went on to pro basketball. And the My connection with them was only at the times when we would come to homecoming games or something reunions, etc. But here 50 years later, we've come back and we reunited, we've re connected. And it is just like we never left each

other. That was my wife's observation. Said you guys, it's just like you'll see each other every day. But that was the kind of bond that we developed. And it was in there were no, there were no fraternities or sororities, but there were no fraternities. And it was an ideal, and an ideal at Providence College, that it was brotherhood for all and fraternities on the undergraduate level would have negated that mindset that that air, if you will, of the school, and the PC gentlemen, each one of us was equal to the other and we will all in a brotherhood and we will call PC gentleman. That affected me in a very positive way. And how I conducted myself and all of the things that I endeavor to do after graduation is just put me in mid res [sic] - or medias res, is in the middle of things as far as competing and for us interacting and it was a great thing.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 14:28

That's beautiful. And you kind of touched on this on your last question, but if you want to extend extend on it. The next question is who or what at Providence College had the biggest impact on you?

Anderson Clary 14:46

Well, I got a long list of people I would I would say, generally every priest, every professor, every person that worked in any capacity and administration, in the athletic department, the coaches, and if I had to single out one person, that would be not only close to impossible, but it would also be not a fair thing to do, because they all - everyone that I involved myself with, and involved themselves with me, took an interest in me as an individual. They were all equal in terms of how they affected me. So it was a cumulative effect coming from a cumulative group of people.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 16:03

Wow, those connections are very important. And it sounds like you had a lot of support earlier here. So it's very wonderful to hear. All right. And -

Anderson Clary 16:20

I appreciated it, and I enjoyed it.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 16:23

I'm glad. My next question is, were there any important political events during your time at PC? And were you involved in any protests or any form of activism?

Anderson Clary 16:39

Not really. There was one protest, this was during the Vietnam War, of course. And there were some of my classmates from my particular graduating year that were against the draft. And I remember them peacefully demonstrating on the steps of the dining hall, Raymond Hall, and I came down one day, and I didn't even know that they had organized to do that. And I just, Hey, how you guys doing? And I'm going in to get some some dinner. I'm hungry. I just come from practice. So during that time, on Providence College's campus, it was it wasn't you know, it wasn't prevalent. Now, I learned since in this modern era, that there, there have been protests for this, that the other and so I mean, that's, that's just a sign. And indicative of these times, in those days. That was the only thing and that didn't, that protests on the war, and the draft only occurred in our senior year. So other than that, everybody was, wherever, you know,

we were, again, that that image of being a PC gentleman, and conducting yourself in that way, whether you're in public, or whether you're in your classroom, or whether you're in your dorm room, or whether you're on a basketball court, or whether you're visiting another school or college somewhere halfway across the country, you always wanted and were encouraged, not mandated, but encouraged to conduct yourself as a PC gentleman.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 18:51

And my next question is, how did your experience at Providence College influence your current or former occupation?

Anderson Clary 19:02

Well, after graduation, which was 69, I came back to Providence College and enrolled in their postgraduate program of Biblical Studies. I was very much moved to I was intending to get that biblical studies label or certificate or whatever, you know, whatever, a master's in Biblical Studies. And so I did not eventually decide to convert to Catholicism and become a priest, primarily because of one vow that they had to take. And that was the vow of celibacy. And it wasn't because I was trying to be promiscuous, but I wanted to have a family. One day, I knew that that was something that would be fulfilling in my life. And so, after getting that tremendous education, I was able to take that, and go on to teach at Harvard, in their seminary in Harvard Divinity School, to go to Virginia, University - I'm sorry - Virginia Union, and teach at Hampton University. And also it assisted me and really enabled me and equip me for the work that I did for 23 years, or 30 years in pastoring. I pastored, a church on Cape Cod, Massachusetts in Hyannisport, and then I was called, and I'm Baptists. I didn't go Catholic, but I was Baptist. And I passed to the church, the historic church here, in the city, where I live now is Queen Street Baptist Church. And that education and that biblical equipping, to I would say, to not to imitate, but to model my life, and leadership in the church, after Jesus Christ was that education was second to none. And to this very day, because I'm retired, but I'm providing supply pastoring, to a church that lost its pastor. And it's the thing that is, is so endearing for me is that they are receptive to the training, the religious training, the religious education, the Christian education, the Biblical Studies. And so we have a tremendous teaching ministry, at this church, and we had a tremendous teaching ministry, wherever we went, whether it was going to university seminary programs, or whether it was in the church, the two churches that I pastored. And I think about the scripture where Jesus said they their hunger, and thirst, after righteousness, shall be filled. And I tried my best to fill that hunger and thirst in people. My undergraduate and graduate education at Providence College, A) was second to none. And B) it equipped me to be effective in winning souls for Christ and leading people in the right direction and with the statement that Jesus made Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for his namesake. I tried to feel that promise that the attitude in the people that I was charged with leading and shepherding in the two churches that I pastored.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 23:39

That's beautiful, Andy. And my next question is, can you share any other successes you have you had while in college?

Anderson Clary 23:53

Hmm. Well, just making it through with, you know, with the demands of playing basketball, and then being able to graduate. And that was it. I mean, that was the that was the big success, graduation, you know, fulfilling the requirements. And that's, that was it. I mean, afterwards, because of my academics, which became better as I got closer to being a senior. The academics, I was recognized as Academic All American. Not so much for the basketball prowess, but for the academic achievement, and the athletic heroics. That's what that's Yeah.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 25:04

And on the flip side of that, do you want to share any challenges you had while in college?

Anderson Clary 25:13

Yeah, the biggest challenge was trying to balance academic pursuit, to graduation, and playing basketball and being, you know, contributing and effective and supportive and leading in, in that acade-athletic environment. So that was that was always challenging. I mean, I know some of my other teammates felt the same way. But for whatever, whatever, the blessings of God that brought me through, I give him all glory and honor. And thanks for bringing me through. It wasn't it wasn't by me. And by those persons, the professors and the coaches, and the staff that stayed with me, you know, and encouraged me and kept the door always open to be accessible to me if I needed anything, and I'm not talking about material, I'm just talking about anything in terms of emotions, and misgivings, misunderstanding, sadness, sorrow, anything. The, those priests, were right there, because there's all priests then there were very few. I have very few lay teachers in undergraduate. And then in the graduate school, I can remember one nun sister, sister, Helen O'Neill, and one lay professor, Dr. Reid. And that was it every everybody else Father Collins, and Father Keegan. and the like. They were all, Father Peterson, they all were priests, obviously. So it was their influence, you know, that really shaped - shaped my life at that time.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 27:36

That's amazing to hear. And next is, What did you wish you knew before you came to Providence College?

Anderson Clary 27:46

I read that question. And the answer is nothing. I mean, I had no misgivings. I had no, yeah, but what if I didn't, I didn't think of what was going to happen or what I thought was going to be one way, and it wasn't. I did think that they would have roomed me, paired me up with blacks. Or as you say another person of color POC, that's a new term for me. I'm old school. But they didn't. And so that was like, the big, you know, surprise, we want to call it a surprise. But we, we work together, you know, my roommate and I and it was my, one of my roommates, who was the principal advocate for recommending me to receive the Martin Luther King award. And, you know, he was he was he had never met a Black man. Okay. And I had, not never met but I hadn't been in contact with. And so we just, we just made it. He was from Syracuse, New York, a little town, where there were no blacks . And my other roommate, Jerry Murphy. He was the hockey scholarship player. And he was from Lewiston, Maine. And they both said, man, you're the first Black guy, we, we really know. But it was, you know, we got along because we're

human beings. You know, we treated each other as human beings and it was not hey - they didn't go home and tell, hey, guess what I'm rooming with and in those days, we will call colored. The colored kid. You know, if I went home and said hey, my roommates a white guy. It wasn't like that. And I'm sure some of that existed. I mean, we don't live in a utopia, and blind to color. But once once you go to bed at night, in the dorm, and your roommates, turn the lights off, and we are lying there in the dark, it's hard to see color, you know. And so you know, you get to talking and you listen to each other. And you're not your walk, as we say, now, we were walking by faith, and not by sight. And Martin Luther King said judge by the content of our character, not the color of our skin.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 28:03

Wow, that's very impactful. My next question is, what advice would you give current POC students, specially first generation students about navigating life at Providence College or college in general?

Anderson Clary 31:22

It's hard to give this generation advice because my advice is old school. And I find even when my my daughter who is 35, and she's a forensic psychologist, and she and my son who is 43, soon to be 44. They, they didn't grow up in a in a environment that was segregated. And so they don't have the same apparent impediments that I had. But the advice that I would say, is, for anyone that's going to school now is to seek to live, not as though you have achieved, perfection and you've already arrived. This is biblical, but seek to live to the glory of God. Because he has called all of us whether we acknowledge it now, and not one day, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess - I'm preaching to you now. And every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. So seek to live not as though you have achieved perfection or have arrived, but seek to live to the glory of God he's called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. And that darkness is full of misconceptions and myths, understandings and prejudices and racism, and social morality, social and moral impediments and distractions. And so keep your eye on the prize and the prize is the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in knowing him, and so seek to live in that in that way. Now young folk don't listen, like that. But -

Nahyr Morales Lugo 33:57

So the last question is just, is there anything else you would like to share? It could be about the project, it could be about anything you didn't get to squeeze into the other questions, anything that you'd like to share?

Anderson Clary 34:13

Yes, and this is just a saying, I'm a believer in when you hear it. It's news. When you archive it and write it, it's history. So I hope that what I have said today is news to you from my particular perspective. And when you record it, and people either listen to it or read it, it will be valuable history. Because if you don't know where you come from. It's hard to get to where you want to go.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 35:09

That's beautiful. Thank you so much for everything, Andy, and thank you for spending time with me and telling me a little bit about your PC experience.

Anderson Clary 35:18

Sure.

Nahyr Morales Lugo 35:19

I really appreciate it.

Anderson Clary 35:20

I'm always available. Glad to to be as healthy as I am.