

[00:00:00.650]

[00:00:02.610] - Briana Wiggons

So this is Brianna Wiggins with your Stories remembered oral history project. We are in Sewanee, Tennessee, with Everett Lee McCrary and Holbert Henrique James Jr. Is it right to say your preferred name is Kwesi?

[00:00:16.990] - Kwesi

Yes.

[00:00:17.380] - Briana Wiggons

Preferred name- Kwesi. We are on the date is February 25, 2023, and we are on the upstairs level of McGriff alumni house. Both of that don't isn't like base boosted on the recording.

[00:00:35.370] - Kwesi

All right, well, thank you for having us and receiving us. We're open arms to record what our memories are here at the University of the south that are known as Swan. I'm of a class. My name is, again, Ever McCurry, and class of 1986. Originally from Atlanta, Georgia, and went to an Atlanta public high school and matriculated through Sewanee, which we had an opportunity to enjoy a whole bunch of array of things, and that being an introduction, I guess you want to introduce yourself as well, and then we'll go into some kind of dialogue.

[00:01:23.690] - Kwesi

So, yes. Again. My name is Holbert James Jr. Preferred name, Kwesi. I came in the second class that Eric Benjamin recruited, came in 1982. I also went to the same high school that Everett McQuarry went to. We both are graduates of George High School. He graduated 1981. I graduated 1982 in Atlanta, Georgia.

[00:01:49.890] - Everette

Awesome. Okay.

[00:01:52.390] - Briana Wiggons

Been buddies for a long time.

[00:01:55.560] - Everette

Yeah.

[00:01:56.360] - Everette

We went to high school and college together and maintained a friendship over these last 40 years or so. Not better, obviously not in contact all the time, but we know how it is when you reconnect with a friend. Things are like no distance this past five. So we respect each other individually, our choices in life, and eternally. I think we love each other. At least I do. With the love of Christ Jesus. Amen. So we're here to share stories. I guess one of the first stories that I could share is the first day of arriving here at the University of Missiles. So my friend, who was also a graduate and a graduate of Atlanta Public High School, mr. Eric Walden, who's not here with us today, I'm sure he'll do this at some point. We both came to a conclusion that this Sewanee would be the place that we would go to school. We didn't come to it in a collective manner, but we came to that conclusion in our own events in life. So I'm probably going to start how I got that and then come back to the first day of school. So Eric Benjamin, prior to becoming the minority student affairs director, was a legal aid attorney, as I understand it, in the Atlanta in the Atlanta area.

[00:03:28.790] - Everette

But he was a graduate of Sewanee. And so Sewanee was trying to launch a program that would bring more African American students to the campus. They had students, obviously, but the presence wouldn't be as what it is now currently. And so he came to our high school and they made a presentation with Mr. Gooch. Never forget that day. So you have to see Mr. Benjamin at the time and his youth. He looks similar to what he did now. And a very tall gentleman, afro beard, gray, slice of

gray, not as much as he has now. And then just sitting there. And then the other gentleman, who is the active, I think, admissions director or counselor recruiter, Mr. Gooch, came to our high school, and our counselor invited all the people in the top 10% of our class day. And so we were sitting at a table like we are currently a roundtable, and the presentation was made. And I looked at the photographs, and you look at Sewanee. Oh, man, this is a beautiful campus. Such a nice and I have this affinity for outdoors anyway. In fact, I claim to be one of the students who saw all 10,000 acres, because I did a lot of hiking when I was here, personal hiking.

[00:04:56.350] - Everette

But anyway, during that event, Mr. Bluemason made a presentation. And then at that presentation, the amount that it would cost to go here became an issue, or it became magnified. A number of my high school classmates looked at and said, oh, man, sounds great. How much did it cost when that comes? When that answer came up, I was like, wow, okay, well, we can't afford that. And then that kind of knocked out all some of the possibilities in some of my classmates. It was about 15 of us, mine. And then Benjamin stood up and he said, well, what Mr. Gooch is not telling you is that if you want to come, if you're accepting and you want to come, there's financial means available. So that opened my mind up. And then Sewanee having the number of student small classes, that was very attractive to me. I investigated further and then came to a conclusion that this is a real possibility. So I applied and was accepted. At the same time, I had opportunities for a Division One and Division Two football scholarship.

[00:06:09.580] - Everette

Yeah and actually earned a football scholarship, full football scholarship at MTSU here in Murphreesboro. So I was torn between football and Swan at the time. So I made a trip prior, about three weeks before school started here, because practice and football starts about three weeks before school traveled to Murphreesboro and literally practice with MTSU's football team. My mother encouraged me to do that simply because it was a full ride. We went to pay anything. But when I got there and I found out that football on a higher collegiate level probably wouldn't allow me to be a student, that was my conclusion because of the number of practices we had and the concept by which they treated players. I saw one of my players, one of the guys on my team, on the team who was in my position, turned and crashed and burned, so to speak, toward his leg. They dragged drug him off the field, and the position coach said, drag him off the field. Guy named John, you're next ever. You're fourth on the death chart. And I was like, wow, just that clean and clear cut. So that resonated with me as to how much of a non student I would probably be able to be.

[00:07:35.410] - Everette

And then at some point after a week there practicing, I just decided that I didn't think collegiate football at that level would be for me. And so I returned home. And then the following week, Eric, Walter and myself follow each other up to Sewanee and arrived on campus with our automobiles loaded with stuff and arrived right in front of our dorm, which we've been assigned to be roommates. Gailor hall, which, you know, doesn't look the same now. It's was a dining hall at that time.

[00:08:09.530] - Kwesi

A dormitory and a dining hall

[00:08:09.530] - Everette

Yeah. And it operated with steam pipes. That was always a memory. Right. So to get heat, the steam pipes would come over in the wintertime, and it sounded like someone was beating the pipe clean. Clang, clang. And that's when the seed get the heat to the room. So we were met that summer with Eric Benjamin. We drug our personal effects to our room, tried to establish some sense of home comfort, and Benjamin was just so excited to see us, and we were excited to be here. Upon arrival, we met two other students who were already enrolled, miss Betty Arnold and a cleavus head. And they were, I think, southboards at the time, and we befriended them, and we moved forward in such a manner. And by the way, I should say this is important, too, because at the time, Sewanee had what were called Saturday classes. I don't know if you've ever heard of this.

[00:09:10.670] - Briana Wiggons

Sounds Horrible

[00:09:12.350] - Kwesi

Before you go to Saturday class, why don't you tell about the other two students that came with you and him?

[00:09:16.640] - Everette

Oh, your class. Fair enough. Okay. So the other two students who came to Sewanee at the time with myself and Eric Walden were also well, one was another person from the Atlanta public school system is Eugenia Williams. And she went to Ferrell High School, which was a local high school that we were familiar with. And then also Miss Sarah Thatcher. And I think Miss Sarana hailed from Nashville, but her dad was an instructor at a college in, say, Carolina, I think of Virginia. No, I'm sorry. Virginia. No, it was Virginia. So at the time, there were four people, four African American students who arrived here who joined in union with two others. And we had a total of six minority students on Eric Benjamin's inaugural development of the Black Student Union at that point of office, which is now transitioned to something else. Yeah. At that point, we went to class every day and made our way through our first year like any other. You all do as well. One of the things I thought that was interesting, you and I had this conversation last night that when we would dine in the dining hall, we would sit together, and the rest of the population, or our student population would always say, why do all the black students sit together all the time?

[00:10:59.240] - Briana Wiggons

That's a book title actually

[00:11:00.440] - Everette

Is it really?

[00:11:01.640] - Briana Wiggons

Yeah

[00:11:05.570] - Everette

You have a little bit of your analysis. I think it's good. I can tell now, but you tell. Your part of the analysis of that.

[00:11:12.410] - Kwesi

and I'm thinking we will probably do this interview because I'm listening to how much in depth you're going to do. You're going into I'm thinking maybe you probably should we'll center this interview around you? I'll chime in, then I'll center one around me. And if you just in terms of black students, I just said that usually people sit together based on their interests and common goals and blah, blah, blah. We know that the football players sat with each other. The basketball players, that was just the different fraternities. And sororities they sat with each other and saw people from different dorms sat with each other. So that's just how people just what people do. People sit together based on their common interest or connection to each other.

[00:11:52.660] - Everette

Right? So I like the way you put that. It's actually very factual and accurate, but I always found it to be interesting that people would ask that question. And my take on it was that, okay, well, if it's an issue, nobody didn't banish anyone from coming sitting with us. I just thought that, hey, if you felt like you wanted to come and sit, it was a free environment. You're welcome to come and sit, that kind of thing. So at that time, coming to the university, when you talk about African American students, you talk about the universalities of things that they have in common with all cultures. And some of the things that we have in common with all cultures is the idea of music, song and art that plays a role in every culture in the world that has ever existed. And so we found an environment by which there was music and culture, but it wasn't totally a music and culture that was identifiable to us, although there to the universities advantage or fraternity house advantage. They would, on party weekends, have bands that play our style of music, which we like. So I'm myself, being a music aficionado, so to speak, love music.

[00:13:23.240] - Everette

I brought with me my little stereo system at the time and all my quote unquote album collections at that time, which grew over time. And we just began to enjoy the music and enjoy each other. And then at some point, the need to be, I guess, carve out an identity that fit who we were culturally began to arise. Okay, the Firehouse is having this band, and that turns having that band. Okay, so what's identifiable about us and how can we operate in that space? So the following year, my sophomore year, I went home at some and worked and earned some money. And I was determined to buy me an upgraded stereo system with a nice turntable and all, and I did that, earned enough money to do that and buy those and brought it back to school with me. And hence a cultural thing took off. We began to have social events at what you all call your what do you call that place down there. We used to call it was known as the outside inn.

[00:14:44.320] - Kwesi

The Ayres Multicultural Center.

[00:14:45.460] - Everette

Multicultural Center. That's what you all call it. Back in the day, it was called the Outside In. And it was just basically a facility that was empty, that you could schedule events, sign up for schedule events. And so we found ourselves signing up and scheduling events and having parties. When party Weekend came, we wanted to party that people could have fun and go dancing and have fun, that kind of thing. And that's what we did.

[00:15:17.090] - Kwesi

And to my recollection, didn't really anybody else use it? No. But you did no one else on campus. It was like a band and probably the more we use it, the less likely anybody else was going consider you.

[00:15:28.800] - Briana Wiggons

That's very familiar sounding

[00:15:31.370] - Everette

It was pretty much abandoned. We adopted. I recall Eric, who's a fledgling artist in and of itself, he played piano for his church and also he just played piano. Just to play piano, have fun. He was considered himself a music songwriter, that kind of thing. And we had an event at the outside end with him and another student I can't remember his name, he played the guitar very played the piano. He's a Caucasian student. I want to put a light on it because these are unions, although I don't remember the guy's name. He was a great fellow and he had a concert at the Outside Eden and he played some his own songs. He played some songs that he knew. And I did the lighting for him and I recall him and the young Men gentlemen, they played a song by what's his name? Sunshine on my shoulder makes me happy. What's his name? John Denver. And me doing the light and I heard the opening entry of the song. This was a very funny thing. And so I'm doing the lights and so when he gets to the opening line sunshine makes me sunshine on my shoulder makes me happy I turned on a light that shined on his shoulder.

[00:16:48.530] - Everette

Everybody Laughs that concert was such a success for Eric that he got an article in the Purple. They call him the future library Richie. Isn't that something? Yeah. So over time again, we bonded as a group of students. The push for faculty. I don't know if Dr. Dunn was here yet, but he came sometime, even a little bit later. And he taught political science. And then we had Benjamin. In addition to those social events, we would have regular parties or parties of dinners and just a welcome session or party at Benjamin's house. Michelle Benjamin would cook dinner for us and she'd invite us over and we listen to music and just talk, just a gathering social so we wouldn't feel too far lost from home. Being sometime in Sewanee, and you can feel isolated because of where we are, because of the climate, all that kind of thing. And fortunately we had an automobile, we had access to automobiles, and we had some fellow high school students who went to the University of Chattanooga University UT, Chattanooga, UTC and we would travel down and go see them on weekends when they had activities going and we would join.

[00:18:28.170] - Everette

So that was very positive thing that helped us cope with being socialized in a college environment. Because you come to college, you want to have a little fun, study hard, you want to play hard, you want to enjoy the full aspect of your college experience. And so sometimes the university campus just wouldn't offer that. So we sought it out in other universities nearby, we had relationships. Sarah Satcher's father subsequently got a position at Fish University where he was an instructor. And so we would go to her house, we'd go to Fish University, we bonded with some students at Fish University, we had student bonding with those at the UTC and Chattanooga, and so we came up with outlets. And then not only that, because of this community, back when we got here, the African American community was a little bit more vibrant than what it is currently. So we had people who were our age living in this community and we befriended them. And it was intentional on my part that we would befriend them. And because of that, I think a relationship developed to where we would invite them to any activity that we would have going on.

[00:19:52.450] - Everette

We wanted them to be a part of us. Well, let me put that in context too, because as we know, Sewanee is an elitist and elite university and people who from elite families send their children here to get educated. So their financial position will be much greater than what anything that we will be able to bring to the table. In fact, sometimes it could be a little bit daunting to see your classmates who are freshmen driving around in BMWs and all that kind of stuff, but that didn't necessarily bother me that much. The thing that got next to me though, is the fact that we could either alienate ourselves from this existing black community, or we could join it. Now in my mind, these people who worked for the university, and they worked off campus as well, but they were here and I saw them as connected to my family back home. And why did I see that? Because they were from working class families. Their fathers, their parents, their mothers. They went to work every day, they worked in high school, they worked here at the university. They worked at UTC, the Army Engineering Air Force Base.

[00:21:07.480] - Everette

So they worked at these places they had to go and work a day, week. And my parent, my dad, my mom, they did the same thing. So I could easily identify with working class people. And I think I could say for truth that nearly for at least the next five years. I don't know what the socioeconomic status of students are now, but when we were here, all of them came from either working class or working middle class families, or maybe even at the edge of upper middle class families. Nobody was obviously well off enough to pay their wages. I'm glad you clarified that. So it was just a natural progression to befriend these people. I mean, we work with them sometimes. Our student work situations put us next to them, right next to them working in the same thing as our work study program, that was cool. And so I saw those connections and I made it my intent to make that one of the things that we would do, because we could come here and become isolated in terms of our mentality. But that wasn't anything I thought would be productive for us as a community.

[00:22:32.020] - Everette

Considering the fact that we were actually coming to their hometown, they weren't coming to ours. And so for us to welcome them to their hometown seemed kind of odd. But I was thankful that we developed relationships that allowed them to be welcoming to us. And we go to their homes, they invite us to dinner, they came to our events symposiums, they came to music events, and it made them feel more welcome, make them feel a part of us. And I think we bonded with this community, this African American very well, so to speak. I should say that without a doubt. Yeah, I don't know if you want to add anything to that at all, but you're welcome to.

[00:23:17.230] - Kwesi

Well, you're saying we and I appreciate the general we. I think you really strongly bonded with the community. Not that we didn't, but you, I think, would have personally epitomized our connection to the community, to the black community in sewanee.

[00:23:35.390] - Everette

I didn't realize I had that much weight, but I recall some of the other students having personal

relationships.

[00:23:43.710] - Kwesi

I mean, I worked in Gailor Hall with some of the black community here as part of my work setting.

[00:23:53.130] - Everette

Yeah, sure. So that's pretty much our first year after buying that stereo system, and we found ourselves becoming somewhat of a DJ fellow fledgling DJ group that developed into something else. There you go. We did it. Right. So the concept of the name that we gave ourselves, I won't hold it to actually Kwesi to actually address this, because his memory is a little bit clear about how the name was established, and then I'll chime in as well. I think he has a clue.

[00:24:37.530] - Kwesi

Well, my version of the story is Kwesi speaking, is that as Everett said, he had come back from Summer and had bought DJ equipment. And I want to add to that, we also found out one thing I get into my story more is that we were very resourceful as a weight lace as well. We always tried to figure out how to get the most out of what we could. And in that sense, we found that there was this huge black speaker. And we used to rent this we used to check that speak out from the library all the time as a part of our DJ equipment. But how the name came into being from my memory is that Mr. Benjamin gave us a name one time, put some name on the flyer, trying to say it in a nice way. We weren't too fond of his creative name that he gave us. So we said out of self determination, we need to come up with our own name and DJ, especially since we're going to probably be doing this more. And if people don't want blah, blah, blah DJ to come and DJ at their party and they have a name to go along with it, not just call everette to come DJ.

[00:25:50.650] - Kwesi

So. Anyway, I remember.

[00:25:52.460] - Everette

Don't forget Eric and Carrie.

[00:25:57.650] - Kwesi

Eric Walden, Everette's roommate at that time, was also part of it. And as as well as Carrie Sinclair came later and who you mentioned earlier, Cleavus headly was already here. The five of us formed this brother, which we called Montu. And Montu actually, the way I remember it happening was that we were sitting around in in the room thinking about a name, and I saw, I literally saw in my mind's eye this book on my mother's shelf, and it was called Montu. And so I just blurted out montu, didn't even remember what it mean and knew what it mean. I just blurted out, montu. And everybody looked like, yeah, they liked the sound of it. And Everett added connection and so in Seeds month connection. And so later on I found that book, looked it up, and the word montu is from southern Africa and it basically means humanity or the essence of humanity, the spirit that unites people as human beings. So that's what montu means. And so we began to consider ourselves actually inviting that as like a brotherhood. I'll talk more about that, but that's my story.

[00:27:19.710] - Everette

As young men, especially in all culture, again, super cultural events, rites of passage become a thing of importance. So in the university environment, the rite of passage that help bring that help bring young men to manhood or teenage, youth to Menhood is called a rite of passage. And one of those things that help do that is fraternity. So obviously Sewanee had their fraternities, but we couldn't find the best way to put that an identity for us in that fraternity. Hence, Montu became that identity of passage for African American, for us, as African American, men and brotherhood and bonding. We did quite a few things. And so we even had some shirts. And this is in your book, in it, that have Munchy written on it. We weren't just a DJ group. We fancied ourselves to be a total part of this community in all facets, actually. I know that you all have literal Greek fraternities now, but one of the things is, part of our identity was that, okay, we're a little bit more progressive than the Greek system. At least that's the way I recall it. And if we were to go see if we can get somebody to sponsor chapter of, let's say, known African American fraternity, then we're still adopting a Western Greek identity, but just black

folks.

[00:29:16.690] - Everette

That was our concept. So Montu fit perfectly. It was African. It represented who we were as people, and it gave us a way of carving out a social identity here in Swan that fit us well. That along with the minority from the BSU, as we call the Black Student Union, because we were both apart, these organizations. The Black Student Union was there, and as Montu developed, emerged into a concept and actually into a whole idea, and I want to say movement, to some degree.

[00:29:57.950] - Everette

We became sort of a progressive end of a BSU, so to speak.

[00:30:06.290] - Kwesi

We bought the BSU into existence.

[00:30:08.060] - Everette

That's a whole story I'll tell that.

[00:30:11.490] - Kwesi

It wasn't a BSU when we came here.

[00:30:13.320] - Everette

Okay, all right. Bunt two became our fraternity. And so we identified the campus, began to identify us like that. And like I said, we just didn't do DJs. We did a whole bunch of stuff. As I recall, in 1984, as 83, sewanee was hit with a major ice storm, and all classes had canceled. For the first time in Sewanee history, half of our student population fled to Florida. Obviously, we couldn't afford them. Yeah. And then whoever were remaining, we were left here to survive that ice storm. So let me give you an example how Muntu responded to this. So we didn't necessarily just sit back. So we came up with some badges and wrote, what is it? Month two, rescue Squad, or something to that effect on it. And what we did was, at that time, Lake Chestnut was a Lake Chestnut. You could walk up the ice over there. We did that. But then we thought about our fellow students, especially the women at the girls door. And so it was our intent to go around and make sure that all of the girl dormitories had at least a fire, because all of them had fireplaces, to make sure they at least had wood in their fireplace. And have a fire starts so they can keep themselves warm. And so we did that to all the female dormitories. We figured the guys could help themselves.

[00:31:49.890] - Everette

We searched out among the campus to find all the facilities, all the buildings that had electricity. And at that time, the Bishop's Common was one of those buildings that had electricity. And so we just made let people know, hey, look, there's electricity in this building, so if you want to get together, we can kind of keep yourself. So that night or during that period of time, the Bishops come, and I don't know what you all use it for now, but the back part of where the offices are were pretty much open. Even where Eric Benjamin's office is currently, where his former office is, he's no longer there. But his office was that was all open space. And so somehow we came up with a space heater, and we took blankets off our bed, and all of us went and plugged the space heater up and slept on the floor. And the Bishops come in that particular area just so we could stay warm, so we can have a confidence each other, so we can be supportive to anybody who may have felt a little afraid in regard of the incident. And then about maybe four days later, actually, the National Guard sent us one just to open it back up to cut these trees down. There were big trees that had fallen and then cover the roads. Some of our student population were in panic mode. But myself, I can point to a point in my history when I was a child in Atlanta, a tornado hit inner city Atlanta pretty good.

[00:33:26.080] - Everette

Yeah.

[00:33:26.500] - Kwesi

So this is Kwesi I actually have pictures from that storm of us standing on Lake Cheston in the middle

of the lake, us posing by trees that were totally snapped in half.

[00:33:41.510] - Everette  
Big trees.

[00:33:42.160] - Kwesi  
And yeah, huge trees are totally snapped in half. And we have pictures just around campus of just the ice storm.

[00:33:52.330] - Briana Wiggons  
We didn't have, like, an ice storm. It was just like, oh, snow came through. And then looking at the trees, like there were the branches encased in ice. And then everyone was like, be careful because the branches will fall and shattered. If that fell on somebody, that'd be it.

[00:34:09.150] - Kwesi  
You're right. So imagine that, because that quadrant there, that area used to have huge I mean, it's got some huge trees down. There were more of them. And that actually happened. I mean, nobody got hurt, but those limbs would fall break, and like I said, they were covering the road, the street, University Avenue. So when they were falling in front of girls dormitories, and we went into those dormitories and just found young women who really were sort of frantic at the time. So we just wanted to make sure we could confident in some manner. We thought the manner by which we could comfort them was to make sure their fireplace was burning and that they had heat. And so that was cool. Yeah. I'm sure Pope is going to speak a little bit more about mine, too. We did a number of things in the community participated. Well, we did some fundraisers around campus. We were proactive. We raised our own money and bought a foosball. You remember that? A foosball table dishes come for everybody to use because we wanted to play, like wanted to play pool. Why don't we do something about it? So we raised our own money and bought food. We had fun doing those kinds of things. Yeah, this organization also through Cleavas, headley had it was intellectual as well, because he developed what we call the Student Faculty Dialogue. This was an organization started by himself, and I want to say by I forget her name, a young lady who were in the philosophy department. He was a philosophy major and one of his philosophy majors students. And they thought and said, hey, look, maybe there needs to be some kind of dialogue between the faculty and students. And so they began to do this pain call, establish this organization called the Student Faculty Dialogue. So we would meet probably once a month in Bishops Common, in the area, in the open area, lounge area, and have presentations, electric presentations, where students can respond to faculty. Faculty can make presentations, students can make presentations. So it's a back and forth intellectual feed between students.

[00:36:33.180] - Kwesi  
And so it was his brainchild when he and other students brainchild. And man, it just goes to show that Montu is just not all about entertainment, but we were about the holistic aspect of us being a part of the Sewanee community. I want to revert back to something that I missed with regard to academics, because I thought when I started thinking about thinking about academics, in a sense, because Sewanee is very challenging academically. Coming from the Atlanta public school system, we read probably one, two Shakespeare, Shakespeare plays, maybe one exposed to Shakespeare to a minimum level. But when you got this money and you had to write papers on Shakespeare plays that you read, and you're reading them in the language wasn't necessarily resonating. And so there had to be a way of overcoming this obstacle. So the library had a music listening room, and I used to work there, and I subsequently found out that they had Shakespeare plays on record albums. So now, okay, I'm having a hard time learning this language, seeing how this language I might already pick up, I can't understand what they're talking about, the context by which it was going on.

[00:37:58.630] - Kwesi  
And so I went to the music listening room, checked out the album you could play, put your headphones on, go to room, and they play it, and took my English book and read along with it. And those Shakespeare plays came to life for me at that point, which allowed me to be a somewhat better student in English, help me pass the class. The academic environment, we never had any remedial



classes or anything like that. That was not a remedial program. So again, you had to be resourceful. And I think again, what Crazy said about us being resourceful. We didn't wait on anybody to hand us something. We would say, okay, here's what we need. What can we do as our part to make something happen that will make it better for us? And I think that's it. That's what took place. Now, I'm going to stop there because I've used a lot of time and I'm sure you got some things that you want to talk about. And I'll chime in again like you did.

[00:39:07.390] - Briana Wiggons

Both of you all got notes on topics I want to say for the record on this eight and a half by eleven paper. Got it filled up.

[00:39:18.770] - Kwesi

So should we stop it inside of.

[00:39:20.550] - Everette

Back or just keep it going?

[00:39:24.050] - Kwesi

You want to leave that separate from me?

[00:39:33.510] - Everette

Okay, we'll just keep it like this. What you gonna start with, man?

[00:39:44.250] - Briana Wiggons

y'all never did elaborate on Saturday school.

[00:39:50.490] - Kwesi

Okay, so let me just do it real quick. Okay, so when I was a freshman, we had Saturday classes. So we would have a day off in the middle of the week, and then we have class on Saturday, which was very counterproductive because after a Friday night at Swine and I'll leave that into your imagination, you know what that's like. And then having to come to class on Saturday, professors thought it was unproductive. We as students found it to be unproductive. And then after my freshman year, they terminated that, coming to a very informed conclusion that it was counterproductive. And so I'm glad they did that. Although one of the things that I think it did do was identify Swan as being unique to have Saturday classes. But I assume that that uniqueness wasn't being unique wasn't enough to justify keeping it that way. I think that's the best way to put that not one of the better ideas. Everybody wants to relax on the weekend.

[00:40:57.650] - Briana Wiggons

So which are the many topics? You can see the thoughts going through Kwesi's mind right now.

[00:41:04.950] - Kwesi

Yeah, I was just thinking that's kind of also maybe just started in terms of coming to Sewanee. Again, coming from Atlanta, predominantly black city, predominantly black high school, you know, and in addition to that, I was raised in African culture tradition. I'm doing this interview in full African clothing. Even the name Kwesi. I have several African names that have been given to me, and that's how most people know me, even my family. And so coming to Swani was quite a challenge for me on different levels. It's so interesting to me because I had a full scholarship to morehouse pre-eminent black college for black men in Atlanta. I had a full scholarship to Howard University. And that's the one. Sometimes I still say I kind of regret not taking up both of those. But I'm sure my life would have taken a different course then, obviously. So it was a reason why I came to Sewanee. I often tell people my elders kind of guided me to go to Sewanee because it's like, okay, well, we know you got the black thing down, so you don't need to go to HBCU. Can you navigate the world?

[00:42:33.090] - Kwesi

And so why it would be a good test for you to see that. So that was kind of how I ended up coming to Sewanee. I remember somebody's visit again, I mentioned wearing African clothes. I was wearing

African clothes in high school at that time, and I didn't even own a shirt or tie, a button up shirt that you wear, a tie, a blazer. And so when I came to visit Swan, before I came to visit Sewanee, I asked Eric Benjamin about that. He said, oh, that's just tradition. It's not required. Don't worry about that. Well, I don't know about now, but it was required when we came. I heard it's not required.

[00:43:15.950] - Briana Wiggons  
More of an ideal, I guess.

[00:43:19.490] - Kwesi  
Okay, I don't know when that happened, but it's not a requirement. That's what people told me that as well. But it was definitely a requirement then. So I came to visit Sewanee and, like Everette said, yeah, it was very impressive, the nature, the buildings, architecture, structure. And so part of my visit was that was to go sit in a class. So I'm getting ready to go to a class, and it's like, oh, you can't go like that. You got to have a shirt and tie. I borrowed a tie shirt from elville cleavage, I think it was. I'm not sure. So I could go and sit in class because I didn't have a quote, unquote Swannie attire for class. I'm like, Gosh, I got to go back home, buy shirts and ties and blazers, change my whole wardrobe. This is kind of interesting. I could have picked a school, but not necessarily one that had that as a criteria. Lab. It's another PWI. But anyway, Salani was the choice.

[00:44:20.130] - Kwesi  
And.

[00:44:20.470] - Everette  
Also, I was trying to think of a way to kind of frame my conversation on just, like, an overall thing. And I think one of the ones, like I said, I want to bring out is the resourcefulness that we have. But also, I think, Evan, I were talking about this, how we came to have to deal with Swani on our own terms. And I think that and I hear that it's still true today with some of the African American students is that usually students that come from predominantly black cities or black high schools, that's what they do. They figure out how to have their own make sense of Swani for themselves and not necessarily try to assimilate into Swani, whereas students that come from predominantly white, maybe rural areas or cities or don't necessarily have that foundation oftentimes find themselves, in our opinion, wanting to fit in and blend in assimilate into Swani. So I think with every group of black students that are here, you have those two different groups. So we were definitely the we're not trying to assimilate crew. This is Everette laid out. I think one of the things also I was just thinking about some things that we haven't talked about.

[00:45:38.570] - Kwesi  
I think it's important that Everette talked about that. Not only did we have to carve out the space for ourselves so we could have our own healing, but also we want to make a contribution to sewanee. And one of the things that we did was our cultural awareness imposing that the guy began those. And the first year, if I'm correct, we brought in Dr. Manny Merrill, who's the leading black he's no longer alive. And he was the leading black one of the leading black economists, political economists in the United States. And he taught us this at the time, right? So we brought him in speaker, and we brought an African dance ensemble that I was a part of in Atlanta to come and perform. And I keep saying this because I want this to be documented. I got pictures of me dancing on stage in Sewanee, pictures of Everette and cleavus and the African dance outside of performing here at our campus. And that was again, that was so uplifting for me to bring an African dance osama that I was a part of as a high school student to perform at Sewanee, to see that side of me, for me to express my culture, my tradition, and to dance on stage.

[00:46:44.460] - Kwesi  
I even remember my French teacher. He spoke to me after that. He was just so surprised to see that side because in French class, I was very quiet, and he spoke in French. I struggled in French how you try to not make eye contact to professor, you don't want him to call on you, that kind of thing. So I was very shocked. So he got to see another side of me after seeing that performance. So the first year we bought Dr. Manny Maribel and Atlanta African Dance Ensemble. The second year we bought Dr. Leonard Jeffers and life was Jazz Band, which is jazz battles for me within Atlanta as well. Dr.

Leonard Jeffries to me is one of the preeminent historians on the planet, black historian. And so he came to Sewanee and just killed it, smashed it, all of that. Dr. Leonard Jeffries is just a world renowned historian. He went to the sabon. So he was a part of his presentation. He started speaking in French, and he let people know that he had the academic pedigree to be at, sewanee to be anywhere, because he had gone to the sabon he laid out all of this history about how Africans are the foundation for what we call Greek culture.

[00:48:08.920] - Kwesi

That Herodotus and Pythagoras and all of these Plato and Aristotle, all these so called great Greek thinkers and mathematicians and philosophers studied in Egypt, studied in Kenneth, got their teachings from Egypt, got their teachings from. I recently shared this with Everett. I shared this with a few people, and he pulled out something called a Peter's Projection, which is a whole different map of the world than the map that we normally see in terms of the sizes of Africa versus the size of Europe, the size of North South America. He pulled that out and showed that. And he's very what's the one say? He was very expressive and charismatic in his presentation. He's laying out all his facts and just upending Western culture, upending Western civilization and insulin. This was the icing on the cake. At the very end of his speech, he finishes and he says, are there any questions or comments? So I just know some white professor is going to challenge him. One of the professors in history, Harvard, trained here at Sewanee. Nobody said anything. That was one of the proudest moments to be a black person. I've had experience Dr Jefferies at Sewanee.

[00:49:27.410] - Kwesi

Nobody challenged, didn't even ask the question. The third year, we wanted to focus on women. So we brought, I don't have her name, but again also again, I keep saying I'm doing this for the record. So I do have a flyer from that. We call them cultural awareness symposiums. And it has Dr. Leonard Jeffrey's presentation on it and the Life Force Jazz Band on there. And then the third one we did, we decided to focus on women. And we brought a woman in who I believe was from India. She was a professor at Yale, Harvard

[00:50:08.930] - Everette

The way that happened is I had done a summer intern in Atlanta with the American Friends Association, which is a church based Quaker

[00:50:18.815] - Kwesi

Quaker

[00:50:18.860] - Everette

Quaker based organization for Civil Rights Struggle. And I'm part of civil rights movement. Also, I must put for the record that I also did an intern with the Marley the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change in the summer of 1984, where I had an opportunity to call King Scholars Intern. And I had an opportunity to meet I already knew these people. I had an opportunity to meet and get personal with John Lewis. Everybody knows John Lewis. He was a part he was a member of the district in my house, of my area in Atlanta, my voting district. So we ate dinner at John Lewis's house. CT. Vivian, one of the pioneers of the civil rights movement. You will probably see him in some film footage where he's on the steps of a church in Alabama and Birmingham, and the police attack and he defends this and they break his nose and he bleeds. Yeah, exactly. And then at the end, we actually participated in social it's called nonviolent social change.

[00:51:24.400] - Everette

And so we had different assignments as Scholars student earned terms about ten of us. And we had different assignments in Atlanta. And one of my assignments was adult education as well. And at the end of the intern, we saw Miss Coretta Scott Keane on a daily basis. But at the end of the internship, we all got an opportunity to sit down like we are now and have a conversation with Coretta Scott King, face to face, one on one, ask her anything you wanted. And, man, that was priceless in my mind. And then not only that, at the time, she had written a book called My Life with Martin, and she gave us a personal autograph copy of her book. I still have that book today at home, well preserved and well taken care of, along with some other memorabilia from the Margaret King Center for Nonviolent

Social Change. I like to say a little bit more about that, but I want to. Be respectful to Kwesi, because you know it's his turn

[00:52:24.030] - Kwesi  
that's fine. And actually, I want to come back to that, because, again, that was one of the examples of us being resourceful. I had found out about the I don't remember the name of the Tanya.

[00:52:35.490] - Everette  
Tanya foundation, the Tanya Scholarship

[00:52:38.940] - Kwesi  
The Tanya Scholarship I think it was called, where students, sewanee students, can do an internship, and Sewanee will pay for it. And so when I found out about that, I did an internship. I started sharing with other African American students, and many of us took advantage of that to do internships. We mentioned Eric several times on this presentation. Eric Walden, he did an internship as well, because I did two internships. I'll come back to that. I didn't want to jump around too much. But again, that was another example of the resourcefulness of us finding out as many things as we can to enrich household experience and make it work for us. So we brought in Dr. Asoke to be the keynote speaker. But then what we did and this was the year we got creative, as we found out that a student organization couldn't request that food service, that lunch, could be served at a location we choose.

[00:53:46.230] - Kwesi  
So you want to tell that story? Go ahead.

[00:53:47.920] - Everette  
No, I'm just saying but that was my brainchild.

[00:53:49.700] - Kwesi  
Okay, this is one of those. Anyway, what we decided to do is to have our cultural awareness opposed to outside. What do you say, Luke? Right across the street where we're doing this interview, literally, at that cultural program, we had gotten some of the international professors here that wanted to donate outfits so that the black women students here could do international fashion show. So dr. El McDonald from Liberia. His wife from Liberia donated clothes from Liberia. There was another Cecilia from India who donated clothes. And so the African American women students wore their clothes. We had an African dance we had an international fashion show. There was an African dance troupe in Nashville that we found out about, a youth African dance troop. They had about 30, 40 young people in the troop. It was a huge troop. And they came down and performed. They were all part of the so we had, like, a whole outdoor festival basically scheduled with speakers, poets, people performing. But the highlight was the fashion show and the african Dance truth. And we had the food service to serve food out there where we did it. So it forced the students to come by at least to get lunch.

[00:55:19.630] - Everette  
Exactly.

[00:55:20.040] - Kwesi  
They had to come out to all of us want to come in, had to come out to our culture where they're supposed to to get their lunch that day. There was no lunch served in Gailor Hall that day. Who served right out there. So that was another one of the things that we brought to the table. And I guess another one while we're on that note would be we started the first celebrations of Martin Luther King Day here. We started something called the Martin Luther King Day candidate vigil.

[00:55:47.610] - Everette  
That's correct.

[00:55:48.500] - Kwesi  
And so we would have it in the evening and we would read excerpts from Martin Luther King speeches. And one of the things that I guess we felt that we kind of were validated in a sense was

because the Joe Reagan, who was a European American student, president of student body, he came and spoke at our Martin Luther King.

[00:56:14.630] - Everette

Yeah, the initial Martin Luther King event took place. Like I said, it was a march and then it ended right on the CornerSteps of the chapel that faced Gailor. At that time, I set up a recording where we played a speech of Martin Luther King well, short speech. And then we had Eric Walden come and sing lift every voice lead us into voice to sing, Remember that? And then everybody standing with their candle lit. And then Ali at the time was the vice president of the BSU black Student Union and she was junior. William was the president. But the organization of that fell on my shoulders and man, it turned out to be such a wonderful event, well received by the community that it took root. And as I understand it, it still continues. But yeah, I just want to add that little bit to you. It was a great thing. Yeah.

[00:57:15.610] - Kwesi

One of the things, too, I was doing some reflection on and I didn't think about this way while we were here, but I thought when we were here, particularly in Sewanee, but I realized later on ever talked about the importance of music and culture and art. And I realized that more than us being DJs was the fact that we bought our albums because I inherited my mom's collection. And so music was really therapy for us. It was therapy for me. I know for sure as one way of dealing with life in Sewanee because there's no cultural stuff, there's no anything to reflect African American history or culture. And so other than us having conversations with each other ever so often, us having parties or whatever. And my mother had what I consider very expansive record collection. So I was listening to stuff like Gil Scott Heron. I'm listening to Fail Out music that my mother introduced me to. I'm listening to Sweet Honey in the rock. I'm listening to Stevie Wonder and even I like to Ellen share this story speaking because this story is always funny.

[00:58:28.140] - Everette

I know what you're about to say.

[00:58:29.250] - Kwesi

You don't know what I'm about to say. This story is always funny to me because during the holiday breaks, sometimes I.

[00:58:38.980] - Everette

Know exactly what's his name came and knocked out and heard the music.

[00:58:44.140] - Kwesi

No.

[00:58:44.920] - Everette

Okay I stand corrected

[00:58:47.910] - Kwesi

The story I was going to tell is that during the holiday breaks, Thanksgiving, Christmas breaks, sometimes I would go back to I would go to Land, but sometimes I would go to DC where my dad lived. And sometimes I went to New York where I had cousins and family. So one break, I remember what it was, christmas, Thanksgiving break, whatever, I went to New York and hip hop was just really coming out at that time. And I got this. And so I thought it was cool that I'm getting the latest music because at that time when music came out, it started in New York. It wasn't like the song came out and was all over the United States. Music started in New York, particularly hip hop, and then it trickled down to the rest of the country, right. And so I was in New York, so I was able to get the latest, latest, hottest music. So I bought this album dougie express and so I was all excited. This is the jam. This is the hottest. I played it so much too. They all look at me like I'm crazy. I don't lost my mind.

[00:59:48.610] - Kwesi

We are not going to play that. Where you get that? What was that? They dug me out so bad.

[00:59:58.670] - Everette  
I stand apologetic to you now for help sake

[01:00:01.870] - Kwesi  
no problem.

[01:00:02.850] - Kwesi  
But yeah, eventually Doug Express caught on this hip hop and they realized that that was a hit. There's another side on that. That was the same time I believe I bought Michael Jackson Thriller. The album just came out, 599 Tower record. I still remember that. And we didn't even have any idea of any clue that that album was going to be as big as being as it was. But it became big. Every song on there was a hit. And I remember also because I think about a way to try to bring some of the women into this. But I don't know if this is the best story, but I remember when Michael Jackson's videos were going to be released, that was a big deal. Like we heard he's going to release Beat it

[01:00:51.230] - Everette  
Billy Jean.

[01:00:52.670] - Kwesi  
Billy Jean And so particularly the sisters were gathering somewhere in one of the common areas and everybody stopped everything. Michael Jackson new video just dropped, that was a big. Thriller. Thriller. Beat it. Billy Jean. Those were phenomenal videos. Like, those were cutting edge videos. So we were like, Michael Jackson new video about to be released again. Stop homework, stop everything, meet and so and so don't.

[01:01:21.930] - Kwesi  
And one more funny story about the music. Right. Cleavus? We were in Atlanta this time, shopping for new music, right? We can't run the music up here. We got to go to land in New York. So we were in Atlanta at the time, shopping for some music, right? And I never forget Cleavus Hadley, who was a part of Montu, he picked up an album with Whitney Houston on it, and this is her first album, Little Skinny. She's real skinny on that album. And he's like, oh, She's is beautiful, man, we should get this album. And I was Like, man, we not gon' buy no album cus' the chick cute on the album.

[01:01:57.450] - Kwesi  
"He said, yeah, man, she looks good man we should get this album"

[01:02:05.110] - Kwesi  
But then he got me, though. What he did was, back in those days, when you go to the record store, they have a list of the top 20 hits or the most popular song. She had two songs that was in the top 20. I said okay, you got let's get it. Of course, Whitney Houston's first album was a big success, and I apologize to him. You were right she was beautiful and she had a great album and she can sing. Those are some, yeah. But music was a very big part of, I think, to me, feeling comfortable.

[01:02:42.550] - Everette  
Can I interject something? Sure, go ahead, man. So, as a geopolitical conscious, conscious rising conscious, raising artists and music, my meeting here at Sewanee brought me to see Bob Marley, the depth, lyrics and social consciousness and political consciousness of Bob Marley and the wailers, and regular music, and expanded from there. And I still love regular music to this day. Prior to coming to Sewanee, I had an enlightened music collection that included Earth, Wind Fires, My Life, my ultimate group that had consciousness. You keep your head to the sky.

[01:03:32.390] - Kwesi  
My mom was Big.

[01:03:33.400] - Everette  
Okay, so now with Earth Wing Fire, now comes this gentleman who's in the Caribbean playing his music redemption song and some more powerful lyrics that I still listen to this day that just

empowers me. And it's still relevant to our day, I think, in my opinion. And I'm so thankful that it wasn't Sewanee that introduced me to him. I think more so social interaction. I got to give credit to Eric Benjamin because he just played a couple of Bob Marley songs. Everybody know songs like Three Little Birds, Jamming, that kind of thing. You can see the one that did a rendition to represent all the college. And then that led to exploration in my mind of further seeking out reggae music. And, man, my reggae music collection just grew.

[01:04:31.910] - Kwesi  
My favorite group back then was Third World.

[01:04:36.890] - Everette  
A little bit more commercial. Yeah.

[01:04:38.960] - Kwesi  
But I'm saying that's how I would say just the entry point. For a lot of people, reggae was Bob Marley or Third World because of their music. But I'm saying we use it. We played a lot of it. We played music as DJs. Third World. Exactly. But they're lyrics, very kind of lyrics as well. I had a whole page full of notes. I'm trying to see what I haven't talked about that I wanted, what I haven't talked about yet on here was the march. Oh, wow, I can't leave that. And I got receipts with Brown with Browning articles hanging out the edge. We gon' do it. We gonna do it. Yeah. Maybe this would be a good note to end on, because there's more stuff we can talk about. But so, yeah, there was at one point, Sewanee launched a campaign to raise \$50 million, and they thought it was going to take seven to ten years, but they did it in three years. Last couple of campaigns, I heard they raised 170 and 190. So that was nothing.

[01:06:12.950] - Everette  
255

[01:06:13.670] - Kwesi  
Could be. So let's just stick with let's stick with the 80s when they raised 50 million in three years and for the endowment. And so they decided that what they were going to do was have Vice President Bush to receive an honorary degree at Convocation and celebrating in celebration of this accomplishment of raising this money. So Dr. Elwood Donna professor from Liberia, who was my mentor here, so I guess some other conversation we could have, someone that helped to help us to navigate being here and feel comfortable here. He also had parties at his house.

[01:06:58.280] - Everette  
Correct.

[01:07:00.550] - Kwesi  
And math. I had a story, one specific story about that, but anyway, so Dr. Elwood never said directly, but he hinted very clearly about perhaps there should be some type of response to Bush coming to Salon. And so we decided to I initiated the idea of us having a march of protests. So we started having conversations with what we thought were the most progressive organizations at Sewanee at this time. And there was a little crew, I don't know how to say there was a little crew of progressive professors, we could call them, that had gone to Berkeley, had gone active in the civil rights. We were, according to them, that's correct. And they had an organization called Sewanee peace Alliance. So we went to them. They said, no, we don't want to have a march. We don't want to support that. We went to the National Organization of Women, which was also very progressive here on campus, went to several other organizations, and all of them said they didn't want to support having a march. Then the word got out that we were having this, so Vice Chancellor Ayers invited us to have a meeting with him, and we sat down at a roundtable, and he said that he would guarantee that we could have a meeting with him to air our concerns, a private meeting with Vice President Bush.

[01:08:29.910] - Kwesi  
And we thought about it for a minute,

[01:08:31.870] - Everette  
just for a second

[01:08:33.190] - Kwesi  
and then we decided that we said to him, our response to him was that us doing the march is. Not for us alone is for the Sewanee community.

[01:08:41.290] - Everette  
I want you to clarify something. When you say we, who are the we you talk about

[01:08:45.190] - Kwesi  
We as Montu. Thank you. Thank you. We as Montu we kind of defined Montu earlier. So, montu, let's be real, real clear. Montu Cleavis headley from Barbados. The only African American student before Benny Arnold, before Benjamin Rick started recruiting. Then Everett and Eric. Eric Waldin. Everett McQuarry, myself and Carrie Sinclair. The five of us.

[01:09:13.620] - Everette  
That's right.

[01:09:14.320] - Kwesi  
So we were organizing, have this march in Bush, hoping that we could get some other people to join us besides five of us. And even at one point, some of the professors, progressive professors at one point did say that they would support the but, yeah, as everette pointed out, we told professor we told Vice Chancellor no.

[01:09:36.680] - Everette  
Right.

[01:09:39.130] - Kwesi  
Some of the progressive professors did say that they would join with us. And then one of the professors I do have names and stuff, but anyway, one of the professors and his wife changed their minds that they're not going to come. And then one of the other professors who their peers told them, they sent a letter, a formal letter to us saying that they changed their mind. They didn't think that the march would have the right impact, that we wanted to have, blah, blah, blah. And then another couple, Dr. Goldberg and his wife that's correct. Responded to their letter. Their peers, like I said, progressive professors. And he said, you know, basically said, don't wimp out. You know, y'all need to support the march. You know, basically, to paraphrase it, and but I have copies of those letters as well. We gonna enter them into the record, into the Sewanee record. We got copies of both of the letters. That's true. And so we went ahead with the.

[01:10:35.790] - Everette  
March and found much wider support

[01:10:40.930] - Kwesi  
Found much wider support than we realized. One of the groups that bought a big contingency, we had no idea it was the what is it? No, the convent,

[01:10:56.155] - Everette  
St. Mary's

[01:10:56.200] - Kwesi  
St. Mary's Convent came with placards and came like, I don't know, 20,25 nuns came to support the march. We did an account of about 125 people total. We had to march. We put an announcement out to everybody. We put in it to all the students who put in SPO. Ya'll still call it SPO?

[01:11:19.155] - Briana Wiggons  
Yeah



[01:11:18.870] - Kwesi

The SPO for those who not Sewanee is the news mail, the Student Post Office. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Sewanee Student Post Office and we put a letter out to everybody to clear up the rumors. We called it to clear up the rumors. We organized the march to be very well disciplined. We told people that we were going to have marshals to keep everybody. It was going to be a solid vigil. First of all, it's going to be a solid vigil. We're not going to be chanting or anything. We're going to have spokespersons. So if the press shows up, we know the press going to show up because Vice President Come but we're going to have designated spokesperson so they can't talk to anybody.

[01:11:57.190] - Kwesi

We have designated spokesperson. We have designated marchers who make sure that we are safe and everything. We had safety concerns taken care of, all of that. And we organized it. And then we came up with a position statement. And I was proud of the position statement because what we did with the position statement is that we looked at the resolutions that were passed by the Episcopal Church every two years is a convening. I forgot what's called biannual something. They call it convening. Whatever it is, is a convening. That the Episcopal Diocese has every two years is a big, big deal. And we pulled position statements from that to say this is why we're in opposition. The administration that Bush represents as he's coming as an Episcopalian well, he's coming as an Episcopalian, these are the things that at Sewanee being Episcopalian, these are the things that Episcopalian is saying that we are for or against and doesn't contrary to what this government is doing, Sewanee bringing him. This is a conference. So we laid out position statement. We talked about what was going on at that time. The Nicaragua Situation Conference in Nicaragua, South Africa was a big issue at that time.

[01:13:15.700] - Kwesi

We talked about other things as personal concerns like more funding for black students in general, government funding for grants and stuff for black students. I think we have some stuff around women and discrimination. Well, again, we have those documents too.

[01:13:36.390] - Everette

Because being here at Sewanee at the time, while we were students, we were isolated from our communities back home. So when we went home when I went home for summer, I came to find some our community some of our communities in Atlanta ravaged with crack cocaine which was an onset that was developed during that administrative period. And so I had friends of mine in high school who mentioned something that I had no idea. And I was like, what are you talking about? He told me literally, he said, man, you've been isolated on that mountain that you don't know what's going on here. So once he educated me on that, I was able to make that convention. And then sometime later, we have something called the IRA and Comfort affair bring a whole lot of this stuff to light.

[01:14:30.150] - Kwesi

Also, one of the things that happened with the marshals was that the professors were basically threatened basically with attending convocations by device. And maybe perhaps some that didn't have tenure were concerned about going to the protest versus going to convocation. However, what happened and this was a very critical part of the march was that the vice president was said in his speech subsequent to the effect and we had the exact quote was quoted several times in the newspapers. Basically, he said in his speech that somebody asked me about the protesters outside. But I would have been disappointed if they didn't show up. And so that validated the march. And so some of those professors and they honored their obligation by going to Convocations, and they left Convocation and came and joined the march. Yeah. And so, again, I have articles here from, first of all, the Sewanee Purple. There were several articles in The Sewanee Purple as well as opinions about the march, mostly favorable. And then we have articles from the Sewanee Purple. We have articles from the Chattanooga Times, we have articles from the Tennessee, the Nashville, Tennessee. And all of this is covering Bush's visit here.

[01:16:08.070] - Kwesi

That's the chat. Yes. So we have the articles where they reference the march. There's some quotes in

there by me about as a spokesperson of the march. And like I said, all of the articles reference the fact that Bush validated us in his speech, which validated the march. We have pictures from the march. There's actually pictures of the march not only in the Sewanee Purple, but in a couple of the yearbooks. There's pictures from the march as well in some of the Sewanee yearbooks.

[01:16:42.350] - Everette

I was thinking maybe you wanted to read one of the portion

[01:16:47.007] - Kwesi

Read a portion?

[01:16:47.070] - Everette

Yeah, I think it will be cool.

[01:16:51.970] - Kwesi

So this comes from the Chattanooga Times dated Monday, October 7. The march was conceived by Hover Jr. Of Atlanta, a senior study economics and third world studies. The young black man lapel boy button supporting the Southwest African People's Organization. " most people thought we were doing the school a disservice. They said this is not a political event, that it is a university academic function". James said, "they said this is an embarrassment for the university, or it's not in the Sewanee tradition, but the school is noted for bringing controversial people to campus. We are here to enlighten the Sewanee community to engage in dialogue" so that was a section from

[01:17:46.580] - Everette

Think that's so important considering our current political environment where people are so divisive in our current atmosphere that we were able to find a means of being entering into a dialogue with different opposing positions instead of being civil and exercising civility. That's one of the reasons why I thought it would be important to read that, so you can compare what happened back then and give it a context to what's going on. Currently.

[01:18:21.710] - Briana Wiggons

Questioned by protesters?

[01:18:26.530] - Kwesi

Yeah, the one that you always claim was the best one in the Purple.

[01:18:34.050] - Everette

Okay, this is lakeman defense protesters. This is like, I guess, an opinion piece that was in The Sewanee Purple. I'm trying to figure out where's a good section to read. I hope no one questioned our right to protest Mr. Bush's administration's policy. Certainly he did not. In his address, he defended the right of church members to fight with their sleeves rolled up. Quote, for their political beliefs. Our group did not acknowledge any particular religious affiliation. Nonetheless, those of us who are fellow Episcopalians were glad to see the vice presidents agree with us on this fundamental point. I also hope that no one felt embarrassed for Mr. Bush. Certainly he did not. He himself said that something would have been seriously wrong if the protesters hadn't...He himself said that something would have seriously wrong if no one here had protested his policies. It is unfortunate that he at least understands the vital role that debate and public dialogue may play in American politics. I am also glad to see that Mr. Bush understands that it is possible for us to welcome his presence and disagree with his policies at the same time. And then he's saying it's in the third person.

[01:19:56.320] - Everette

So he must have participated with us. He participated with us in the march. So this was his name is Thomas Lakeman. That's, again, an excerpt from me. And there's several actually, there were several opinion pieces that were in the salani purple, as well as an article about the march, as well as opinion pieces about the march, as well as pictures from the march as well.

[01:20:17.620] - Everette

So sort of a synergy happened, so to speak. So I had done my intern at the oh, yeah. Center for Nonviolent Social Change. We literally studied the principles of nonviolent social change. You had done an intern?

[01:20:33.680] - Kwesi

I did an internship at Trans Africa Forum, which is a leading public policy organization of African Americans focusing on public policy towards Africa and the Caribbean. And again, this was all through the fellowship that Sewanee offered students. And actually, while I was there, while Everett was name dropping, I got a chance to be in a room with people like Desmond Tutu, Harry Belafonte, leaders of the South African Trade Union organization different highlight people like Jesse Jackson and other elected officials. Congresspeople in DC came through the office, so we were able to see them introduce ourselves to those types of people. And that was a very exciting summer for me to do work with Trans Africa. Like I said at the time, South Africa movement was very big. That was a time when there was people got arrested every day in front of the South African Embassy for a whole year. And so Transactor Forum was the organization that organized that. So they would go into church groups and different groups to pick a day out of the week to organize. I got arrested myself. I think it was one day a group didn't come, like, we need somebody to get arrested today.

[01:21:48.130] - Kwesi

Grab that answer and holbert, put it on front line. Because the rule was this was how the strategy came about was that the leader of Trans Africa Forum and two other activists gosh, I wish I couldn't remember their names right now. But anyway, two other well known black activists in DC protested in front of the South African Embassy, and the South African Embassy said, we won't press charges if you just don't do it again. So they got the idea, well, okay, well, we just get some other organizations and other people and other church groups to protest. And so again, they launched this campaign of people protesting every day. And I learned about this. Again, like I said, one of my breaks from school, my dad is an activist. And so I was on break from Sewanee. I think again, Thanksgiving, a Christmas break with my dad is when I learned about this going on in trans Africa. And so I got fellowship through Sewanee to be an intern with Transafricanism, which was very just like Everette said, was very life changing event to have that opportunity.

[01:22:56.730] - Everette

Great. See all those great memories.

[01:22:59.690] - Kwesi

So you were saying about how you had gotten the training right?

[01:23:05.360] - Everette

yeah So part of the training at the center for Nonviolent Social Change marvin King Center for Nonviolent Social Change was that. We literally studied the philosophy nonviolent direct action.

[01:23:22.478] - Kwesi

the philosophy nonviolent direct action.

[01:23:22.550] - Everette

Exactly. And what about the direct, what it meant to be placed in an environment where your life could be threatened? What type of training those students at SNCC and all those other organizations had when they were in what we quote unquote, now call the movement from the we're a generation, two generations behind that. We're in the so we're still studying because we understand that there's still work to be done. Not that we want to be confrontational, just to be confrontational, but we wanted to be pushed. The idea of black people being who they are and finding liberty and freedom in the context by which they find themselves, we're only one generation from being lost in mind. Every generation has to learn these same lessons, so to speak. Hopefully, we as those who've been through it, can pass them down. And hopefully the generation who will pass them down to can listen and hear and follow. But, yeah, we learned those things. And so during that time of the march, we came up with the idea of having Armbands to identify our marshals so we could protect and the idea of marshals because we didn't know what kind of response would happen here on the mountain.

[01:24:50.090] - Everette

This was very peaceful environment for the most part. We could walk around campus, enter any dome at any time of the night, almost freely. And so we had much more of a free idea of being able to move in and about. But we had no idea what kind of response would happen to even the communities beyond Sewanee, because if they would have heard about them coming, what kind of response. So we want to be prepared to protect anyone who was a part of participating in that process. Yeah, I don't think it's important. I don't know. We can figure out how we could get a student to do some research on this. We may have had the only march like this in Sewanee. At least that's what we were told up until the point we had. And I don't know if there's been anything subsequent to it, but that was one of the big things that Sewanee was wrestling with. Students, faculty, everybody was like, this is not what we do. This is not characteristic. Sewanee we don't do that. That's those other colleges that do that. But that's not the Sewanee protocol. That's not the Sewanee ethos to have a protest period. We were going up against all of that. We were going up against carve out.

[01:26:09.340] - Kwesi

A place, a place where we could feel.

[01:26:13.430] - Everette

So I would be interested to see if anything if they ever the impression I get hadn't been one before us. We don't know that for sure, but that was the impression we were given. And I don't know if there's ever been one after that one, which we could that one that should be easier to research if there's been any protest. But now, before 1985, that might be a little bit more challenging to research. But I think that would be a good endeavor. You make history.

[01:26:44.180] - Kwesi

Sure.

[01:26:44.720] - Everette

Whether there was other ones or not, this one didn't make history.

[01:26:47.620] - Kwesi

Absolutely. I must say that.

[01:26:56.130] - Everette

If you want.

[01:26:56.640] - Kwesi

To continue, you're welcome. You got so much fast. There's so much more we could go on for 80 more things we could talk about.

[01:27:03.030] - Everette

We talked about mentally everything I see on my list. All right, that's significant. And I was going to say we need to talk about the locks on the doors and all that, but you just mentioned it.

[01:27:14.650] - Kwesi

Yeah, well, I mean, we could go on.

[01:27:17.310] - Everette

Yeah. There's other little stories we tell, but I think I think we told the significant ones. I think the significant stories and the significant perspective that we bring to this conversation, I think we got across.

[01:27:28.620] - Everette

I think you're absolutely right. Thank you for having us, man. We don't know what you're going to do with this, but hey, we look forward to seeing what happens. I'm looking forward to resharing all your documents because archive because you have literal physical evidence to back up what we're talking

about.

[01:27:50.710] - Kwesi

Pictures, letters, articles. And actually one last little note. I was teasing Everett when we walked over here. One of the creators I don't know who came up with this idea. We think Eric Walden did. One of the little fundraiser ideas we came up with was singing Valentine's. So we decided as African American students, we would take different songs and rework them, or at least the refrain of different songs. We work them into little Valentine's jingle and offer that to students to give a Valentine song serenade to their significant other friend potential, whatever. That's what we did. We had our own system. We would go to one dorm, then the next door we to go to this room and blah, blah, blah, knocking the door. They would tell us what song they wanted us to sing. We would pick a song and we would sing a song to them. I thought that was a little unique.

[01:28:52.310] - Everette

Yeah, we always thought kind of outside of the box.

[01:28:56.380] - Briana Wiggons

Right.

[01:28:58.670] - Kwesi

But I think we covered a lot of ground, man.

[01:29:03.070] - Everette

This is a project that's ongoing, this recording. And then there are some other, like some other students. Yeah, that's right.

[01:29:16.850] - Kwesi

I do look forward to entering stuff. Some of my documents.

[01:29:25.970] - Briana Wiggons

Like that. They will love all this.

[01:29:30.870] - Everette

That's the kind of guy he is. I have a little bit, but you have a lot.

[01:29:37.910] - Kwesi

I was saving my test and papers. For a long time I think I got rid of it. At some point, I have to go back and look nice to have

[01:29:45.930] - Everette

that's cool. That's awesome.

[01:29:48.570] - Everette

Does this end our session?

[01:29:50.570] - Kwesi

I think that's a good note to end our session. Is there a question or anything? We just talked like we did.

[01:29:59.050] - Briana Wiggons

Let me think.

[01:30:06.290] - Everette

okay. I'm a flex eleven. Yeah, I mean, I'm all right, but I got a little time.

[01:30:10.600] - Everette

What would you like to know from someone that's, well, you might graduate anyway for next two

months. What would you like to have heard before you came to someone that could have better prepared you? I'll say this one thing that I learned, and I think Cleavus mentioned this to us. He said one of the things that colleges usually don't talk about before you go to college, your experience at a college campus is fundamentally influenced by who your roommate is. It has a big impact, hbcu, PWI doesn't even matter who you first come and end up staying with as a roommate has a lot to do with your experience. That was something that he did, and I thought that was too. Like when I went back to high school, that's something I added in my little presentation. That's something to think about. And the other thing I think about is that colleges, when they're recruiting and they don't talk about social life that much, they want to underplay that. But you're 1819, 2021. Social life is a big part of being a college student. It is. We didn't talk about party weekend, but social life, social life is a big part of any college experience.

[01:31:40.780] - Everette

Again, whether it's hbcu, whether it's a PWI period, it's a big part of it, and no one really talks about that. It's just like I think that those are things that high school students that should be a part of the conversation. We have high school students, we should keep it real with them. It's going to be party, telling everyone, walk here, party. We can use stepping over, people going to the door, people that drunk and pass out on the floor.

[01:32:11.370] - Kwesi

But after studying hard, we need that big release.

[01:32:17.610] - Kwesi

Unless you got something,

[01:32:20.350] - Briana Wiggons

I'll say, what was your final impression of Sewanee How do you look back on it?

[01:32:27.470] - Kwesi

that's? Complicated. So for us, at least for me, and I know for at least I want to speak for Everette, but we've talked about it. There seems to be, at some point, soul reckoning with Sewanee because when you leave it, you have a sort of a lack of I want to say hate, but you have a love relationship that also is complicated. I think that's probably the best way to put it. And then when you meet your...

[01:33:00.570] - Everette

Yeah.

[01:33:01.290] - Kwesi

When you meet your peers who went to other colleges and universities and you find out their experiences, and you say to yourself, like, you got accepted more. I got accepted more. I was going to go there in a relationship with them. But events turn. But when you find that out and you hear those stories and then you say you reflect on what could have been, at some point, your soul has to reconcile and say, this is the place by which God wanted me to be in his divine promise. And that's the way I reconcile. So it's good to see old classmates. It's good to reminisce, and I love it. And I have a great relationship with my university atleast in my mind, on my terms.

[01:33:52.570] - Everette

I was thinking the answer for me, and it's interesting because it took me back to what I said in the very beginning of the interview, which I look at it as I passed the test that my elders gave me because there was a big attrition. I don't know what it's like now, attrition meaning that many students, that many African American students, particularly in our era, dropped out, didn't graduate, probably more dropped out, more less Sewanee than graduated versus how many came in. Graduating from Sewanee was important for me and I think significant. And again, we just talked about all of the things that we did and contributions we made to the school that would have been sure different if I had gone to a different school. It's a challenging relationship, though, because, again, sometimes do reminisce or regret and think about the fun I would have had back on Howard. I think about the social life. I feel like I missed out if I had gone to a select more household. Yet I feel like there are certain things that I

got from Sewanee that was that was unique and that helped to prepare me in the work that I do and helped to prepare me.

[01:35:24.690] - Everette

You gave me an experience I wouldn't have gotten if I had gone to Morehouse or Howard. So I'm thankful for that. I'm thankful for that. All right.

[01:35:33.930] - Kwesi

Thank you, young lady.

[01:35:34.900] - Briana Wiggons

Again, thank you.

[01:35:38.010] - Kwesi

The posse.

[01:35:49.370] - Everette

He gonna sit you down and pick your grave.

[01:35:54.210] - Kwesi

Thank you.

[01:36:05.650] - Everette

Is it so they say we go to Gailor to show our badge. What's your name again?

[01:36:12.820] - Briana Wiggons

Brianna

[01:36:13.750] - Everette

Brian, thank you for being patient. Listening to two old guys ramble.

[01:36:25.290] - Kwesi

Oh.

[01:36:29.610] - Briana Wiggons

And so concludes this interview session.