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ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
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Dr. James Cross

Interviewed by Allison Seyler

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Johns Hopkins University
Oral History Collection

Interviewee: Dr. James Cross (JC)

Interviewer: Allison Seyler (AS)

Subject: The life and education of Dr. James Cross

Date: April 7, 2020

AS: So this is Allison Seyler. I'm here in Baltimore, Maryland, and it's Tuesday, April 7th, 2020. I'm speaking by phone with Dr. James E Cross who is currently in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Good morning and thank you for being with me today.

JC: Good morning, I've been looking forward toward the interview.

AS: The first question we'll be starting with is, if you could tell me a little bit about where you were born and what your family life was like growing up.

JC: I was born on May the 29th, 1937 on a 20 acre farm just outside of the city limits of Hampton, Virginia. Actually, my birth certificate gives the place of birth as Elizabeth City County, Virginia. The area was eventually annexed in as part of the city.

Today, it would be said that I came from a single-family home, but that would be misleading. That is because in addition to my mother and grandparents, I grew up in a home with ten uncles and aunts. Although we didn't have a lot of money, I had a very, very rich childhood. On the farm, we raised strawberries, tomatoes, potatoes, lettuce, cantaloupes, corn, and other types of vegetables.

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In addition, we had pigs, a yard full of chickens and two cows. So, we had a lot of eggs and milk and we made our own butter. There were a half-dozen apple trees and a couple of pear trees, so we had lots of fruits. The farm was hard work, gathering vegetables, milking the cows and feeding the pigs and chickens. But in effect, I had a very, very rich childhood.

AS: It definitely sounds that way, and it sounds like you guys were able to live that sustainable life and support your family. So, what were your

experiences growing up like in Hampton, Virginia? In particular, – can you speak to attending segregated schools?

JC:

All schools, like everything else, were segregated at that time. From the first grade to the sixth grade at the schools where I attended, there were two grades meeting together in the same room, so the teacher had to divide her time between the two classes. There was one high school for white students and another high school for Black students. The high school for Black students was on the campus of Hampton University, at that time called Hampton Institute.

The City of Hampton was leasing the school from the university. Our high school served as a laboratory for practice teachers from the University. As a result, for a good percentage of the time, we had “practice teachers” being supervised by the main teacher. Our teachers were part of the Hampton University faculty. We were often told that the schools, like everything else, would eventually be integrated and that if we did not fully apply ourselves, we would not be able to compete when integration took place. So the challenge was always that of preparing to compete in an integrated society. Sometimes the criticism would be “You are not ready and integration is coming”.

There were about 105 students in my high school graduating class. I graduated number four in the class. But the students who graduated number two and three didn't take all the math and science courses like I did and the student who graduated number one.

There were about six of us who went to take a college entrance exam being given at an all white college in Norfolk. The students from our high school, Phoenix High, were the only Black students there to take the exam. Because of the math and science courses I had taken, I made the highest score of the students from our school.

I was always interested in electronics so while in the tenth grade, I begin taking a corresponding course from DeVry Technical Institute. As a result, the summer after grading from high school and before starting college, I completed the studies and received a diploma in Radio, TV and Electronics from DeVry Technical Institute.

Track was my main extracurricular activity in high school but I was also on the football team. I think the coach mainly wanted me on the football team to stay in good shape for track. I also wrote poetry and songs. The music teacher had one of my songs sung on a school program.

AS: Yeah.

JC: I guess that gives some idea about the school system.

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AS: Sure, it sounds like you had a lot of different interests as a student, which is really good. You were well-rounded. So, one of the things you've spoken about before is the National Scholarship Service & Fund for Negro Students. I was wondering if you could talk a little about that and if you knew at that time that their efforts were part of a larger Civil Rights movement?

JC: When I was in the tenth grade, representatives from the National Scholarship Service & Fund for Negro Students came to our school and made a presentation to us, along with a few teachers. The organization asked us for a commitment to begin preparing to integrate colleges in the South and elsewhere in the country. It was only recently when I did some research on the organization that I've understood the extent to which this organization was part of the larger Civil Rights movement. My research revealed that in 1953 this organization received a grant for a South-wide talent search to assist Negro students in attending college.

The report shows that they had seven or eight core project schools with a large number of participating colleges and universities. In looking at one of the reports I saw that Johns Hopkins was one of the participating universities. The teachers at our high school made a review of the curriculum to see how well it was preparing us to attend the participating colleges and universities. As a result, several additional courses were added to the curriculum. I remember that trigonometry and solid geometry were added. I took both of these courses.

AS: Oh, that's really interesting. So, in that vein, would you consider yourself a Civil Rights activist, and did you participate in the movement in any way?

JC: Yes, I would consider myself to be a Civil Rights activist. But I determined that the greatest contribution I could make to the movement would be through education. Yet, I was forced to move to the front of the movement during my senior year in college. That was in the spring of 1960. A group of students from Howard University came up to Baltimore to have a debate with the Hopkins students. When the Hopkins students took them out to the Blue Jay Restaurant to eat, they were informed that the restaurant didn't serve Negro students. So, the white students decided

to have a sit-in at the restaurant. They said, "You know, it'll look a little odd with just us white students going out to have a sit-in at this restaurant." So, they asked me and the other Black student who graduated with me, Victor Dates, if we would participate in the sit-in. We had no choice but to say yes. I was very apprehensive in that I was trying to graduate in a few months and now they were asking me to participate in a sit-in. So, the two of us Black students did participate.

My teaching job could be considered my participating in the Civil Rights movement. My accepting the job of teaching in Louisiana was partially in response to the advice I received from a high ranking White officer in Germany. When I was about to return from serving in Germany with the Army, I mentioned the possibility of joining the Peace Corps. This White officer from Georgia pulled me aside and said, "Look, Cross, you're talking about joining the Peace Corps. Instead, you better go back to the United States and help your people down South." Circumstances happened that I ended up in Louisiana. I've considered that to be part of my contribution to the Civil Rights movement.

AS: It seems like that was really your way of participating, advocating for your people. Could you tell me a little bit about why you chose to apply to Hopkins and maybe why you ended up going there?

JC: That type of question was often asked of us who were in the program preparing for integrating colleges. We all had a similar type of response. My response was "Hopkins chose me." My eleventh grade English teacher served as our mentor and advisor. We were applying to the colleges and universities being recommended by the United Scholarship Service & Fund for Negro Students and as I mentioned, Johns Hopkins was one of those schools.

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This organization promised that if we received a scholarship from one of these universities, it would give us a supplemental scholarship. I only applied to schools that had electrical engineering programs. As an example, I didn't apply to Hampton University although our high school was on its campus, the reason being it only offered electronic technology. Also, I didn't apply to Virginia State College because it didn't have engineering. Still, I received a letter from Virginia State College offering me a full tuition scholarship.

Additional schools to which I applied were Tulane University, Gettysburg College, Stanford University and a few others. Concerning Gettysburg

College, I remember catching the train and the bus from Hampton up to Gettysburg to take a college entrance exam. I spent the night in the dormitory with the two Black students who were enrolled there. I remember the Director of Admissions coming over to meet me in their room. The two students were getting on his case telling him “You keep telling us you're going to get some Black girls here!” He said, “Well, I'm working on it.”

I received letters of acceptance from most of the colleges to which I applied. I recall receiving a letter from the track coach at Gettysburg College with just a token scholarship offer. Stanford University also offered me a token scholarship saying that the scholarships were mainly for California students and after a year, I could declare myself to be a California citizen. On the other hand, Johns Hopkins offered me a sizeable scholarship and the National Scholarship Service & Fund for Negro Students, as promised, provided a supplement. So, as for my choosing Hopkins, again, I say that Hopkins chose me with the best scholarship offer.

AS: That makes a lot of sense, especially financially when you're thinking about your family. Did your friends or family from home have much of an opinion about you going to Baltimore or going to Hopkins? I know it probably was not too big of a distance.

JC: My family was very pleased with my going to Hopkins in that it was not a great distance from home. Also, I had an aunt who was a nurse in Baltimore. She lived up on Monroe Street, so, I also had family in Baltimore.

AS: Oh, great, that's very cool. So, what was your experience like when you arrived on campus in Baltimore? Were there other Black students around, and were there any in your class when you arrived?

JC: When I arrived, I didn't see any Black students at the time. But there was one other Black student living on campus. I eventually met him. That was Ernie Bates. I only had one class where there was another Black student in the class. Soon after arriving on the campus, there was someone coming through the dormitory inviting students to attend the church that was located about a block or so down from Hopkins. He came to my room and told me that there were no Black members attending the church but he would present the matter to the Deacon Board that would be meeting during the middle of that week. He returned a few days later and said they'd love for me to attend. As a result, I attended this church fairly regularly.

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I met the football and track coaches. I was on the football team my freshman year but was on the track team all four years. The other Black student living in the dormitories came and introduced himself later.

AS: So it seems like it was a very few of you. In that vein, were there any Black faculty members that you can recall at the time?

JC: There were no Black faculty members and no Black TAs, I'd say definitely not.

AS: It took Hopkins a while, I think, to start implementing some of those changes. Could you elaborate on where you lived while you were at Hopkins and maybe who you hung out with? I know you mentioned some of your hobbies and being part of the track team. I wondered if maybe there was a scholarship, or anything connected to that activity.

JC: I lived in a newly-opened dormitory and was not originally assigned a roommate. I remember that Milton Eisenhower had just become president of the University. His press secretary had not found an apartment, so for several months he stayed in the dormitory on the same floor we were staying. In not having a roommate, there was an extra bed and an extra study desk in my room. As a result, my room became the meeting place or hang out place for all the students on my floor and their friends from across the campus.

After a few months, a student from across the campus said his best friends lived on my floor and asked me if he could become my roommate. I accepted. The other Black student in the dormitories was in his junior year. He lived in a dormitory on the opposite side of campus. He introduced me to the other Black students who lived in the city. There were three Black students in their junior year and one other Black student in my class, Victor Dates. We occasionally had social activities together and had a lot of fun.

I elected to take ROTC and I had friendly relationships with several of the students on the track team and who were also in the ROTC program. There were especially a couple of other such students, and we took the lead in some of the dormitory activity. As an example, in that there was just one paid telephone in our dormitory, two of us had a telephone installed in a room. Other students could use it at half the price for the pay phone in our dormitory. The two of us took responsibility for paying the monthly bill.

As another example, two of us purchased a TV set since there wasn't a TV in our dormitory. We collected money from the other students to help pay for it. So, there were two or three of us who were sort of the "leaders" in the dormitory. Being in the ROTC program meant I had to take an extra three hour courses every semester. This was in addition to having drill once a week. This was really a heavy load; practicing track every afternoon and then, a lot of times after track practice, coming in to work in the cafeteria. It was very challenging keeping up with my studies. I was tired all the time.

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So at one point, I told the track coach that I would have to drop track in that I was about to fail a few courses. He replied "You really shouldn't drop track." He told me that in reality, my scholarship was a track scholarship. He said "I'm really the reason for you being here." As a result, I failed a course during my junior year. It was one of the most difficult courses in engineering. I came back to summer school as recommended by the Director of Admissions. At the end of the summer, I remember receiving a letter from the Director of Admissions saying, "Congratulations, Jim. You passed the course. That is great!". As a result, my scholarship was doubled for the senior year.

One year when it was time to elect captains for the track team, I was a candidate to be captain. I had been one of the top point scorers on the team and the leader for the exercises. One of my teammates voting in the meeting told me that the track coach said I should not be considered for the position. He said the duties of the captain included such things as making arrangements for eating places and a lot of places did not serve Blacks. This was the nature of segregation.

AS: Sure. And, you know, the track team would play or would compete with Southern and Northern state schools. I'm sure that was an interesting dynamic.

AS: Okay. So, did you work or have a job while you were a student?

JC: I did have a job. My first job was before starting classes the freshman year. When the Electrical Engineering Department Chairman learned that I had a diploma in Radio, TV and Electronics, he gave me an assignment of wiring up an electronic piece of research equipment. I believe he said it was for measuring the height of the waves in the ocean.

For several months, I worked in the Biology Department washing test tubes. Then I was able to get a job working in the cafeteria. That became my permanent job during all four years. But I received a stipend for being in ROTC and that was my most reliable income. It was \$22 per month for the first two years and \$52 per month during the last two years. Between ROTC and working, I always had some spending change.

AS: It sounds like you were able to secure some good work. So did you have any mentors when you were at JHU?

JC: For social purposes, the other Black student living on campus was my mentor. For my studies, there was an oriental student who was near the top in all classes. He was also on the track team and in ROTC. He was always willing to assist in any way when I asked for assistance. So these were my two mentors.

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AS: Speaking of your studies, what was your degree in and what year did you end up graduating from Hopkins?

JC: I graduated in the spring of 1960 and my degree was a BS degree in Electrical Engineering.

AS: Then after graduation, what did you do?

JC: Being in ROTC, I had a two year commitment for active duty and five additional years of reserve duty in the Army. I was scheduled to leave for Germany in November of 1960. So, in order to remain in the United States for Christmas, I elected to go to Airborne School which would take place in January 1961 at Fort Benning, Georgia. I made five parachute jumps to qualify as a parachutist. I left for Germany during February 1961. After completing my two years of active duty, I returned to the United States.

Before leaving the United States, I had received a letter from the Dean of the College of Engineering at Southern University in Louisiana saying there was a newly formed College of Engineering and instructors were needed. I didn't know very much about Louisiana or Southern University. But while in Germany, I met an officer who had graduated from Southern University. He said that the official statistics were that next to Washington, DC, Louisiana had the prettiest girls in the United States. That was a positive influence in my deciding to go to Louisiana.

Upon leaving Germany, I called the Dean of the College of Engineering at Southern University and was told that job openings still existed. Ten days after leaving Germany, (in September 1962) I joined the Electrical Engineering Department faculty. In 1964, I became the Department Chairman and held that position for 27 years. After the two years of active duty in the Army, and serving five years reserve duty, I was discharged with the rank of captain.

The year after joining the Electrical Engineering Department, I entered the graduate program at LSU and earned the MS degree in electrical engineering in 1967. I was the first Black student to receive a master's degree in engineering at LSU. I did further study at LSU, and spent a year in graduate school at the University of Florida. I spent ten summers working in industry for different companies to include IBM, Bell Laboratories, General Electric, Westinghouse, Western Electric, Caterpillar, and other companies.

AS: That's amazing. You have done so many things! So, can I ask you to elaborate a little bit more on your time in Europe? You know, what role did you play in the Corps of Engineers? And I think you mentioned living in Germany or France. What did you do there?

JC: My orders actually assigned me to France, not Germany.

AS: Okay.

JC: But there were three sister map depots under the Mapping, and Engineering Intelligence Center, part of the United States Army Headquarters Europe (USAREUR). One depot was near Heidelberg, Germany and the other two depots were down in France. But the parent unit for the two depots in France was the Heidelberg location. When I reported to the parent unit, it was decided that I would remain there in Germany and would be in charge of the map depot there. This was during the time when the Berlin Wall was being built.

I had 50 American soldiers under my command. They were sending everybody and “their little brother” pretty much to Germany, not knowing what the Russians were all up to in building the Berlin Wall. At one point, a new person was coming in just about every day. Also, I had 20 German civilians assigned to me. Some worked in the office for cataloging maps and others worked building boxes for shipping maps. It was the policy not to have a person in a position for more than a year if possible, so my second assignment was with the Engineering Intelligence Center where I

evaluated intelligence reports and maintained files on all of the bridges in East Germany.

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At that time, there was East Germany and West Germany, where East Germany was part of the Communist zone. As a junior officer, I was assigned several additional duties. One such duty was as pay officer for my company of about 100 men. This entailed driving about 30 miles in an open jeep and picking up the payroll every month, returning to count out and pay each man in cash.

AS: Wow.

JC: In addition, I had \$2,000 in German money, called marks, for anyone who wanted to exchange dollars for marks. I was the fire marshal and safety officer for the post. So, I had a very rich experience in Germany.

AS: Sure, it sounds like it was really interesting, and you had a lot of varied assignments.

JC: Concerning the other two sister map depots down in France, my sergeant and I got to go down for a visit. It was important that we got to know each other since we had to work together as a unit. We had a train layover in Paris.

AS: Oh, great. And were they white men? Like the people that you interacted with in the military and the other officers, were they mostly white men?

JC: I was the only Black officer in my company. There were a few other Black officers at other locations. About 20% of the men in my unit were Black. The others were white. We never had any race related problems. I remember when I first received my assignment my main sergeant who, was white, told me, "Now Lieutenant Cross, when I went to school to be a sergeant I was told that sergeants are supposed to see that the work is done and as an officer, the only work you should have to do is to sign your name. If you let me, I'll make certain things get done." I said, "That's good Sergeant, but when things go wrong, they're not going to be looking for you, they will come looking for me, so I need to know what's going on at all times." So, we got along quite well.

AS: Yeah. *[Laughs]* Well that sounds like a good relationship, then. Could you tell me a little bit more about your graduate school experience? You

mentioned going to LSU. Did someone or something inspire you to go there?

JC: LSU is about 15 miles or so from Southern University. LSU had been accepting graduate students a number of years before I started my studies. However, it had only been a couple of years or so when undergraduate students were being admitted, under court order. I was the only Black student in the engineering graduate program and as such became the first Black student at LSU to receive a graduate degree in engineering. As a Johns Hopkins graduate, I had respect from the faculty and was listed as an instructor in teaching a laboratory.

But the faculty did not go out of their way to provide any special assistance. At that time, I believe each faculty member was concerned that he might be viewed unfavorably by others if he was observed helping me. This could've caused me problems in that a master's thesis was required. I was assigned an advisor for my master's thesis but I really didn't need a lot of help. It happened that during the summer of 1965, I worked for Westinghouse, Inc. just outside of Pittsburgh. My assignment involved designing circuits with a new electronic device called a gate controlled switch that the company had recently developed. My master's thesis at LSU was a continuation of that work involving the design and analysis of firing circuits for gate controlled switches.

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And that went along quite well. Concerning my motivation for attending graduate school, until 1965, the laws of the State of Louisiana mandated segregated school systems. The laws prohibited predominantly Black schools from hiring White faculty members and prohibited predominantly White schools from hiring Black faculty members. As a result, I was able to begin teaching at the university level with just a bachelor's degree. But for accreditation, a minimum of a master's degree would be required. I began attending LSU part-time while working full-time. That was the situation for several of us new faculty members. This was to obtain advanced degrees that would be required for university accreditation in the various fields.

AS: That's an interesting thing to note about the professors having to be of the same race essentially at the university. So, do you mind sharing your anecdote about a gentleman named Percy Pierre?

JC: Percy Pierre is a native of New Orleans. Percy completed the master's degree in electrical engineering at Notre Dame and joined the Electrical Engineering department at Southern as a colleague, I believe in 1963. He

was trying to decide on a university to pursue the PhD degree. I took out a catalogue of Johns Hopkins, and at my recommendation, he elected to go to Johns Hopkins. As a result, in 1967, Percy became the first Black person in the United States to receive a PhD in Electrical Engineering. So, Johns Hopkins issued the first PhD in electrical engineering to a Black person.

Percy really had a solid career. He served in such positions as the Dean of the College of Engineering at Howard University, and I believe he was the Undersecretary of the Army for procurement. Then, he served as the President of Prairie View University and recently retired as Vice President at Michigan State University. I recently received an e-mail from Percy. He had been invited to robe the graduating law students at Johns Hopkins during the spring 2020. I don't know if the virus will affect this.

At one time Percy was introducing me to his sister. He explained "My sister is a sister". He meant that she was a nun in New Orleans. Percy's wife and my wife belong to the same Chapter of a national organization, the Smartset. They are members of the New Orleans Chapter. This chapter also includes members from Baton Rouge. So my wife and Percy's wife are in meetings together every few months and I occasionally see Percy at some of the national affairs. Percy had a great career and we stay in touch.

AS: Yeah, that's fantastic. That's a really nice story of, you know, supporting one another in your career. So, I wanted to ask you, too, what would you like to say about your tenure at Southern University? I know you were chairman for the Electrical Engineering department for 27 years – which is a *really* long time and I'm sure it must've been an experience full of ups and downs.

JC: I left Germany on September 1st, 1962 and arrived at Southern University about 5:00 PM on Friday September 9th, nine days later. I remember going to an office about to close. At that time, we had classes on Saturday mornings also.

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When I went to the office Saturday morning, the day after arriving, I asked what classes I would be teaching. I was told "You see those students sitting out there? Well, they're waiting for you." I was given the textbook, studied it for about 10 minutes and went out that Saturday morning and taught my first class about 9:00 AM. With the department chairperson leaving for another job, I became the department chairperson in June of 1964, and as I indicated, it was the position I held for 27 years. When I was first commissioned as an officer in the Army, my official area of

expertise was listed as a small unit leader. The leadership training I received in the Army served me well in meeting the challenges I faced as department chairman.

For several years, I served as the President of the Southern University chapter of the American Association of University Professors. In that role, I assisted in resolving disputes between faculty members and the administration. As such, I gained the respect of other faculty members and that of the upper administration also. I remember a time when Southern University was under censorship from the National American Association of University Professors due to some disputes with faculty members. I invited the national president of the organization down from Washington D.C. We met with the President of Southern University and agreed on what to do to resolve those disputes. That was a good experience.

AS: Sure, absolutely. It sounds like you made a tremendous impact at Southern. So what was your experience like at the University of Florida? Did you go there to study for your PhD?

JC: When our engineering department was applying for accreditation, the University of Florida, Tulane University and the University of Illinois served as mentors for our college, advising as to what needed to be done for accreditation. The chairman of the Electrical Engineering Department at the University of Florida visited and gave advice. He invited me to come to the University of Florida to study for the PhD in Electrical Engineering. In addition, I would be listed as a member of the engineering faculty.

Upon first arriving on the campus one late afternoon, I recall meeting an electrical engineering faculty member. He warned me saying, "There is a couple of faculty members here who are really prejudiced. Make sure not to take any courses under them." I later found that he was giving me good advice in that I took classes under them anyway. It was later revealed to me that all the Black students had walked off campus the year before my arrival in protest of the faculty being prejudiced. I was the only Black student in the Electrical Engineering department.

In that there were no Black faculty members in the College of Engineering, I suspect that was the reason why the department chairperson wanted to list me as a member of the faculty so that the College of Engineering could show that it had a Black faculty member. I was introduced as a member of the faculty in an engineering college meeting.

My going to Florida was a family decision in that we had three young children and my wife would have to take a leave from her teaching job as a middle school music teacher. My wife went to the Department of Employment applying for work in the city. Surprisingly, she was hired to work in the employment office. She was on the radio in the mornings announcing various job openings. Despite taking classes under faculty members after being warned, course work went reasonably well. I remember receiving an A from a faculty member.

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But in telling me that I would receive an A, it sounded as though he was apologizing for giving me an A. He said "With the work you did, I didn't have a choice but to give you an A." It sounded as though he was expecting other faculty members to get on him for that. Anyway, after two semesters, I had not received an advisor for a research dissertation that would be required for a PhD program. So, the family agreed that we would return to Baton Rouge at the time. I said I consider myself to be a civil rights activist but was trying to stay out of trouble; always trying to operate under the radar. I thought that in some situations, it would be better not to push too hard. I would say like one general said, "I am not retreating, but instead, just attacking in a different direction." In that respect, despite my effort in pursuing the PhD program at the University of Florida not being successful, two of my electrical engineering students at Southern University, who married each other, both received fellowships to the University of Florida and both received the PhD in Electrical Engineering. So, I felt that I had done well in throwing myself across the barbed wire so they could advance. I felt that this was part of my civil rights activism.

AS: Sure, that seems like a victory in some ways. I know you have also pursued education in other ways, what other degrees have you earned in that time?

JC: After returning from Florida, I began taking courses at LSU with the possibility of entering the PhD program there. But there were no Black students in the Engineering PhD program, and it became quite apparent that I wasn't going to change that. So, having an interest in religion, I eventually became a student at Christian Bible College of Baton Rouge, earning a bachelor's, master's and a doctorate degree in theology. I have served as a part-time member of the faculty at Christian Bible College of Baton Rouge since 1983.

AS: Are you still teaching?

JC: I still teach courses at Christian Bible College on a regular basis and at Southern University when needed. I taught a course in Comparative Religion during this spring. We compared about 10 different religions. Special emphasis was put on the Muslim religion with a complete reading and analysis of the Qur'an. So, I'm still teaching. All of my students from the Bible College this spring are pastors of churches. I feel blessed to be able to teach church pastors.

AS: Sure, yeah. That sounds like a good group of students. So obviously, teaching and education more broadly have been a *huge* part of your life, but I also would like to hear other parts of your life. Would you like to tell me anything about your family or your personal interests or scholarly pursuits?

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JC: I've been engaged in a number of community-related programs and activities. I served on the Citizen Advisory Board for a Housing and Urban Development community improvement program for Baton Rouge some years ago. Baton Rouge was the first city in the United States to be funded under the grant program. I presented a paper at an international housing conference in Saudi Arabia on the results of the project. I received a traveling grant from Saudi Arabia.

AS: Wow.

JC: I serve on the board of directors for both the Louisiana Council and the Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations, being the editor for the Joint Quarterly Newsletter. I serve on the Fire and Police Civil Service Board for the City of Baker, Louisiana. This has involved deciding cases for police and firemen when a trial was needed to settle personnel matters. We have to approve all personal matters to include promotions, sick leave and disciplinary issues. As example, we recently approve a directive saying that when police and firemen are out sick due to the virus, it will not count against their sick leave time. At my church, I tutor math, serve on the Deacon Board and am the superintendent of the adult division of the Sunday school.

My wife is a Eucharistic minister serving at nursing homes. Her priest taught World Civilizations at LSU and had experience in arranging tours. We went on tours with him to Rome, the Holy Land, Paris, Macedonia, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, the Isle of Patmos, the Normandy Beach, Brazil and Argentina.

AS: That's great.

JC: Now my wife is a Southern University graduate. She majored in choir and band, and her first job was as a high school band director. She was among the first Black female high school band director in the United States. She retired after 31 years teaching both band and choir. We have two boys and a girl. Our daughter graduated in Computer Science from Southern University in 1990. She has worked for several different companies in the Dallas area, currently working from home for Oracle.

AS: Oh, okay, that's good to hear she's working from home.

JC: She has her two daughters. One of them graduated from Southern University in Agriculture two years ago and is completing working on a master's degree at Southern University in Biology. The youngest one is preparing to start the junior year at LSU in Environmental Engineering. They have to adopt new study methods with the virus situation.

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AS: Oh, great.

JC: So yeah. All that's going on as part of life.

AS: It may not be the normal situation, but it's good that they are making progress with their studies.

JC: Yes.

AS: So, that kind of brings me to the conclusion of my questions. I just want to say thank you for answering all of them so thoughtfully.

JC: Let me tell you it was my pleasure. When I say it was my pleasure, I think back to Hurricane Katrina. Our Church hosted a large number of people coming from New Orleans out of the flood waters. Concerning that some of the persons coming out of the flood waters may have tetanus, several of us working with them were given tetanus shots by Army nurses. A nurse sitting on one side said, "It'll be my pleasure this morning to give you a shot in this arm." Another nurse sitting on the other side said, "And it will be my pleasure to give you a shot in this other arm." I said, "Oh, no. The pleasure is all mine." So, I say, the pleasure of doing this interview has been all mines.

AS: Sure. *[Laughs]* That sounds like an interesting experience. So, I do also always like to ask if there's anything else you feel we missed in the interview or that you'd like to add to the interview as a final thought.

JC: It can be noted that Dr. Fred Lacy, the present chairman of the Electrical Engineering Department here at Southern University, received his master's degree from Johns Hopkins in 1989. He also worked at the Johns Hopkins Applied Research Lab.

Finally, I would say that Johns Hopkins prepared me well for a career of service and a life well lived.

AS: Well thank you very, very much for that. I'm glad that the experience at Hopkins was so influential for you. So with that, that concludes the interview portion of our conversation.