

Interviewee: Student interviews at the Plaza of The Americas

Interviewer: James Wilson

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UF301

W: My name is James Wilson, I am interviewing **Damon Austin** as a part of the series of the Plaza of The America's project. Today is April 12, 1996, I am conducting the interview at the residence of James Wilson at 3504 30th Terrace in Gainesville, Florida. Damon, would you please state your name and then spell your entire name?

A: My full name is Damon Lorne Austin.

W: Thank you. Damon, what are you studying here at the University of Florida?

A: I am a student in agricultural engineering.

W: How long have you been a student at the University of Florida?

A: This is my fifth year as a student.

W: Are you originally from Florida?

A: Not originally, I am originally from New York city and my family moved to South Florida when I was about five years old.

W: So you went to high school, junior high school here?

A: Exactly, yes.

W: What made you interested in coming to the University of Florida?

A: I had not originally planned to come to The University of Florida. Actually, I originally planned to attend another university and sometimes things happen in an individual's life that you have to take an alternate route and University of Florida happened to be one of those.

W: What was the university that you wanted to go to?

A: I was originally going to go to Georgia Institute of Technology.

W: For engineering?

A: Yes, for engineering.

W: How have you enjoyed your stay here. For example, are you a Gator, do you go to the football games, are you well connected to the culture here at Gainesville?

A: I have never attended a football game and that surprises people. I have been to five or six basketball games, a couple of soccer games, but that is women's soccer team which they have a new team just within the last year. Other than that, no I would not consider myself to be a Gator. I am not a Ra-Ra type of individual. So, no I would not feel that I fit in very well with the University promotional type of genre, I guess, but I consider myself a validated student.

W: I have explained to you about the project, the Plaza of The Americas, and I would like for you to just give me your own thoughts about the Plaza. What are your immediate thoughts when you think of the Plaza of The Americas?

A: Until you explained to me earlier the history of the Plaza of The Americas, I did not know exactly what that history was. I did not even know the name of that specific area on campus until about three years of being a student. I certainly have never seen any representation of their being some sort of Latin-American history or Central-American history or anything other than just a general space for general purpose activities, is what it seems to me. Particularly, I do not see many black students hanging out there or many students other than what one would call "white" students and I, myself, being a black student, I took quick notice to this my first semester here. I noticed that because I would always go to the library which was Library West so my impressions of it are that it just seems to be a general purpose area that there is not a whole lot of pressure for students to conform to any kind of standard of behavior. Simply, there was this frisbee throwing or digs running around campus. it is almost a free-for-all at some times, but I do not feel endangered when I walk through there. I just do not feel that it is comforting either.

W: Why is it not comforting?

A: There does not seem to be an element of people there or anyone who seem to have similar interests as me there. I would say that really there only seems to be one type or limited types of people there if you do not count the visitors like the preachers or whoever is out there while

people are trying to publicize some sort of specific point of view or something like that and that does not happen all too often. It is not as politically focused as you made it seem to be in this description.

W: Right, in the 1960s and the 1970s, as I explained to you, there was a lot of political activity on the Plaza. As a student here for five years, have you noticed any type of political activity that would draw you to go to the Plaza?

A: I have not noticed any political activity that would draw me, particularly to go but I could not say that I have been well informed on every political activity that has occurred there. I know, for example, the NOW organization has had some type of functions there, etc.

W: What is the NOW organization?

A: I cannot remember the exact wording.

W: What kind of organization is it?

A: It is a women's organization. Certainly, it is an organization that puts forth...

W: Is it National Organization of Women?

A: Yes, exactly, National Organization of Women and they are politically and otherwise concerned with the interests of women and how women can better deal with the social issues and get along better in this environment.

W: So that type of activity was at the Plaza?

A: Yes, this was at least over a year ago but I think it was during National Women's Month. Now there is a National

Women's Month that follows, I do believe, Black History Month, so I guess that would be March. It is just one of the many functions they probably had there.

W: You are African-American and you mentioned that the Plaza did not have people who you could identify with, generally, you had identified the people as white. Where would you say that predominantly the African-American students would hang-out on campus? Is there a particular spot?

A: Any particular spot that, I suppose, any one might initially be able to see a lot of African-American or black students would hang-out, could be what is called **the set**. It is the area in front of Turlington Hall, particularly, actually the section that is closest to the Marston Science Library. That is where one could find a significant number as compared to what you might find anywhere else with black students hanging-out so to speak. I suppose they do it in between class, just like other students might do so in other parts of the "set."

W: Would you consider the set to be an extension of the Plaza of the Americas?

A: No, personally, to me they seem to be two very different places. The Plaza of The Americans seems more, I suppose in these terms today, more alternatively oriented to the student population. Whereas, the student population at the set would be more organization oriented in general and when you see a population of white students there, much of the

time there is an organization with a table set up. Whereas with black students there are also tables set up, but being a black student I know that black students also feel pretty much that that is one of the few or only places they can go to see other black students beyond the population of their own specific classroom.

W: Where do you hang-out on the campus? Tell me more about where you would socialize. Would you hang-out at the Plaza of The Americas? Have you ever eaten any of the food of the Hare Krishna or have you sung **Kum-Baya** with the local guitar players that hang out there on the Plaza?

A: I suppose I could say, if you are serious I have never even heard anyone sing Kum-Baya there.

W: I am just kidding here.

A: No. I, as an individual, I would not hang-out at the Plaza.

W: Why?

A: As I stated before, I do not really feel that the population there have my interest in mind. Although, I could hang-out with a variety of students, but it would be only to a certain degree. I could hang-out with the average ideal of what a white fraternity student would be, but that would only be to a certain degree of interest for me.

W: So where do you hang-out?

A: I do not hang-out anywhere, actually, I am pretty much focused on my studying and my hobbies are sports. I suppose I hang-out in the city of Gainesville, if you will, because

I perhaps have played in Tennis challenges, these types of things, and I get to know local people as well as people affiliated with the University. Also I play a great degree of intra-mural sports, if I can.. I try to play football, I try to get involved with that. so my hanging-out is more socially oriented with a sport twist to it.

W: So you never hung-out in the five years at the set or you have never congregated there to talk with friends on your way to class?

A: Not for any significant amount of time. When I say significant amount of time, I mean for even more than thirty minutes of an afternoon and probably in the five years, if you add all of my time that I spent there, perhaps maybe about an hour and a half.

W: So why is it so important for students to congregate and the second question is, how have you come to observe the location of white students and black students? Is it just in passing constantly, because you seem to be a very serious student with no time to really socialize in between classes?

How have you come to observe these different locations of people on the set and on the Plaza? Is it common knowledge?

A: Is it common knowledge...

W: That blacks students hang-out on the set and generally, white students hang-out on the Plaza?

A: Without a doubt. It is common knowledge, speaking particularly about the set, it is common knowledge that

there are black students and white students on the set. It is also common knowledge that black students hang-out in one part of the set and white students hang-out in another part of the set.

W: So the set is segregated?

A: Yes, almost \_\_\_\_\_ shall never meet, but there is always some.

W: Where are those different locations?

A: As I mentioned, the black students pretty much hang-out as close as you can to the Marston Science Library and still being connected to the main walkway.

W: Is there any significance of why that location?

A: I really could not tell you. I really would not know. But I know the white students hang-out along the wall that is connected to a rear bike rack and is directly across the street from the bell tower. I do not know if there is any significance to that either. Then there are also elements of white students which may or may not be affiliated with the white students you see hanging-out on that wall around the rock there, which is called the Turlington Rock. That is pretty much it. Then you have your flocks of people that are consistently going through.

W: So this is all informal. I mean, how does one learn where to socialize and where to hang-out. When you were a freshman at The University of Florida, is it just that you see people who are like you and you congregate in that

general area. If let's say, you are a freshman and you do not see anyone on the Plaza like you, so you chose not to hang-out there? Is it just a general socialization process?

A: When I was a freshman, I initially, I suppose as anyone else sought to hang out with "people who were more like me, " who were people who would hang-out with various types of individuals. I am not, personally, used to a lot of segregation in a social sense. I am used to being able to deal with and interrelate with various types of people and I did not see that represented in either of the groups so I initially never gravitated towards any of them and that behavior sort of stuck with me.

W: Is that typical of what you would say with other students? I know you can only speak for yourself, but would that be a typical representation of other students when they get here at the University of Florida?

A: I have heard quite a few students say similar things and it may be dependent upon what stage the student is at in their academic career, where they are as a person, but I have heard all types. I have heard students say they only hang out with one group and not another and I have heard students say they hang-out with neither and that is, I suppose, a group of its own almost which does not assemble though.

W: If there were a political rally, let's say right now at my alma mater University of Texas, there is a serious move to dismantle the whole concept of affirmative action at the

University of Texas and let's say that happened here at the University of Florida, where would students integrate together in order to listen to speakers, to debate, I mean, have you ever seen any joint type of efforts, like say, resistance against apartheid? Have there been, in the five years you have been here, any type of physical place on campus where all types of students come together in protest or in harmony? Is there any kind of place like that?

A: There are places I can imagine from personal experience and from memory I really cannot say that. I am sure there have been some organizations which have tried to purpose getting students together, perhaps on the Plaza of the Americas or on the set or even in front of the student union in that large land area there. But I would not be able to tell you which one is the most important to the student population. I think it is a matter of just a provision of the expected turn-out. I could not say that there is a specific area. There are several areas that may provide for that type of function, but I do not recall any function that seemed to have occurred that I have really witnessed.

W: Have you ever considered partaking into the food of the Hare Krishna? I mean, you are a healthy young man and you seem to be very aware of the importance of food and recreation, you say that you are a semi-pro jock-type, would you consider eating some of that vegetarian food and just

hanging-out with some of the people who play guitars and have their dogs there?

A: I am more of an individualist type of person so I do not have an aversion to meeting anyone or to hanging-out with anyone, but in itself, the Plaza still seems to me like a large group of people as though you might see a group on the set or one of the two groups I cited on the set. I have considered eating the Krishna food, it has just never been paramount for me at any moment to actually try it. It has not appealed to my senses enough. Maybe it did not smell like what I am used to or maybe I did not look at it and say, hey, I have to try that. That is not to say that none of it is appetizing, it just did not strike me at those times that I have had the opportunity to walk through and witness perhaps on my way to class or from class and I am concerned with getting home.

W: SO that would be the one selling attraction for you would be eating the food of the Hare Krishna. Is there any other activity there that you would be interested in, like the preachers, the ministers there, the evangelists, have you ever stopped to listen to them?

A: I have stopped to listen, it is more of a show to me than anything. Not particularly from what the preachers are saying but from the entire atmosphere. It seems as though the preachers are walking out there almost intentionally to be persecuted and then you actually hear some students who

might commonly be on the Plaza during the times that the preachers come out and simply try to ridicule and blast and completely challenge the preachers. From time to time, I imagine that the preacher says things that are out of order or condemning of an entire population of people and then that is taken with offense and then it is reacted to. SO, to me it seems like a mess of a situation. I have been through there and it seemed ridiculous, but it just seems to me that is just one of the things that happens at the Plaza.

W: You do have some sense of observation there. Is that a two-minute observation, you keep walking, or have you stopped there for a significant amount of time. You have given a specific amount of time that you have spent on the set in the five years that you have been here, can you give the same type of summation of how much time, perhaps, that you have spent on the Plaza?

A: I have spent, literally, this is not a joke, probably at most, if you do not count that I am walking through, that I have actually stopped somewhere between five and fifteen minutes in the all the time that I have been at the Plaza in all these years.

W: Damon, is there anything else that you would like to add that we have not discussed about the Plaza of The Americas or the set in front of Turlington?

A: If this is about the Plaza itself, I do not think I have really cited what I see when I walk through the Plaza. I do

not think I have cited what I feel. I do not feel in any way averted or offended. I can imagine that a completely stuffed-shirt person might say, I want you to avert the people at the Plaza and these types of things. It is just that if the Plaza really has the purpose that you cited to me, I see that purpose going unfulfilled in the time that I have been here.

W: Can you tell me what you understood the purpose to be?

A: I understood the purpose to be, at least in some way, honorary to Latin-America or what we call, Central America or any other type of country in America that sort-of has that history to it. I do not see any, and maybe it is that I have missed it, but I really do not think so, any type of commemorative item or painting or anything that would be a commemorative mainstay at the Plaza. Unfortunately, it does not surprise me that you said that was the purpose of it because to me it seems that fits right in with the culture of the University to give false honor to maybe a culture of people or maybe a section of people or a race of people even just in name and that name is going and being used for something else, for its own purposes at any rate anyway.

W: Have you ever seen the Chinese or Latino, we have mainly spoken of white and black and I always try to talk about diversity and much broader terms. Have you noticed any pattern in the five years that you have been here of where the Latino students, particularly would hang-out or the

Chinese students or the foreign students for example? Are there any different areas besides the set and the Plaza of The Americas that those students would congregate in generally?

A: If not for organizational purposes, for example at the union in perhaps some sort of meeting room. I really do not see any environmentally exposed place where a group of people could experience and appreciate the many days of sunshine we have, the nice weather we have here. Actually the only people I see appreciating the weather and the sunshine and all that we have here in a mass sense would be what one would call a "white" population. I do not mind stating white or black as it is, because if those are the two extremes, which they are as far as we know, they are the two extremes which exist in this American society, then every other type of person will fall in between those, at least from a **phenotypic** racial standpoint and that is important to know.

W: The last thing that you would say is that you typically do not hang-out in either. You do not hang-out necessarily at the set nor have you been interested in hanging-out at the Plaza. Generally, if I can understand your situation is that you are a very serious student, you go through both of those areas, but you are mainly associating yourself with sport-like activities and generally, these are some

observations you have formulated over the years of being a student here. Is that a good summary of what you said?

A: I could try to answer that like this, I think that every place that has been designated, let us say the set, I think that anyone affiliated with the University would be happy that there was an area where students could hang-out which we call the set and also a place named the Plaza of The Americas where students can hang-out. I think these places are designed for, ultimately, the uplift of students across the board, whoever the students are. For example, Plaza of The Americas, if it has been named that then it is obviously set forth to honor either a population, an area or a culture of people, something to that affect. That goes directly along with the uplift of a particular type of people. I would say, on the set, it is more general purpose and speaking on the point of uplift, I really do not see the fact that white students are really doing a whole lot to uplift themselves other than just relaxing, which is fine because to me, in my personal opinion, there are many other facets of the University that focus on specifically their own uplift. I think, moreso than any other group of people, black students congregate there particularly to feel a sense of uplift that is not felt at all anywhere on the University campus to a large degree. I think if you interview quite a few of the black students out there, they would say something similar.

W: What would you recommend as an uplift? What is an example of, and what is the need of the uplift?

A: The point I am getting to is saying that I go through now in order to relate to those younger black students and let them know that there is an element of a black student population and through my relations with other black professors, that there is an element of people who are liked and that they can communicate with and they know appreciate them and give them more hope in succeeding through the system and through the matriculation at the University and really to monitor not in a George Orwell "big brother" type of way, but more in a loving big brother type of way to really just help, as I said, in uplift, and inspiring them to achieve whatever it is that they need to achieve in order to function as viable beings in this society and so that they feel good about themselves.

W: My last question. Can you tell me, Damon, whether your future goals after you graduate from the University of Florida, what are your plans if you have gone that far. What will you do?

A: That is an extensive list. A few of the things I will say is, basically, I would like to do research in agriculture, particularly \_\_\_\_\_, Africa, as well as the Middle East. I would also like to teach at a major university in the United States once I have done my research. I would like to be able to ultimately help a large part of the world

population in an agricultural sense to be productive and so that people have control over their own agricultural situations to where they are controlling their own agricultural economy.

(Next Interview)

W: My name is James Wilson, today I am conducting an interview as part of the Plaza of The Americas series. I am interviewing **Joyce Marie Norris**, a student here at the University of Florida. The interview is being conducted at 720 S.W. 34th Street Apt J100, this is the apartment of Joyce Norris. The time is 7:00, April 16, 1996. Joyce can you please state your full name and spell your full name for me?

N: Joyce Marie Norris.

W: Thank you. Joyce can you state basically what are you studying here at the University and how many years have you been at the University of Florida?

N: Right now I am a Junior, so I have been here for about three years. My major is in History, but I am also studying in the sciences for going to a Chiropractic program in the future.

W: Are you originally from Florida?

N: Yes, I grew up in Miami, Florida.

W: I have explained to you about the history of the Plaza of The Americas, what are your immediate thoughts about the Plaza. If someone says, hey I am going to go and hang-out

at the Plaza of The Americas, would you know where to go on campus.

N: Yes, I know where the location is.

W: Did you know the name of the Plaza of The Americas, or did you have any prior knowledge of the history of the Plaza of The Americas before this interview?

N: Yes I did. In fact, I knew about the Plaza in my orientation when first arriving at the University of Florida.

W: Briefly tell me what you know of the Plaza?

N: From what I was told, the Plaza of The Americas, I do not know exactly where the origin of the name came from, but the certain trees that are lining the boundaries of the Plaza, I was told was from a meeting of all the presidents and head people of the different countries of South America and each, in a sign of peace or contribution, they brought a tree that was original from each country and planted it in the park and there is a plaque at each tree. That is about as much as I was told. I was also told it was a meeting place for all the students.

W: What type of students do you generally see that would hang-out at the Plaza of The Americas?

N: The average person I see at The Plaza of The Americas is usually a non-student, I would say, homeless person. The only reason why I am saying homeless is based on the clothes they wear, it is very tattered, they usually have dogs,

heavy back packs. That is about the average person I would see there. Also the Hare Krishnas, many of them there and of course, the people expecting a free meal from the Hare Krishna.

W: Would you say that predominantly most of the students that you see at the Plaza are a mixture of races, Hispanic, African-American, White, or what would be your general observation of the Plaza?

N: I would say not. I would say that the average person there is white. I am sure there is people crossing through. I have never seen a congregation other than of white people there. I have never seen any minority represented there at all.

W: Where would you generally say the minority students congregate on the campus of University of Florida?

N: I would say in the Turlington area, closer to the Marston Science Library.

W: That is right outside of Turlington?

N: Yes, right outside of Turlington almost in the center pathway between Turlington and the Marston called CSE library.

W: Where do you generally hang-out because I am not getting the impression that the Plaza of The Americas is where you would congregate to meet with your friends?

N: No, I have never hung-out there. Where me and my friends usually congregate if necessary is usually what they have

termed "The Rock," based on the sculpture that is found outside of Turlington.

W: So if I wanted to meet you I would say Joyce, meet me at The Rock and you would know exactly where I was talking about?

N: Yes.

W: Where do you normally see people of color, like Hispanics, African-American students, Asian students. Where would they hang-out?

N: Where i said before, it is usually in that area. The same Turlington area, but more towards the library on the certain concrete planars and benches and usually that is where I see the areas. I see the Vietnamese clubs represented there, the Latino clubs represented there and also the African-American Greek organizations are being represented.

W: Are you familiar with the term "The Set"?

N: No.

W: The Set is a term that is the geographical area that you described African-American students generally call that the Set. I was initially told that that is where a lot of the black Greek type of step shows or activities take place. Have you witnessed anything like that, sororities or fraternities activities of the blacks?

N: I have never seen the step shows, but I have seen, in fact it was two weeks ago, I saw a sort of sorority initiation taking place, a black sorority.

W: Would you consider the Set, or that Turlington area, the Rock to be an extension of the Plaza of The Americas?

N: No, I do not see it at all.

W: Why?

N: It is two totally different geographic areas and also two totally different social areas. It is just obviously two totally different groups of people. It is obvious, you would never see one in the other.

W: You would say that the University of Florida is somewhat segregated in its social places for their undergraduate students?

N: Highly. I see segregation highly based on race and based on Greek-affiliation.

W: Are you a part of a Greek association?

N: No, I am not.

W: You are saying that the Plaza has mainly people who are non-students but I have seen when I go to the library the evangelists there, and I see students with backpacks that would suggest that they are students hang-out and listen to the evangelists. Have you ever observed that?

N: I have observed what you are talking about and I would probably say the only reason those students are in that area is because of the evangelists or because of a political debate going on. If it was not for that, I am sure those students would not be there.

W: Having given you some history of the Plaza, you realize that back in the 1960s and 1970s there were a lot of political activities that took place there. Would you say that that tradition or that legacy still remains in the Plaza of The Americas? You mentioned some political debates. Have you noticed that the Plaza is a political area?

N: I would say it is a political area, strictly to the definition of wherever there is a political campaign debate or grouping going against some political forum in UF, that is where it would be taking place. I do not think it is at the same intensity as what you just spoke about in the 1960s. Every debate I have seen against student government, against any even the local government of Gainesville, has been at the Plaza of The Americas?

W: Did you participate in listening to those demonstrations?

N: The student government debates I listened to some, but that was about the only debates that I actually listened to.

W: Have you ever taken part of the free meals by the Hare Krishna or decided to stop by and listen to the guitar players or the beads? Have you ever, as a student, decided that Hey, it is a hot day, I want to hang-out at the Plaza?

N: Never.

W: What about at night when you pass through the Plaza going to the library, have you ever been a part of a student group to discuss class or whatever?

N: Never, in fact, while in the dormitories there were a number of rapes that were associated with the Plaza of The Americas which is what allowed as you walked through those certain blue lights with the certain emergency phones, why there is more there per square yard than anywhere else on campus. The fact that it is done by students with the number of rapes that I was told about is what makes me go completely around the Plaza if I ever need to go anywhere on campus by myself at night, but I have never gone to the Plaza at night for any reason.

W: You are saying that rapes took place right there on the Plaza at night?

N: Yes, attacks, purse snatchings, muggings, rapes at night.

W: Generally, this would be reported that they were non-students?

N: They were students.

W: They were students?

N: Yes, they were students and as I have been here for the past three years, I have noticed more and more of trees cut down, more lights put up, more securities and maybe now it is much safer than when I first came here. You can always count on a police officer to be around that area, but if you talk to anyone, the Plaza of The Americas at night usually makes some women feel a little fearful and raise their eyebrow to going there.

W: Tell me more about your overall impression. When you first came to University of Florida you said that you were given information about this general area during the orientation.

If you can go back and remember, were you told that this was a place that students congregated and played frisbee? Was it told somewhat in the caveat that this was a place that you would hang-out in the four years or five years that you were a student?

N: Yes, in fact they strongly emphasized that this was such a main area for students to hang-out and when I questioned why there were so many non-students at that time, my orientation was during the summer, and they said it was because it was summer. When I attended here my first Fall, I expected to see all of these students, but to my surprise as I described to you now, it was basically the same type of person was there three years ago that is there now.

W: Where else would you describe major congregating centers on the University of Florida, beyond the Rock, the Set, the Plaza of The Americas, is there any other area?

N: Not that I can really think of. Turlington is such a major thoroughfare I guess you could say between the buses and class that people usually stay in that area. A lot of people, I would not say a lot, not to the level of Turlington, but many do congregate outside of Little Hall around Carleton Auditorium. That is usually a popular area because there is a food stand there, there is many benches,

plenty of trees, that is usually an area where some students do congregate.

W: Can you tell me where you would go if you had to meet someone on campus and you wanted to discuss what happened in class or if you wanted to discuss a paper. I am just trying to get a heartbeat of where that would be. Would that also be outside of Turlington?

N: Due to my schedule, it is all science classes right now. It would usually be at the CSE Library, in the library. If this is about classes, it is usually I meet people at CSE Library. If it is about another class, it is at the other library which is called Library West. That is usually where I call people to meet.

W: Is there anything that we have not discussed about the Plaza of The Americas or the Set, that you would like to add at this point?

N: Just that there is strong segregation on the campus today. The Plaza of The Americas is not a student area. I just do not think it is a student area. Of course, these people have every right to be there, it is a public university, they can be there, but it would be nice if there was more students there. It is a very nice area, but the fact that you are going to be harassed if you go there is quite disappointing. That is about it, just a strong segregation on campus.

- W: Where would you suggest that the University make some type of inroads in terms of addressing the segregation? Many believe that the Plaza of The Americas is this haven for student activity, political activity, where would you, if you had an opportunity to make it be known to the administration here at the University of Florida, that in fact the Set and the Rock and the Wall and the Plaza are very isolated entities where people would not even consider mixing?
- N: The fact that the University of Florida administration likes to believe that the Plaza itself is a very integrated area where all these students go to because I saw that through my orientation where that was the main center place where we always had to meet and I was just waiting until the Fall when everyone is going to be there. I think if you want to get to University of Florida students on a large-scale, meaning everyone, you would have to go through The Alligator, which is not tied to the University but everyone reads it and if you want to get a large-scale reaction, I think it would have to be through an editorial in the Alligator.
- W: You would think that people would actually respond because the University has tried to, in the past, change then physical layout of the Plaza and there was a lot of reaction. You think that if someone wrote a commentary that

there is social segregation where people congregate before and after class, that there would be some awareness of this?

N: There would be awareness. Would I say there would be a reaction to it? I doubt it. The kind of student at University of Florida, is not one to be socially aware and want to change. They seem to be someone who wants to come in, get their education and leave. So I do not know, honestly, if I would say there would be a huge reaction, but there would be awareness and you would have a large-scale audience and it is up to that audience to react to it on their own will because the only way anything is going to be changed is if the students change it, no matter what the administration does, nothing will be done unless the students want it. So it is up to the students to want the change and I just do not see that happening at the University of Florida.

W: Joyce, tell me what are your plans after you graduate from the University of Florida? You have an interesting mix, a Humanities and a Science background.

N: I see it as almost an overall education I am trying to get. I am trying to get the history and also plenty of sciences. I enjoy history and the liberal arts, but I also plan on going to Chiropracting school and due to their requirements it is heavy science. After getting my history degree I hopefully plan to attend school up north at a Chiropracting school.

W: That will be after one additional year here?

N: Yes, I have one more year. I plan on graduating Spring of 1997 and after that is when I will be attending a Chiropracting school.

W: I want to just thank you for the interview and I hope that the Plaza of The Americas or the Set or the Rock or the Wall will someday, I guess blend into just a social outlet where people will feel comfortable with each other. Hopefully, this could happen as an outset of this project, but we will see.

(Next interview)

W: Hi, today it is April 14, 1996. I am continuing the series of interviews on the Plaza of The Americas project. I am interviewing **Jeremy David Cohen** at 915-B S.W. 6th Avenue in Gainesville, Florida. The time is 4:30 and now I am going to begin the interview. Jeremy will you please state your full name and spell your name?

C: Jeremy David Cohen.

W: Thank you. Jeremy, please tell me briefly what you are studying here at the University of Florida?

C: I am a graduate student in Anthropology, this is my second year at the masters level particularly studying archeology.

W: Where are you from originally?

C: From California.

W: What part of California?

C: Northern California. The Monterey Peninsula.

W: So the climate here at Florida is not very different than you are used to?

C: It is nasty here.

W: It is nasty here, why?

C: I do not like the humidity.

W: You do not have humidity in California?

C: Not where I lived, the heat is a dry heat.

W: I am from Texas, so I concur. I am from Dallas, so I am used to a drier heat. Let me just ask you to get your impressions about the Plaza of The Americas. I have briefly talked to you before the interview about the history, some of which you knew, but what are your immediate thoughts if someone were to say tell me what you think about the Plaza of The Americas?

C: My immediate thought?

W: Yes.

C: The first things that come into mind?

W: Exactly.

C: Hippies.

W: Hippies, from the nineties hippies or hippies from the sixties?

C: No, nineties versions of hippies.

W: Define the hippie according to you?

C: That is problematic. A lot is based on clothing image. The Plaza at times appears as if it were a piece of a Grateful Dead concert.

W: For those who are not familiar with the Grateful Dead can you please tell me what specifically that is?

C: The Grateful Dead concerts have a lot of activities going on that are not specifically the audience listening to the performance. Juggling, Hackysacking, drum playing, drug use, though I have not seen drug use on the Plaza of The Americas.

W: But you assume that it is there?

C: I assume there is people there who have drugs and are willing to sell, but I have never seen that.

W: What about the Hare Krishna food? What about the evangelists? What about the students with their dogs, the frisbee playing? Have you participated in any of those activities?

C: I have never eaten the Hare Krishna food, I do not like to wait in line for food. Krishnas serve between twelve and one and I try not eat between twelve and one.

W: Why?

C: I do not like waiting in line.

W: Even though the food is free?

C: I heard it is free or a willing donation on the part of the consumer. What I am saying is that if I were to eat there I would give them something, but no, I have never eaten the Hare Krishna food.. I have stopped for the evangelists, I enjoy watching the evangelists. I enjoy watching the crowd's interaction with the evangelists.

W: What specifically do you like? What intrigues you about the evangelists?

C: I like to hear what the evangelists have to say. I like the interactions between the evangelists and the crowd.

W: When I pass there and just recently, the police were involved because some students complained that the evangelists were harassing them. Have you ever been technically harassed by any of the preachers or evangelists on the Plaza?

C: No, not at all. I have never had any direct interactions with the evangelists.

W: So you have never been propositioned with the bible or a pamphlet?

C: Pamphlets yes. The pamphleteers I would not call them evangelists. Perhaps they were, but these were young people, I assume they were UF students that had positioned themselves on one of the diagonal sidewalks and they were handing out pamphlets about, I think, the Bible, I do not remember.

W: What would be the racial composition of those who you see on the Plaza predominantly?

C: Those who hang-out on the Plaza?

W: Right.

C: White.

W: White. So you see no diversity. You do not see any people at all other than white students?

C: Some of the Krishnas would probably be considered of color, but in terms of permanent residents of the Plaza, so to speak, it is not very diverse at all.

W: We talked briefly about the history, what do you know about the history of the Plaza of The Americas in terms of how it got its name or just tell me briefly what are of the Plaza did you find out or did you become oriented with when you first came to University of Florida?

C: When I came to University of Florida I entered directly into the Archeological Field School, in St. Augustine so I never had any formal introduction or orientation to the University or to the campus or to my department. My orientation was mostly informal through my fellow field school students. What they told me about the Plaza was first that it was specifically a free-speech zone which I found odd because the entire campus should be, being that it is state funded. Also that it was named the Plaza of The Americas. Why it was I did not know, they did not tell me. Why it is, I cannot really say. It does not reflect much of the Americas if one thinks in terms of the North and South America continents.

W: Your field work mainly is in Latin America, is that correct?

C: That is correct, I am studying the Spanish colonies of the Caribbean. Maybe this will make it clear in terms of the way I see the Plaza. The road that connects the airport and the city of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic is

called the Avenue of The Americas. Along the Avenue of The Americas are plaques that represent the flags of every single country in this hemisphere. So it is quite clear that the structurists of the Avenue of The Americas have made an effort to show that the avenue actually represents all of the Americas. I come here and Plaza of The Americas is American in name only if one talks about Americas in the larger hemispheric sense.

W: You have never witnessed, in the two years that you have been here, any type of activity that would reflect something that would be in keeping with representing various people from the Americas?

C: No, I cannot say that I have.

W: You also know that during the sixties and seventies, the Plaza of The Americas was the location of political activity and you mentioned something briefly earlier. Have you witnessed or participated in any rally or any political activity since you have been here at the University of Florida?

C: Student political activity on the Plaza?

W: Right.

C: The one event that I witnessed, I did not participate in because I was actually hanging-out inside of Grinter Hall was some speeches given by some, I cannot remember the title of the party, but a recently formed student party whose platform was to give money back to the students. They had

set-up on the Plaza of The Americas and each of the candidates were giving speeches in the days before the recent student elections. Outside of that, I would not say I have seen any explicit political activity.

W: At that rally, would you say that it was representative of all the students at the University of Florida, was it more diverse than you had previously noticed on the Plaza?

C: The speechmakers were more diverse, the audience was non-existent.

W: What does that mean?

C: Nobody was listening.

W: So people were just there.

C: It was the regular activities, people either passing through the Plaza on the way to the library or to the intersection of 13th Street and University Avenue, or the usual crowd hanging-out.

W: You, yourself, did not really stay, you just went through and saw this activity?

C: I did not go through I was watching for a little while from a distance, from the lawn that is directly east of Grinter Hall.

W: You mentioned hanging-out. A part of the survey is to really understand where and how and why people hang-out at various locations. You mentioned "hanging-out" in front of Grinter, is that a location where graduate students hang-out

or would you say in front of Turlington, that area? Where particularly do you hang-out on campus?

C: To the question of where do I hang-out, I usually hang-out either in the museum or the Latin American collection of the library. I could not say that I spend time sitting around at the common locations where students gather outside.

W: Where are those common locations according to your observation?

C: As far as I could tell the Plaza of The Americas and the Plaza that is between Turlington and The Marston Science Library computer center complex.

W: You would consider that area an extension of the Plaza?

C: No.

W: You just said the plaza in between Turlington and the Science Library, so I am just trying to get some clarification here. What would you call that area, what have you heard that area be referred to?

C: I would call it the Turlington Plaza and I have also heard it referred to as the Set.

W: The Set, I do not know if you are familiar with this, is a term that typically African-Americans have named it. Has an African-American told you that or referred to it as the Set that told you that?

C: One of my fellow Archeology graduate students referred to that area as the set. Around Valentine's Day when he and

other African-American males are handing out flowers to African- American females.

W: He said we will be doing this on the Set?

C: They have done it on the Set.

W: Prior to that conversation, did you know if he had said, hey Jeremy, meet me at the Set...

C: I would not have known.

W: Can you describe to me just from your observation what type of students generally congregate on the Set?

C: On the Set?

W: Or in the Turlington Area?

C: No, you can call it the Set, I have no problem with that. The Set is more representative of being the plaza of the Americas than the actual Plaza of The Americas. You know what I mean?

W: No, what do you mean?

C: Let's use a crude identifier language.

W: O.K.

C: On the Plaza of The Americas in front of the library, I only here English. On the Set, I have heard English, Spanish, Caribbean Creole English, Patua.

W: Any Asian students?

C: No, I have not heard them speaking in languages that were not English.

W: Are they representative on the Set, though?

C: Yes, they are. Pakistanis, Indians and East Asians too.

W: Tell me more about the physical layout of the Set. I was informed by one of my interviews that there is something called the Rock and she referred to it as, Hey meet me at the Rock.

C: Is that the potato?

W: Is that what you would call it?

C: I do not know. There is that potato looking, rock looking, statue, sculpture that has a bench circling it where students sit.

W: Right, they call that the Rock?

C: That is the Rock?

W: Right.

C: O.K.

W: I know that, being a graduate student, you may not be privy to the actual geographic location terms of where to hang-out because we, generally, do not have that much time, but would you just describe to me what you have seen in that area since you would consider that more of a Plaza of The Americas even though you have said you do not think it is a physical extension of the Plaza?

C: No, I do not understand how it would be a physical extension of the Plaza in front of the library.

C: In terms of one plaza being an extension of the other, I would say that is true if you are actually moving. For example, moving from Anderson Hall to the HUB. Obviously the two plazas are connected. In terms of the way the students interact and the actual groups of students who interact at the two places, it is totally distinct groups and the two do not mix.

W: They do not mix? Why?

C: I do not know.

W: You are saying that they are segregated?

C: Segregated is a term you could use, yes.

W: What other term could you use?

C: Another term that could be used is autonomous. Like groups associating with like groups.

W: It is really problematic, maybe, to use the term Plaza of The Americas which is supposed to be representative of diverse atmospheres? Is that what you are saying?

C: There is various reasons or various justifications for maintaining the name Plaza of The Americas. You explained to me the history of the creation of the Plaza in terms of the planting of the trees from different countries and the plaques, so, yes, there was a past historical process which made this the Plaza of The Americas. Does it continue to be a plaza of the Americas, does it continue to represent all of the Americas or does it try to represent all of the

different American students on this campus and when I say American I do not mean particularly the U.S.? No. In terms of the current process of its maintenance and its reproduction as a Plaza of The Americas, it has nothing to do with it.

W: You said you have noticed or you have heard more languages on the Set, but I have come to find out that the Set in itself is also segregated. Have you observed that?

C: Definitely. For example you talked about the Rock. The Rock is problematic so let me move away from the Rock into that short brick wall that is on the east side. That is where a lot of the Sorority and Fraternity groups set up their tables for penny voting and other weekend planning activities and that is a definite area.

W: Is that a white or a black area?

C: That is a white thing.

W: O.K. What is a white thing?

C: I mean it is a white thing in that the majority of those people are white and those folks never set their tables up in areas that have come to be, perhaps not explicitly but implicitly, spaces occupied and used by people of color on the Set.

W: You have noticed this just be happenstance or as an archeologist/anthropologist you just looked at the different cultural mixes?

C: I would hope that my Anthropological training is not the reason why I have noticed this. It seems pretty obvious to me. I would hope that when I was in high school, I would have been cognizant of this. For me it is pretty clear, there is different groups, you could call them ethnic or racial groups and they are represented by different parts of the Plaza.

W: I am trying to get this term down.

C: Which term?

W: Plaza.

C: When I just said Plaza I am referring to what you have referred to as the Set and we have discussed this.

W: What is the Plaza to you? Let us start with that terminology first of all because you have also said, previously that the Plaza of The Americas and plaza at Turlington? What is a plaza?

C: A plaza for me would be an urban public space constructed for the purposes of public activities.

W: Such as speakers, music?

C: Speakers, music, merchants, performers, "a pasear," which is people going out for strolls and the formal and informal public activities whatever kind. It is a lot different because this is a university campus but I think the general idea is maintained. Quads in the North East , I would consider plazas.

W: Let me do a comparison here. Before coming to the University of Florida, I believe you went to Amhurst.

C: That is right.

W: Can you tell me were the quads or plazas at Amhurst any more diverse or any more politically conscious? What would be the comparison between a quad at Amhurst and the Plaza or the Set or the Rock at the University of Florida?

C: It is a difficult comparison because of the weather. The quads or the open spaces at Amhurst have very little time during the school year in which they are occupied because it is too damn cold. You have to look to internal spaces within buildings, the dining hall, the campus center, the student union. Were they more diverse? Yes. Was there segregation? Yes. Was there more political activity at these places? Yes, definitely. In part because the dining hall at Amhurst College \_\_\_\_\_ to particulars of the college I attended had 1,600 people with specific dinner hours so that everybody is in the same place at the same time so it is very conducive to social and political interaction.

W: I asked that because I wanted to get somewhat of a handle on how you came to the University of Florida coming from the north and coming down as a yankee to the south. I was trying to get a feel for how you would view this place.

C: I am from California.

W: That is right, sorry. You are a Californian. I will abstract that Yankee comment. I am more interested in how people who are not from Florida come here and view the place and view the social process. I am trying to get a handle on how one would decide to either hang-out at the Plaza of The Americas or hang-out at the Set or hang-out at other locations on the campus. How did you come to make a decision on, if you had any spare time to socialize, where would that be and why on campus?

C: Right. The places that I have socialized have been in the museum where I work and where my advisor works and where some of my fellow students are and so that is a particular archeologist context. I frequent that museum and talk down there. Grinter Hall would be another place just because it has a concentration of people who are interested in the same things that I am interested in particular, Latin American and the Caribbean.

W: You said you spend some time in the Latin American library so you often have to pass the Plaza of The Americas to get to Library East, is that right, where the Latin American collection is?

C: Now, the Latin American collection is in Marston Science Library. Until January it was in Library East, so I would have to often pass through the Plaza of The Americas to get there.

W: I have been told that at night women here at the University of Florida do not feel comfortable walking past there because of a history of rape and muggings and robbery. Have you heard of any of that type of activity while you have been here at the University of Florida?

C: No, I have not.

W: Have you felt uncomfortable or endangered by walking by the Plaza at night?

C: The Plaza of The Americas at night?

W: Right.

C: No, I have not. In terms of being uncomfortable, the only times I have been uncomfortable in the public spaces has been when there have been concentrations of police officers and that has always been on the Plaza in front of Turlington.

W: Why were they there? Describe that.

C: I was not sure but off-hand I have noticed that officers have shown their presence in greater numbers and with greater frequency in that area than they do at the Plaza of The Americas during the day at night they have stopping and getting out of their vehicles.

W: Do you have any idea or any reason why they would be more representative on the Set than they would be...

C: I have my prejudices, yes.

W: What would they be?

C: There is a lot of black folk on the Set. Particularly when the black folk on the Set are doing black folk activities, cops show up.

W: In greater numbers than they would be at the Plaza of The Americas?

C: In greater numbers than there would be at the Plaza of The Americas or if for example, one of the black frats are doing the step show on the Set.

W: That is a good observation. I, myself, have not picked up on that. I have noticed some policemen on the Plaza of The Americas. Like I said, recently, some students complained that the evangelists were "harassing" them. I put "harass" in quotes because I do not know if they were grabbing them and making them repent or I do not know what they were doing. There is a general consensus that if black people on any campus tend to congregate together, the university police are generally asked to monitor the activities and see what is going on. I have not seen the presence of a large group of people on the Plaza of The Americas, but you say that this is racially motivated?

C: I would say it is racially motivated. Cops could probably make an argument in response in terms of safety or the movement of people. The plaza in front of Turlington, the Set, is a central location. In the mid-moments of the school day, there are lots of students passing through

during the changes in classes so they could probably make an argument that just the massive people there, black, white, Asian, Latin, they would have to boost their presence, but i do not know.

W: Do you have any recommendations for example, you said at Amhurst College the students were a bit more political than the students here at the University of Florida. What type of recommendation or some type of activity or initiative do you think would be instructive in informing students to observe the kind of things you observed about the segregation in the mall, the different types of people on the Plaza of The Americas? Is there anything that we could do as concerned scholars about the blatant continuation of segregation on predominantly white campuses? Is there anything that you could think of that would bring a broader awareness of the issue or is it just the way it is?

C: Just the way it is? I hope not but I think we have to look at the reasons why the people behave in the ways they do. Would the Pakistani female students who hang-out at the upper parts of the Set want any change in the way they act during the day and the way they congregate?

W: How do you know for a fact that they are Pakistanis and where specifically are minorities? Can you give me a racial diagram of where the various groups are because that is new. I did not even know that there was specific Pakistani?

C: The Rock seems to have sometimes a diversity of students who usually meet there and then move on, usually undergraduate I would say.

W: That is just a holding spot that could just be a circumstance of just being there that it is not consciously diverse? It is just a location that happens to be.

C: It is definitely a lot more consciously diverse and the people who meet there I do not think I could argue who meet there and one of their conscious objectives is to meet people of other cultures or other ethnicities at that particular place. You have the Rock, you have got that row of frat boys and sorority girls, the African-Americans, I wish I could diagram it, it would be easier. The African-Americans are along the southern side of the open space, if you are following. As you move up the stairs towards the computer center and the library, you get East Asian students, Indian and Pakistani students and then sometimes I have seen some kids from the English speaking Caribbean islands up in the upper area.

W: There is a black segregated part as well you have African-Americans and you have African-Caribbeans?

C: The African-Caribbeans move in and out of the African-American area.

W: How have you come to observe this?

C: Listening.

W: You listen?

C: Yes, from the accents and from the language.

W: Why is it that you are interested in this? How have you come to observe it?

C: Why am I interested in this? I do not know.

W: Your observation is probably the most diverse in terms of a clear observation and as you described this area I am looking at the plaza and I can actually see it. I can see it in my head. I am just curious as to why it is that you have made this observation?

C: Perhaps it is from my experience in the Caribbean. Where the Caribbean is so amazingly diversified place.

W: So you are drawn to that?

C: Yes, I am drawn to that.

W: Let us say that the Hare Krishnas came to the Set, would you be more apt to try their food there in a more diverse setting?

C: No, because I cannot say that I am trying the cultural interactions of the students that hang-out there. I am passing through.

W: You are not an active participant?

C: I am an active participant in the manner that everyone who moves through those public spaces is a participant, but I could not identify myself with one of the groups that frequently meets and spends time there.

W: Where are the regular white people, I mean the non-Greek, you said frat boy and frat girl? You specifically said the African-American, you said the Asian and the Pakistanis, but I do not know where the non-Greek person is?

C: The non-affiliated?

W: Exactly.

C: I do not know.

W: They are just in the mix somewhere.

C: Maybe they recognize, not consciously or in some way, but the Set is just not big enough. I am not sure. Also, because the Plaza of The Americas has been established by the people who hang-out there as a space for those people and because those groups who hang-out on the Set have done the same for themselves, they have claimed the space, squatter's rights so to speak, perhaps other students say I cannot hang where the Alpha Phi Alphas hang, they would not want it, I would not want it.

W: What is an Alpha Phi Alpha?

C: A member of a black fraternity.

W: You really should have chosen Kappa Alpha Xi because the Alpha Phi Alpha is my direct rival.

C: Sorry, I say Alpha Phi Alpha, not because I have any allegiance to either one, but they are more vocal. I have heard them here more than I have heard anybody else.

W: I would say maybe on this campus.

C: That is what I mean.

W: Generally across the nation, I would not agree with that.

C: I went to Amhurst College and we had no fraternities so this is my first experience with a university that has strong fraternities and sororities, black, white, latino.

W: I am curious now for you to turn your anthropological eye on to the Plaza so that I can get a kind of a more descriptive eye on what you see at the Plaza.

C: What do you want?

W: What is it that you see? You made the observation on the Set. You said some of the people there but when you stop and listen to the evangelists, what type of students do you see engaging in that type of activity?

C: The evangelists are interesting because when the evangelists come and when they draw a big crowd, the crowd is, at times, racially or ethnically diverse because they are people who are passing through. I would consider myself one of those people passing through. I have seen the Asian students, African-American students stop and listen so perhaps the evangelists are a diversifying element on the Plaza of The Americas. Take the evangelists away and it is interesting because it is more of a park in a United States sense. A very white park in terms of people bringing their dogs, playing frisbee, that for example, is something that would

not be done on an urban plaza in, for example, Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic.

W: You are saying it is more culturally. You would not say that in Santo Domingo you would see people playing frisbee and letting their dogs run around?

C: Not on a plaza, no.

W: Where would you see that?

C: That would be at a park, I guess. It would not be in a central location within the urban environment if we are calling the University of Florida campus an urban environment.

W: What do you think about the Plaza, then as this political haven? If the evangelists can stir up diversity, and there have been some rallies there, if you wanted to bring to the attention something to the general student population, would you go to the Plaza, get a permit. You, yourself, would you consider that to be a location where you would be able to set up a forum?

C: No, I would try to do a public activity in front of Turlington. I would do it at the Set.

W: Given the history and knowing the history of the Plaza of The Americas, you would still go to the Set?

C: The history of the Plaza of The Americas as far as I can tell is that its role as such a place is fading fast. Just in terms of access to people and different types of people.

I think the Set is a more efficient position to establish oneself if one wants to speak loudly and publicly, just in terms of its physical location in relation to the different centers and buildings that students and professors have to get to on campus. The Set is more central.

W: The Plaza is just a place where some white students could get a tan if they wanted to if it is a good hot day. It is a place to get a free meal, to hang-out and buy some beads. You alluded earlier that drug sales are there but yet you have not, yourself, seen it. Keeping with the political activity, you would not say it is the political hub of the university right now? That is your observation.

C: I would call it a political center, because the folks hanging-out there hang-out there because they want to hang-out there. It is quite an expression of their political position in terms of how they want to interact with other students with the university and in the public at large. So it is a political place. Is it the best political position to try and reach either a majority of the student population at the University or other various representative groups within the student population? No.

W: You worked, like you said earlier, in Latin America. Do you know any Latin American graduate students here at the University of Florida?

C: Yes.

W: Do they know any of the history of the Plaza of The Americas?

C: I could not tell you. I do know that they do not hang-out there. They hang-out at Grinter. They hang-out on that lawn just outside of Grinter.

W: So that is a general Latin American, graduate hang-out?

C: I would not go so far as to label it an official hang-out. For example, if a Latin American graduate student who works and studies in Grinter Hall wanted to go outside and either talk with someone or just hang-out, they would not stray across the street onto the Plaza of The Americas. They would go out to that lawn. Maybe it is just a very materialists explanation that it is closer and we just do not have to go out very far to find grass and there are similar people in that area.

W: Jeremy, are there any other things that you would like to add that we have not discussed so far?

C: I never responded to the question of what types of remedies or solutions or ways of dealing with this problem are. In terms of solutions, I do not know what is to be done. I see that there are, I guess you could call them, grass roots efforts going on right now, I would say, on the Set. For example, on the Set, when the black fraternities and sororities perform it does draw a crowd, it does break down those small groups that are spread across the Set. A couple

of days ago there was a performance by some African drumming group, I did not know who they were, there was a big crowd.

W: Yes, I saw that. I was there.

C: Those are the kinds of things that I like better than an official move on the part of the University, so perhaps maybe the students are moving in a positive direction on their own. Does that integrate the Plaza and the Set? I do not know if I could say, with conviction, that the people who hang around at the Plaza do not move around, but that is my impression.

W: Are there any initiatives that you would see that would benefit or move people to understand that there really is something valid in socializing with someone outside their immediate group? Are you saying that just let this naturally occur with student activities?

C: What I see sometimes going on in the Set, is that the actual cultural or ethnic groups that congregate there, seem to be at times at least, moving in a direction of exploring each others different groups. That does not mean that the groups all have to meld into one but I do see a time of greater interaction between different groups of people. It is unfortunate that the situation is so implicit or unstated in terms of people arriving here and they are basically forced into a certain pattern of behavior or pattern of spacial distribution of themselves.

W: You are saying of a young freshman, black person, comes to the University of Florida, there is an implicit kind of geographic location that he or she will know to hang-out in this particular area as opposed to just going to the Plaza of The Americas and hanging-out and singing Kum Baya with the guitar players? They know that that is not their place?

C: Yes, for example, I wonder about the hypothetical, young African-American hippie who likes grass and likes trees and comes to this campus.

W: From California.

C: Yes, from Berkeley. Would that person feel comfortable on the Plaza of The Americas? I do not know. How would the people on the Plaza of The Americas treat that person, as a fellow nature lover or as a black hippie icon?

W: I am really impressed with your usage of the word hippie. I was not aware that that word was still circulating in our lexicon. I thought it was some kind of revisited or revisioned word, but is it used?

C: I do not know. I use it because I think it is funny and probably the folks that hang-out on the Plaza who consider themselves hippies in the sixties would probably feel comfortable with the term. The young folk who hang out on the Plaza, probably do not. I do not care. I like it because it amuses me.

W: Do they amuse you?

C: Do they amuse me? To a certain extent yes. I would have to say yes.

W: I have to say thank you for your geographical insights as in anthropology. I have gotten more of a geographical location and a sense of identity from this interview. Jeremy, can you tell me what your plans are after getting your masters degree here in Archeology, is it Historical Archeology?

C: It is Historical Archeology.

W: What do you plan on doing afterwards? When will you get that degree?

C: Hopefully, I will have that degree by the end of the Fall semester of this year and I will apply to graduate programs, \_\_\_\_\_ programs in History here and elsewhere and then make a decision either on continuing for a PhD in the Anthropology here or continuing for a PhD in history here or going somewhere else to do it or a PhD in Latin American History or some other program.

W: I have just one brief recommendation that the University of Texas in Austin has a fantastic program in Latin American history, it is, as you well know, my alma mater.

(new interview)

W: I am continuing with my interview of students at the University of Florida on the Plaza of The Americas project for the Oral History program at the University of Florida. Today is April 14, 1996 and I am interviewing **Bernard Scott**

**Lucious.** The interview is taking place at Diamond Village, building 304, apartment 12 in Gainesville, Florida. Scott, would you please state your full name and then spell your full name?

L: Bernard Scott Lucious.

W: Thank you. Scott, what are you studying here at the University of Florida?

L: I am pursuing my doctoral degree in English.

W: How long have you been a student here at UF?

L: I entered into the Summer B semester in June of 1994. SO two years.

W: Are you originally from Florida?

L: No, I moved here from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania though I was born in Thailand.

W: Thailand is quite a distance from Pittsburgh.

L: My father was in the military, so I lived sort of a military brat type of life and we travelled all over. I went to high school in Wheeling, West Virginia and later went to Pittsburgh to pursue my undergraduate degree from Carnegie-Mellon University and continued on to study at the masters level at **Ducan** University.

W: What brought you to the University of Florida?

L: A number of factors actually. One of my professors at Carnegie-Mellon is a graduate of the English program here at the University of Florida also my mother has relocated to

Orlando, Florida. In addition to those factors, the program itself was appealing to me and this was the program that was ideal for my graduate studies.

W: You have enjoyed your stay here at the University of Florida so far?

L: I would say I have. I had to get used to living in a small town such as Gainesville but nonetheless, the program, the department, the University has been ideal for me.

W: You have become a Gator, so to speak?

L: A reluctant Gator.

W: Why reluctant?

L: Although I watch some of the Gator football games on T.V., I have not been very much a supporter in terms of participating in the games and so forth.

W: I have explained to you briefly, the history of the Plaza of The Americas and I would like for you to just tell me, what are your immediate thoughts when you think of entering the Plaza of The Americas?

L: The Plaza of The Americas projects an image of a modern-day Woodstock at the University of Florida for me. That is what comes to mind. When I walk through the Plaza itself, either to go to Library West or to Matherly Hall or Anderson Hall, where I teach and also have office space as a T.A. here at the University of Florida, I often see different types of groups of students. I see, either, students who are playing

hackysack or students who are observing a speaker about issues of Christianity. I see, often, students supporting the Hare Krishna meals and I also see students sun bathing or just having some good time with other friends.

W: Out of all of those observations, do you see diversity at all? You mentioned a lot of different groups of people, what would be the predominant race of the people whom you normally observe?

L: My response to that would be two-fold. To answer your question exactly in terms of the racial composition, it is not as racially diverse as one would imagine such a setting, but in terms of diversity, what comes to mind is moreso the religious spiritual/political type diversity because of my reference to Christianity, Hare Krishna and sort of the nouveau Woodstock-type culture that I see there, so in that sense, it is somewhat diverse in terms of religious and spiritual views, but in terms of racial or ethnic diversity, I am not sure that I would describe it as racially or ethnically diverse.

W: What are the predominant congregation of people?

L: Primarily, European American. Very few people of color so to speak, African-American, Latino-American or Asian-American. Usually, the African-American, Native-American as well as Latino-American and Asian-Americans are among those

to pass through that area, the observers of this particular environment.

W: So you have never, yourself, witnessed a racial composition that would be described as a diverse setting on the Plaza of The Americas in the two years that you have been here?

L: I would say, no, I have not with the exception of a Latino or a Chicano-American festival that was taking place on the Plaza. However, as I looked toward the area where the festival was taking place, I still saw very little in terms of the Latin-American, Chicano student presence.

W: You mentioned this Woodstock type of description. Could you tell me? I am a child of the sixties and I know of Woodstock, but could you be more specific in breaking down what you mean by Woodstock type of atmosphere?

L: The Woodstock culture or the images from Woodstock as one speaking from having grown up during the seventies, hippie type attire, very free-love type of attitude, also not only European American but also some African-American participants in the Woodstock and its representation of peace, unity, love, so to speak. That is what comes to mind when I think of Woodstock and what it stood for. It seems as though the young people who are often spending most of their time throughout the Plaza of The Americas seem to project that type of image.

W: Are all of these people, from your own observation, students here at the University of Florida or would you consider them to be outside of the University community?

L: At first it is really hard to determine whether or not the students are University of Florida students, but having spoken firsthand with one of the students, I realized that many of them were not University of Florida students. I happened to have conducted class discussion once on an area of the Plaza of The Americas and learned that the students who were also occupying the same area were not University of Florida students.

W: What class do you teach?

L: I teach ENC 1102. English 1102 is the freshmen introductory course to writing.

W: Why did you choose the Plaza of The Americas as a location for your class?

L: on this particular day it was really nice outdoors and I decided to conduct my class discussion on **Maya Angeloux's** poem on The \_\_\_\_\_ Morning which she presented during the Clinton inauguration. I asked my students where they would like to conduct this class discussion and most of the students mentioned the Plaza of The Americas, so we carried on.

W: Did you know the formal name of the Plaza of The Americas?  
If someone said, hey, let us go to the Plaza of The Americas, would you have known where that place was?

L: To be honest I am awfully confused about the whereabouts of the Plaza of The Americas. I have heard of it mentioned several times, but I never had taken notice of exactly where it was. At this point, I realize exactly where it was. That it was the area in front of Library West, but often I never would take notice of exactly where this area was.

W: You, yourself, personally, have never participated in listening to some of the evangelists talk or have you partaken of the food of the Hare Krishna? You look like a healthy, to-be professor type, do you stop off and share the food of the Hare Krishna?

L: Actually, I am not very active or supportive of the activities that take place at the Plaza of The Americas. I have seen maybe students or faculty members participate with the Hare Krishna meals and I have also watched students observe the speakers on issues of Christianity and religion, but I, myself, have never partaken in any of these activities. Basically, I am just walking by, that is about it.

W: You have noticed, obviously, with very nice observational skills the community at the Plaza of The Americas and you

talked about the lack of African-American students. Can you tell me where you would say the major congregational area for African-American students or Latino students or Asian students is on campus?

L: Without a doubt, the area known as the Set, the area between Turlington and the computer science building is the area where most of the African-American students interact with one another. Often you will find many African-American students, primarily undergraduate students, interacting and conversing with their colleagues. At times you will see African-American sororities and fraternities, presenting various bits of information about their activities and so forth. So the Set is where most of the African-American students can be seen interacting. In terms of Latino-American and Asian-American students, often you will find many of the students walking through the Plaza and at times, meeting on the Set, but I do not know that that is an area that many of these students frequent like the African-American students themselves.

W: Where did the term the Set come from and as you learned about the name for the Plaza of The Americas, how did you come to know the term the Set because that is in itself an African-American description because often white, American students here at the University of Florida have not known in the interviews that I have conducted, have not known of it

as the Set? Do you have any idea why it is called the Set or how you came to know it as the Set?

L: During my orientation to the University of Florida in the Summer of 1994, I was made familiar with the term the Set from other African-American graduate students who were informing me of the different settings as you could say on campus and it was clear that, as I mentioned earlier, most of the African-American students interacted on the Set so the answer, basically is from other African-American students.

W: So it is an informal type of orientation?

L: Definitely.

W: Did they at any time, in your informal orientation, say to you that the Plaza of The Americas is another area where students of African descent or Latino descent would congregate?

L: Never was there any reference to the Plaza of The Americas as also an area where the African-American students would congregate?

W: Would you describe the Set as an extension of the Plaza of The Americas?

L: It would not seem appropriate to suggest that the Set was an extension only because it seems to represent two different social spheres as I mentioned African-American students interacting on the Set as well as primarily European-

American students interacting throughout the Plaza of The Americas. It does not seem to connect in any way.

W: Why is that?

L: I am not sure. I have no idea why.

W: I would hate to use the word segregation but I am going to go on in that direction. Why do you think that the students have chosen, both formally and informally, to segregate themselves or would you even say that the Plaza of The Americas and the Set or the area in Turlington, there is another area called the Rock, there is another area called the Wall? Have you noticed that these areas could be described as segregated?

L: I would suggest that it is apparent and I have noticed that before. I have also raised the same question to my students in my course and I asked them to observe the different groups or cultures on campus to determine why it is they feel that the different communities are so segregated. First, are they and secondly why so. Most of the students have observed also the same segregation but were not sure how to respond to the reasons for the continued segregation of the different groups. It is really apparent, but in terms of why, it is uncertain.

W: You are also, not only of African-American descent but also of Thailand descent. Can you tell me where the Asian

students on campus are also normally congregated? Have you noticed?

L: I do see several groups of Asian students as I am walking throughout the campus, but I really cannot locate where the students interact on a normal basis. I do see, as I say, Latino-American students, but aside from the Set where African-American student primarily interact as well as the Plaza of The Americas where most the European-American students interact, the Latino-American, Asian-American or even Native-American students seem to just exist in the cursory of these two areas. It is hard to locate their areas.

W: Have you also noticed that the Set in itself is segregated? Have you happened to see that?

L: Actually, within the Set itself, there is definitely a degree of segregation in the sense that while many of the African-American students will socialize and interact in the area closest to the computer science building, closest to that particular library by that building, the students who are representing various social organizations will often have booths out there in the Set but most of these students will set up closest to Turlington by the Wall closest to Turlington where the newspapers are. That area closest to Turlington is where the non-African-American students can be located.

W: Non-African-American meaning?

L: White students, European-American students, Asian students, Latino students.

W: What about the area around the Rock? Are you familiar with the term the Rock?

L: I am not familiar with the area.

W: One of my interviewers said it is a potato-like shaped thing with benches around. An undergraduate informed me that that is called the Rock and if one were to say hey Scott please meet me by the Rock, in fact I saw you on the Set and that is why I decided to interview you because you were sitting on the rock. Do you remember?

L: Yes, I remember.

W: Would you say that area is more integrated naturally or are you aware of its racial composition?

L: That area is more integrated or diverse as compared to the other area of the Set. The Rock area which we are speaking of is an area that is pretty popular among graduate students especially graduate students who study in Turlington. In terms of whether or not it is somewhat integrated, yes it is as compared to the other area of the Set.

W: I explained to you the history of the Plaza of The Americas and basically told you that the political activities that took place in the sixties and seventies were obviously vastly different from what is going on today. Do you think,

though, that the Plaza is still a place for political activity? Have you noticed or participated in any activities that would be considered political?

L: I would suggest that the Plaza as well as the Set are both areas in which students seem to conduct various political activities. I mentioned both in response to your question because on one hand I mentioned that the Plaza of The Americas is an area where mostly religious and spiritual issues are confronted and projected. At the same time, from my observation I see that on the Set in terms of political and civic issues, particularly African-American sororities and fraternities, I see that as an area in which these political activities are often taking place. So, I see both.

W: Where do you hang-out on campus when you have time?

L: I seldom hang-out on campus, but when I have time, usually in the Rock area where you mentioned that you saw me interacting with other students. I would continue to add that the reason I do like to hang-out by the Rock area, so to speak, is because of the interaction between graduate and undergraduate students as well as interaction of various ethnic groups. That is something that interests me and I often am just watching the different groups of students interact.

W: I would like to go back to the Plaza of The Americas again.

That is a place where you mentioned earlier where some people could hang-out and get some sun, play frisbee, play hackysack, get a free meal. Would you say that the people there are unaware of the fact that the Plaza is not diverse in terms of its racial composition? You have observed the people, is there a sense that this is a territorial turf in like the Set is a territorial turf where people just do not mix because that is just not where you go? Is there a sense of that here or is it very informal and very implicit in its regional location of where the various races hang-out?

L: I am sure that students who interact in the Plaza of The Americas area are aware of their ethnocentrism as you could say as well as students who interact on the Set, but in terms of any questioning of the reasons why there is little interaction or there is a lack of consideration among different groups, I am not sure. That is something that is on their mind.

W: Are there any ways that you could think of where maybe the university or maybe an article in the Alligator or maybe someone could bring it to the attention of the larger population here at the University of Florida that the Plaza of The Americas is not the hub of a diverse setting of political consciousness nor is the Set. The Set is diverse but it is not a political hub where people come together

consciously. Do you have any recommendations or suggestions as to how we could get students to start to look at these issues because as you know, in many universities the dismantling of affirmative action is starting to take place and there does not seem to be a political climate where people are concerned with the richness of why it is important to be concerned about each other's culture? Do you have any suggestions on how the students would react or how to approach this issue to get people to just observe the differences?

L: Perhaps the best thing to do in terms of trying to raise consciousness among the students, both the students who interact at the Set as well as the Plaza, is that you actually conduct some sort of informational type programming within the area themselves, the Set and the Plaza of The Americas. Some sort of, as you might say, diversity fest could take place. The fest itself could take place on both the Set as well as the Plaza of The Americas. That perhaps would be the most striking forum which could raise the awareness among the students of all who interact between both groups.

W: Is there anything that you would like to add that we have not discussed in the interview concerning the Plaza of The Americas and where students hang-out here at the University of Florida?

L: I understand from your explanation, the history behind the Plaza of The Americas, but from my experience here in the last two years, I have not developed a strong sense of the Plaza of The Americas as being a central part of the campus where political activity and transformation should transpire and it is very interesting that the Plaza of The Americas, throughout the interview, seems to be made central to the discussion. I would be interested in hearing the results of a similar type of interview but perhaps of students in terms of the Set. If the Set was made central to the interviewing and to ask non-African-American students of their opinion of the politics and the political activism that they observe on the Set, that would be interesting.

W: Scott, can you tell me what are you going to do after you finish your doctorate degree here at the University of Florida? What are some of your plans after receiving your PhD?

L: My immediate goals include teaching at a university level, perhaps in Florida although I am not limiting myself to Florida. I also would like to write and conduct research in terms of the areas of Asian-American, African-American cultural studies. Beyond that I am not sure of what else I would like to get into.

W: Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this project. You are the last of my interviewees and I surely think that the

information that you have given me has given me a rounded perspective of how to really look at the Plaza of The Americas as well as the Set. You have stated earlier that you did not think that the Set was an extension of the Plaza and I just want to, I guess, have you say one last thing and that is, if we were to somehow engineer a program to get people to talk with each other, get people to explore each others culture, how do you think we might go about doing that? Just one simple idea.

L: That is a tough question. The only thing that comes to mind, as I mentioned earlier, is some sort of public forum for dialogue and conscious raising and that would be a series of activities, whatever they might be, cultural, intercultural type activities taking place in both areas.

W: You mentioned the diversity fest.

L: Right, something like that. Other than that, I do not know of anything else aside from the apparent cultural instruction and so forth, but that is something that requires students to interact with the administration and there is a whole dialogue that has to take place in terms of the necessity for enforcing such teaching in the classrooms.

W: I asked that question because you have a very diverse approach to teaching. In our pre-interview you talked about the various aspects of diversity in your teaching and the

kind of things that you have exposed your students to.

Would you say that is a starting part?

L: Definitely, that is definitely a forum in which we can begin to engage in such issues and I definitely do attempt to do so in my own course even though the courses I have taught, writing as well as literature, may not require conversations on such issues as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, religion and so forth, but I use that particular forum to raise such issues, to challenge the students to think about their own opinions, their own politics on such issues. That is definitely an ideal forum, unfortunately, I know that not everyone places emphasis on such "multi-cultural" issues in their courses but that is definitely an ideal forum because it requires them to confront these issues in a serious context.

W: Scott, thank you so much for the interview and I hope that maybe we can implement some of these ideas when we become professors in the academy in the near future.

L: Thank you very much.