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Jerome Long Oral History Interview, Apr. 17, 2012

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Interview One with Dr. Jerome Long by Chandra Galbiati, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, April 17, 2012.

CHANDRA GALBIATI: For the record, this an interview with Professor Jerome Long on April 17, 2012. I wanted to start with some questions about your childhood and your early life. Can you tell me about your family and your home growing up?

JEROME LONG: I was born and raised in Little Rock, Arkansas. I'm the youngest of nine. I have five brothers and three sisters. Can you be more pointed? What do you want to know about my childhood?

Galbiati: What was your early education; and what were your early experiences in school like? What did you think of education at the time?

Long: [Laughs] It wasn't the object of reflection.

Galbiati: Did you like school?

Long: I loved school. Well, that's too strong a term. Like most kids, you endured school. In fact, if truth be told, I didn't like school at all until I was in the tenth grade. I didn't like it because it seemed—well, as my son told me once, he didn't like school because you couldn't go home when you wanted to. Now that I think back on it, it was a place where I learned a lot, learned to respect learning and education. In Arkansas, we went to primary school, the first to the sixth grade, and then junior high school, seventh and eighth grade, and then senior high school, ninth to graduation.

I went to Dunbar High School. Hooked onto the Dunbar High School was Dunbar Community College; Dunbar Junior College is what they called them then. They were called community colleges later, when they tended to be more technical-oriented. But it was a junior college then---specifically

junior because of preparing you to go to senior college. I graduated from high school in 1949, and from Dunbar Junior College in 1951. From there, I went to Chicago, where my brother was. Got drafted into the service. Got out of the service in '54, and went to Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, for my junior and senior year. Graduated from there in '56. Attended University of Chicago from '56 to—long time.

Galbiati: May I slow you down and ask some more specific questions?

Long: Yeah. Go, go.

Galbiati: Well, you said that your early school taught you the value of education. Specifically, what was it that stuck out?

Long: Well, for example, in February—now declared African-American History Month—we had Negro History Week when I was growing up. That was a long time before the Civil Rights movement. And our teachers were very, very concerned and dedicated that even though only meager resources were assigned to African-American schools at that time, they really made the most out of what they had.

For example, you heard of the Little Rock Nine? They went to Central High School. We used to pass by Central High School walking to Dunbar High School. Central High School was a magnet school. (So was Dunbar, in a way.) Anyway, it was huge, and rated as being very, very, very good, not only in Arkansas, but throughout the nation. We had occasion to go there once, for a lecture or to take a tour or something, and I was just amazed at the size of the library, compared to Dunbar's library. And their shop area had mounted jet engines! Our shop area had automobile engines. That gives you a sense of disparity, in terms of the money spent per child. Black/white, you know—that's what I meant.

And also, in Dunbar, when you got to the ninth grade, you could choose between two kinds of curriculum. One was pre-college, other was shop. In the shop, it was plumbing, electricity, woodworking, and automobile mechanics. In the pre-college, it was liberal arts. English, history, social studies, languages. Our teachers insisted we had to be sort of heavy in liberal arts. We could take some shop courses, but nothing beyond the required minimum, because they insisted that from that point, you had to concentrate on college

Galbiati: And did your family also encourage you to pursue college?

Long: Oh, yeah, yeah. My father said: “All of you are going to college.” And we didn’t know how the hell he was going to do that, because we didn’t have any money. The only reason I went to junior college was because I took a competitive exam, and the first place winner got \$100. I was second place: I got \$70. But the winner decided to go to another college, not Dunbar Junior College, so then I got his slot. If it hadn’t been for that, maybe I could have squeaked by in terms of money, but it would have been very difficult. That is, I would have had to work full time, go to college at night—which I ended up doing anyway, so that’s what I meant.

Galbiati: Did your ideas of the value of diversity develop at all when you were younger?

Long: What do you mean?

Galbiati: Well, I’m getting this based on reading some articles and interviews about you.

Long: Oh, what did you read about me? Let’s see if it’s true or not.

Galbiati: I read an interview that you gave for the Hewlett Diversity Project, about 13 years ago.

Long: My Lord. That long ago? Gee. Go on. Repeat the question.

Galbiati: When you were young, did you develop ideas about the value of diversity—cultural diversity---in society and in school?

Long: Well, changing one's consciousness, or mind, is usually a slow process. I mean, you don't just sit down one day and say: "I'm going to think about diversity." You know what I mean?

Galbiati: So then, what sort of experiences during your early years helped bring you to thinking about diversity?

Long: Well, okay. Little Rock, Arkansas, like most schools in the South—and most in the North, East, West, too—was segregated, by law. White people in the front, black people in the back. Water fountains were enameled white for whites, black for blacks. So was education, so were all public places. In spite of that, there was a hell of a lot of communication and intercourse between white folks and black folks. For example, on my paper route, we used to gather—white newspaper boys, black newspaper boys—at the pickup point where the guy dropped off the papers, where we had to get them and fold them. And we'd fold together, and we'd talk. I remember once, we got to talking about track and field, and one white boy asked: "What kind of exercises you guys do in track and field?" We got talking about different kinds of exercises, and one guy says, "What do you run?" I say, "I run the 50-yard dash. What do you run?" "Seventy-five." That kind of exchange was going on. Plus, we could play pickup football games, pickup baseball games.

And I know a lot of the adult black women worked as domestics in white homes, so we had that level of interaction. Then it occurred to me that all this segregation stuff is just crazy. It doesn't make any sense, because the exchange is going on all the time. I remember my older brother; he was taking a correspondence course for the United States Army Air Force. There wasn't any separate Air Force in 1947. And he was taking these exams,

which he would mail in—sort of like online, you know, only then it was the U.S. Post Office. You mail it in; they send you your grade back.

And he passed every exam, and then he got his final letter, which was supposed to tell him where to report for training. The paper was yellow, and then, in black at the bottom of the page, it said: “The U.S. Army Air Force does not accept colored applicants.”

Now, he had passed everything, and that was a real shock. But his attitude was that, “Damn, they just missed a damn good candidate!”

So we went on about our business, but that tells you something of the vagaries and the silliness and stupidity of segregation---and the value of diversity.

Galbiati: I would like to hear more about your experience in the Army. What was your view of the Army—because you were drafted, right?

Long: Oh, yeah.

Galbiati: So what was your view of being drafted, of serving and being forced to serve, before you started?

Long: Well, I have five brothers. Four of them drafted to serve in World War II.

Galbiati: What kind of stories did you hear from them? What did they tell you about the Army?

Long: It was segregated. One was in the all-black 761st Tank Battalion. You heard of that?

Galbiati: No.

Long: World War Two. He was very, very proud of the outfit, even though they were segregated and they were training in Louisiana and Texas, where they were not treated well in the town. Another one of my brothers was in Guadalcanal. He got injured in a truck accident. Another was with the Red Ball Express in Europe. Another was in the U.S. Air Force—trained as a

bombardier. So they had all kinds of stories, sort of like Little Rock. I mean, on the one hand, rigid segregation and silly meanness, but on the other hand, communication. But there was one question, or concern, that all black soldiers had. That was: Why does the United States Army legitimize and practice this foolishness?

Okay, I was drafted in '52—1952. When were you born, by the way?

Galbiati: 1989.

Long: Oh, my Lord! Okay. Truman signed the Desegregation Order for the military in 1948, so by the time I was drafted, it was all integrated---up to a point. In '52, there were no black senior officers, no black admirals, no black generals. Benjamin O. Davis was in World War II, but I think he had passed by then. I took Basic Training in Fort Riley, Kansas. That was integrated. From there, I went to Italy; from there, Austria; from there, Germany. All of it was integrated, all the way up. What spurred on integration and diversity in the Army was the Korean War, because—you know about that, right?

Galbiati: Mm-hm. Well, I don't know about the integration during the Korean War.

Long: Well, tell me about the Korean War. What do you know about it?

Galbiati: Not very much.

Long: Lord!

Galbiati: Well, I know they were talking about using the atomic bomb again, and that caused a lot of—

Long: No, what caused it?

Galbiati: I don't think I know why the Korean War was fought! That's interesting. I just knew it was happening!

It's sort of always tacked onto the end of World War II—between World War II and the Cold War: oh, there was this Korean War.

Long: Well, it happened during the Cold War. June 25, 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea. Korea was divided.

Galbiati: I do know where Korea is.

Long: The 38th Parallel. Everything north of the 38th Parallel was Russia, Communist, whatever. In the south were the United States' spheres of influence—I guess you would say that South Korea was a protectorate. And so they invaded them. This was a very important thing, because Truman was President, and he appealed to the United Nations, saying, “We have to stop this.” This is important, because Italy did the same thing when they invaded Ethiopia, in 1938. He went to the League of Nations, and the League of Nations washed their hands of them. And this was sort of a similar situation, you see? The United Nations responded and said, “Yes.” So the United States, along with thirty-seven other nations, got an armed force together and pushed the Communists back, you see.

At the same time, you see, the Cold War was gathering steam—spheres of influence in Europe, and in the Middle East, and there were worries about things like: “Who’s going to control the resources? the oil?” So the military was in Germany, keeping an eye on the Russians, having contingency plans in case the Russians swarmed over there. We were supposed to go to the Brenner Pass—you know geography?

Galbiati: I know there are mountains in Germany. I don’t know where that is.

Long: The Brenner Pass is a pass in the Alps between Italy and Germany, and we were supposed to guard that so the American citizens could get out. Because, in terms of armament and troops, the Russians outnumbered our forces ten to one, twelve to one---I don’t know---there’s no way we could have stopped them if they decided to do what they wanted to do.

But anyway, to get back to diversity: It was stupid. You just couldn't say: "I'm not going to serve with this guy because he's Turkish," or something like that.

But there was always that sense in your mind: in the United States it's been working all the time underground. Well, it seems that the powers that be do not want to share public space with non-white folks, whether that public space is in the area of jobs, in the area of entertainment, in the area of education, or the military. You see? They don't want to do that.

All right. I'm running in my mouth too much. You had a particular interest, go.

Galbiati: I guess, I would like to hear about your impressions of Europe, while you were serving.

Long: Well, I was there in '52, three, and four, and a lot of it was still recovering from the war. Europeans are friendly. I mean, in Germany. I was on a furlough for 40 days in Mainz-Kastel, and I stayed at a—I don't know what you call it—a place where they took care of young people that were homeless. For lack of a better word, I'll just call it a halfway house. A friend of my brother worked there.

But the young adults weren't on drugs or anything, they were just having a very hard time. They stayed at this place, and they had jobs in Mainz itself. The place was in a suburb of Mainz-Kastel, and the residents did a little work at the place, fixing it up and so on. They were very, very hospitable and nice.

The attitude of most Germans, French, Dutch, and Belgians toward black people was the same as the attitude of most white Americans toward black people. They just shifted gears and stuff. But on another historical level, all these different nationalities I'm naming, they had colonies outside

of Europe, in Africa, and in Asia. And many were anti-Jewish, too. While I was there, I would say the freest country in my opinion was France. Some guys said that the northern countries---Denmark, Norway, Sweden---were cool. But I never did go to Sweden.

Plus, Europe was struggling to knit its economy and political situation back together. And the United States was still underwriting NATO---the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, consisting of thirteen countries in Europe. NATO was facing off the Warsaw Pact---that was the Russians---so the tensions were still there. We had a battalion in Linz, Austria, and we used to run border patrol from Linz to Passau. You know about that?

Galbiati: No. Can you then tell me how it was to come back, to return to the U.S.?

Long: That's where Hitler was born, his birthplace. It stands right on the border of the Warsaw Pact. Czechoslovakia used to run border patrol from Linz to Passau, and our job was to just watch, because refugees were escaping over that route, and we would hear fence crossings and shootings. We were supposed to report on stuff like that. I just say that to indicate that tensions were high, and had been made higher because of the Korean conflict. Okay, the Korean thing was just a feint, and they really wanted to get into Europe, where the resources were. So we were on high alert there for a while.

But anyway, back to what you wanted to know.

Galbiati: Well, so how was it returning to the U.S.? How did you find the U.S. after having been in Europe?

Long: Oh, it was in '54. Things were heating up, with regard to civil rights in '54. As I told you, I'd finished junior college, and I wanted to finish up the last two years, junior and senior. So I went to Knox College. In Galesburg, Illinois.

Galbiati: Why did you choose Knox?

Long: Oh, well, my brother---the one who was a bombardier---was going to the University of Chicago Divinity School. I was discharged in July '54. Now, that's pretty late to be figuring on going to college in September, because I hadn't taken the exams, or anything like that. Now, the dean of the Divinity School, who took a liking to my brother, said, "Well, let me make some phone calls." He called some people, some alumni that he knew in Grinnell, Swarthmore, other places—Knox was among them.

He talked with the chaplain at Knox, who was a graduate from the University of Chicago. The chaplain said: "Yeah, yeah, I think we can do that." And the thing in favor of Knox was that it was the only college he had recommended in Illinois, and I had relatives in Chicago. Otherwise, I didn't know anything about it. Today we have ratings, things like *U.S. News and World Report*, but rating colleges at that time? Forget it. They didn't have it. You had the Ivy Leagues, you had state schools, religious schools, tech schools, and that was about it.

So—I got to go to Knox. That's in Galesburg, Illinois, 141 miles southwest of Chicago. Knox was founded in 1836. I was the twelfth black student to go there. I didn't figure there would be many black people, but I had no idea that I was going to be number twelve. I figured, "Gee whiz! I mean, this is crazy!" So I went there, and I was surprised. Eight hundred students, and me and Smitty and about four black students. Eight hundred to four. So I said: "Well, I'm here. I'm going to be here two years and get my degree and get the hell out of here." And I met some very interesting people there, among the faculty and the student body. I graduated from there in '56 and went to the University of Chicago.

Galbiati: And what were you interested in at Knox? What subjects?

Long: I majored in religion and philosophy, mainly because those were two of the disciplines that had something I felt was interesting to say.

Galbiati: What was that?

Long: I think it was about what is knowledge? How do you know what you know? What is the evidence? That kind of enquiry. And then all this stuff about God, and what's the nature of God, and why does God permit evil, and so on. The faculty and the teachers there reminded me of my teachers in junior high school and high school. They were very sharp but very supportive and patient. Now, I'm not saying the other disciplines were bad. It's just that I was drawn to those two disciplines. Well, it was just really one discipline, because all religion majors had to major in philosophy, too, and philosophy majors had to major in religion.

Knox College is just a wide place in the road. It's only claim to fame is that one of the Lincoln-Douglas debates was held there. Carl Sandberg was born not too far from there. It's thirty miles from Peoria, that big, cosmopolitan area

Galbiati: It sounds as though you already were planning to pursue a higher degree?

Long: Yeah.

Galbiati: What were your goals? Where did you see yourself going in education at that time?

Long: High as I could go. The doctorate.

Galbiati: And why?

Long: I found out I liked the kind of work I was doing. I didn't sit down and say, "I'm going to get a PhD." It's just, "I'll just go as far as—." And the dominant factor was that, as a veteran, I had the GI Bill.

Without that, I couldn't have finished Knox, because I didn't have the money. And then the GI bill also paid for graduate school, up to a point. And

by that time, the economy was picking up, and I had a job—or part-time jobs.

Galbiati: What were you doing?

Long: There were a lot of grants available. Fulbright's and Luce—L-U-C-E. They took an interest in our education. This was the boom time, because, you see, in 1946, 1945, when the war ended, the United States was, economically, the richest of all the Allies. The economic climate really was a boon to manufacturing.

And a lot of things were going on, too: the Civil Rights movement was heating up; the Supreme Court was striking down segregation laws, in terms of education and elsewhere; “Third World” countries were becoming independent---like Ghana, the second independent country in Africa. There was a lot of bubbling going on.

Galbiati: Liberia?

Long: No, no. Liberia was never colonized. It was established in around 1830, whenever President Monroe was president. Because the capital of Liberia is Monrovia, and that was named after President Monroe. There was an issue of what to do with all the slaves after liberation. One of the options was to give them their own country; a reverse colonization, and hence Liberia. And that was a big mess, because slaves that went over there began to set up a class society where they were on top of the indigenous people; as I said, a big mess.

So anyway, these were the kinds of social, economic, and political activities that were going on in the country here. And in some ways this is related to diversity, because if you look at the “wealth of nations” on the map, you see the disparity, and you question: “Why is the all wealth

concentrated in the northern hemisphere, where white folks are, and all the non-wealth in the southern hemisphere, where all the darker people are?”

And so things were changing. Plus the fact that everybody was scared as the dickens of the Communists, without even understanding what the hell that was all about. And then the Third World countries became strategic pawns in this big power struggle. And this whole business of diversity was right in the midst of all this change and upheaval, but neither big power wanted to acknowledge that, you see? So they begin to mess around with it: the Cold War, then the Korea, Supreme Court dilly-dallying, and so on.

Galbiati: Can you tell me more about your master's and your PhD, and the research you did for that? It sounds really interesting.

Long: Okay. I went to the University of Chicago, and got a BD, bachelor of divinity, and then an MA, master of arts in divinity. Now, to go to each one of these echelons, you take a whole series of exams. And in order to get to the doctorate, you have to choose an area or focus or discipline. I chose the history of religions. You know what that is? You ever heard of it?

Galbiati: More or less.

Long: Okay, tell me the more.

Galbiati: This is study, I think, largely focused on Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, but I think it also incorporates a lot of other religions, especially Buddhism and in my lower schooling, we learned about Buddhism, Hinduism.

Long: Yeah, well, you're talking about world religions.

Galbiati: Yes.

Long: All right, now history of religion is much broader. That field considers any religious phenomena, no matter where, when, how, whatever. It includes “primitive” religions, non-literate religions. Okay, you ever heard of Eliade? Mircea Eliade, wrote *Sacred and Profane*?

Galbiati: Oh, okay. I think I read from there for a course.

Long: If you took any religion courses here, you read from him.

Galbiati: Yes.

Long: Anyway, he was at the University of Chicago, and I wrote him a letter saying, “I really like your work, and I’ve decided if you would accept me as your advisee, I would like to study history of religion.” Namely, I wanted to do religion of hunters and gatherers. That’s the oldest culture. More specifically, I wanted to do religion of the Bushmen who live in the Kalahari Desert, and Mbuti pygmies who live in the Congo—both hunters. And he said, “Yes, I’ll do it.” And he was very pleased, because he said, “Of all the students that I’m advising, you’re only the second one who wanted to do religion of the hunters. The rest of them wanted to that highfalutin stuff like Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity.” The other student, a woman, was going to do Australian Aborigines. So anyway, I wrote my PhD thesis on the religion of the hunters, the Bushmen and Mbuti. That’s in the archives in the University of Chicago library, I hope.

Galbiati: And how did that research inform your understanding of the world, and humanity, and philosophy?

Long: Well, since the hunters, we’ve been going downhill. Since the discovery of agriculture, the world has been going to hell in a hand-basket. Yep, yep. There’s been a devolution, not evolution.

Galbiati: How so?

Long: It’s a devolution. Well, just think about it—just a personal, practical point of view. When you are responsible for feeding yourself, you have to mess up the environment in order to do that. And you are messing up something you can’t control. And you are being very risky about the whole thing. In contrast to hunters. Eighty percent of the hunters died, except in the northern

part of the world—Eskimos. Vegetarian: You just dig it up. Just twenty percent of us, meat. You get agriculture, and you can sustain more people, but it's very risky, because you depend upon the climate, rainfall, drought, the elements. If that doesn't work, you're going to have to start messing with the world, in the sense of getting the water where it should go by irrigation, which in turn, you've got to have the labor force to implement. And then you've got to have a central authority in cities. Then you've got to have taxes, and pretty soon it's all messed up. All messed up.

Galbiati: So then did you start teaching before you came to Wesleyan?

Long: Oh, yeah, I was at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. You ever heard of Kalamazoo?

Galbiati: I almost applied to Kalamazoo College.

Long: Hey, that's a good college! It was right in the town. I went there in 1963, and taught there. Came here in 1970.

Galbiati: Did Wesleyan recruit you?

Long: Yes, I was there teaching in the '60s, you see, in the time of the troubles, the riots. Martin Luther King was assassinated in '68, riots were everywhere: Detroit, Kalamazoo, New York, everywhere. The Tet Offensive was happening in Vietnam. All the students were organized---SDS and so on. It was a big mess.

Black Action Movement, that was the name of the student protest group in Western Michigan. BAM: Black Action Movement. I was the faculty advisor. Then, in the middle of all that, I got a call from the chairman of the Religion Department here, and he said, "We're interested in you, why don't you come out and look at us?" And I said, "No, I can't leave right now; there's too much going on here. And furthermore, I don't think I could

leave anyway. It's just too much." He said, "Well, it wouldn't cost you to just come out and look." I said, "No, you've got that right."

At that moment, however, my wife and family—I had two, a girl and a boy—were moving from Michigan to live in Kent, Ohio. I'm flying out; I was going to pick them up on the way back. So they went there to stay with Grandmom and Granddad. I came here. The day that I got here was the same day that they killed those students at Kent State. Now, my in-laws live right on the periphery of the Kent State campus. The National Guard was called out, and their headquarters were right down the street, in the schoolhouse. Anyway, I'm here; I couldn't reach my family. I just heard the shooting—so did everybody—and I said, "I've got to go!" and I took off to go to Kent.

Got to Cleveland. The president of the university had closed the school down, and cordoned it off. Nothing's going in, everything's coming out. I said, "This is crazy. I've got to see my family." But all my legitimate and illegitimate appeals didn't work. Then this guy at the airport said: "You want to go to Kent?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "It's tight there, you can't get in." I said, "Yeah, that's what they tell me." He told me that his cousin was a cab driver, and said, "I'll see what he can do." So his cousin said, "Yeah, I can take you, but not all the way, because they got roadblocks here. But I know a way you could finagle." So we got in the cab and he took me within two blocks of the house, where he said, "This is as far as I can go, because there's a roadblock up there." I said "Okay" and I grab my suitcase. I'm hoofing it down the street; a National Guards guy stopped me and said, "Sorry, sir, this is closed. This is a restricted area. You can't come in." I said, "Look, that's my house right down there. You see the lights on?" He still refused, so I said, "Okay, take me to your commanding officer, please."

So he took to me to his lieutenant; lieutenant took me to the captain; captain took me to the colonel. “No, no, no, no, no.” I said, “Well look, what can you do for me?” He said, “I can put you up in the hotel in town. This curfew---closedown, lockdown---should be over in a couple of days. You can stay there.” I agreed, and when I got to the hotel, the phone connection was okay. I couldn’t call them when I was in the airport; they had cut all the communications.

The kids were fine. They were four and six, and it was a big experience for them—soldiers, guns. But they were fine---and that was a long parenthetical note about me first coming to Wesleyan.

Anyway, I went back to Kalamazoo and I figured that it was too difficult to move. See, after the shootings, most of the schools in Northeast, like Wesleyan, were protesting. Wesleyan was protesting. Trinity was protesting. Quinnipiac was protesting. Yale, Harvard—everyone. So when Professor Swift, who was chairman of the Religion Department, called me back up and urged me to move, I said, “Professor Swift, I really don’t think I’m interested in coming to Wesleyan. It’s just too much.” He said, “Yeah, come on, come on, just look at us. It doesn’t commit you to anything.”

So I did come, and they offered me a job, and I said, “Look, I’ll come for a year. If I don’t like it and you don’t like me, I’m going back.” So I took a leave of absence in 1970, came to Wesleyan for the year, and the department was very, very good.

So anyway, that’s how I got here. Nobody in the department was teaching courses in religion of hunters, agriculturalists, nomads, African-American religions. The chairman of the department, who taught American religions—he and I team-taught together, American religions, black, white, and red. Also, I started up an African Studies program. The whole

University was changing. I mean, back then in the 1970s I wouldn't have recognized the Wesleyan University of today.

CG: First, I forgot to ask—how did you meet your wife?

Long: In college.

Galbiati: At Knox?

Long: Yeah. She's from Minnesota—St. Paul. Our son went to Macalester. In fact, he's out there now, teaching—not in Macalester, but teaching school in St. Paul. Second grade.

Galbiati: You said you wouldn't recognize the school. What was it like when you got here?

Long: Well, Usdan wasn't here. The Mocon was operating. Downey House, where it was—it wasn't on Mount Vernon.

Galbiati: Did they move the house?

Long: No, they didn't move the house. It was just located on the corner of High and Court. The dining room was downstairs, and it used to serve the same functions, pretty much, as Usdan.

Galbiati: Interesting.

Long: There was more diversity here at that time. There were American Indians, some from the northeast, some from the west. I think there was almost a male/female gender parity, because they had just let you women folks in here in '71. And I think that in '73, you were, what, 49.2 percent. Then it dipped again, but for a while it looked like it was more women than men, but I'm not sure. See, I retired in '97, so I've been out of the loop.

Galbiati: I think now it's like 60 percent women.

Long: Oh, my Lord, you women have taken over!

The African American faculty has—right now, I don't think has as many as at other times. I think that back in the mid-'70s there were more---

in different departments, too. I don't think there are any African American faculty in Division Three, the natural sciences. But I'm not sure.

Galbiati: Yeah, I was thinking about that. I can't think of any, and I worked in the Hall-Atwater building.

Long: There was a very, very vibrant Center for African American Studies. It's not as vibrant as it was.

Galbiati: So what made it vibrant?

Long: I don't know. I'll go back to what you mentioned earlier, when we were talking about history and historical forces. You had the Black Panthers, and for a time the University used to offer a breakfast program, and school programs. The University was more involved, dynamically, on the cutting edge of things—visibly so. Students were very, very, very active, and sometimes doing stupid things, but there was lot of energy, and new ideas on the table. And the faculty was more willing to take risks, in terms of challenging the administration to do things differently, or to do new things.

Galbiati: Like what?

Long: Well, one was to push the Board of Trustees to divest our money from South Africa. The second one was to work locally. When I first came here, there was a black Baptist church on the other side of Washington Street: Shiloh Baptist. I think it burned down in '74. Now, they rebuilt it on Butternut Street. I think the University was instrumental in supporting it, and not only financially. Now, Cross Street AME Zion has always been involved with Wesleyan, since its inception. You know about Cross Street?

Galbiati: A little bit.

Long: The University was very, very supportive of Cross Street relocating to where it is now, across the street from Snow School on Wadsworth, you know where that is?

Galbiati: Yes, I've been there.

Long: They had a very active Head Start program, which I gather is still active. Very active Upward Bound program.

Galbiati: Can you tell me more about Middletown? You moved to Middletown, right? Or were you living in Middletown when you first came? Where were you living?

Long: Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Galbiati: No, but when you first—?

Long: I was commuting from Kalamazoo! [Laughs]

Galbiati: I know professors commute from New York. I think Kalamazoo seems a little—a little much.

Long: Too far-fetched. Yeah, we moved here.

Galbiati: And so what was Middletown like when you got here? How did you find it?

Long: Small town-ish. In some ways, it was sort of dominated by Wesleyan, because Wesleyan is institutionally known throughout Middlesex County. The city itself was more vibrant. It had four movie theaters; can you imagine that? In this little, doohickey town. For lack of a better term, it was sort of quaint. I think—but I'm not sure about this—that the majority of folks in Middletown are Sicilians who migrated from one small village in Sicily.

Galbiati: Wow!

Long: Now, when we came here in 1970, the word was that when a Sicilian child reached a certain age, marriageable age, he or she went back to that same town for their bride or groom. That's what I mean by quaint.

Wesleyan had three "zones of occupation--A, B, and C." We stayed on Brainerd Avenue, which was in the "A" zone. People two houses down from us were Sicilian, the Russo family. People across the street, the

Zamittis, they were Sicilian. They had kids our kids' age that played together. But at that time, Brainerd and Home avenues were more integrated class-wise—that is, Middletown people, as well as University people, and so on. I don't think that's the case now.

Galbiati: Not on those streets.

Long: Because we moved to Brennan, across the ravine, and driving down Brainerd, we saw they cut all those big trees down. Most of the houses are University houses.

At that time it was a mixture of Middletown people, faculty, and students, so the complexion and the demography has changed a lot. Okay, as I said before, the Center for African American Studies was vibrant--- though I don't know whether they could major in African Studies or not then.

Galbiati: Not African, African American.

Long: African American, okay.

Galbiati: At some point later, I'm going to get to African Studies, because that seems to have disappeared.

Long: Now—I haven't made a statistical study of this—there are quite a few Asian students here. I don't know what percentage of the student body it is, but, just driving around, there seem to be more.

Galbiati: Especially on this street, I think, because the Asian American house is right across from this house.

Long: I see. Okay.

Galbiati: So how did you feel about bringing your kids to Middletown, and having this be their hometown?

Long: My children?

Galbiati: Yes. Did they go to public school?

Long: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Galbiati: How were the schools?

Long: Oh, it was good. It was good. They had this sort of one room schoolhouse. It was Stillman, right down here, off High Street. You know where that Lutheran church used to be?

Galbiati: I don't know.

Long: They changed the building. It's no longer a church---or maybe it is. Anyway, the block right before that, down the hill, used to be Stillman School. Now, it's no longer Stillman School. Both our kids went there, and it was a very wonderful small town school. From there, they went to the middle school, Snow School, right across the street from Cross Street Church up on Wadsworth. And they had a good time. It was a nice neighborhood; they could go out and play, and we had no worries about their being safe. I was concerned about the number of black people in the neighborhood, but we went to a black church, so that took care of that.

What I was disappointed in was the lack of black faculty in the public schools, and the faculty there didn't seem to encourage the black students to go to college. They didn't keep track, in my judgment—not as vigorous as I'd have liked to have seen them. For example, if we didn't go up to school and push our kids' teachers about "I want my children to be taking this Latin and this advanced subject," they wouldn't push it. They would say: "Oh, he should go play football and basketball," which is okay, but there are more options out there than that, you know?

But I said Wesleyan dominated Middletown—Pratt Whitney and Wesleyan. You know Pratt Whitney?

Galbiati: I don't think so.

Long: Airplane manufacturers, Pratt Whitney. Aircraft industry.

Galbiati: I don't think I've ever heard of it before.

Long: Come on, Colorado! Come on, you got to do better than that! You never heard of Pratt Whitney?

Galbiati: No.

Long: Look it up.

Galbiati: I'll look it up.

Long: Yeah. Get on your computer and look on Google. It had a plant out here, in Middletown: Pratt Whitney, CVH—Connecticut Valley Hospital, Wesleyan. I would say those are the three big industries. The rest were small industries. It was quaint also in the sense of views from the Connecticut River, which is very, very nice and very beautiful. And hey, Lyman Orchard. Our kids used to go up there to pick apples. So, all that makes it a nice place to raise kids. You had the church and the nice schools, and great surroundings.

Galbiati: How did Middletown view Wesleyan at the time? What was your impression of that?

Long: [Sighs] I don't know. I know, but I don't know, in the sense that it changes a lot. Offhand, it was sort of like Wesleyan's the big house, and they the field hands. On the one hand, they identified with it, but the class thing was there. The image was Ivy League, and then when, back in '68 or '67, Wesleyan had the largest endowment of a school that size, because they sold Xerox, they built Wesleyan Hills. And they put oodles of money into Wesleyan, doing all kinds of things that were exorbitant—I mean, planting full-grown trees; things that were sort of imprudent. Anyway, they just extended the gap between the haves and the have-nots. But, academically, Wesleyan had a very good reputation. William Manchester, the novelist who wrote a series of books on Winston Churchill. He taught in the English Department here; lived on Pine Street.

One of the guys who went to high school with me, went to Dunbar, was named William Jeffers. He worked for a lab out in California on quality control. Now, when the United States decided to go to the moon, they farmed out a lot of jobs to different places. Wesleyan's lab was supposed to make some piece of machinery to go into the rockets. William Jeffers got the job of going around to different places, checking out this piece of machinery. Anyway, Wesleyan had this thing; that's why he came to Wesleyan, and we reconnected. Now, this was very interesting to me because I could see MIT, some big technological school, getting this assignment. But little old, itty bitty Wesleyan's reputation was such that it had an important part in this NASA project!

Now, that's just an example of the kind of reputation Wesleyan had garnered---which was way beyond commensurate for a school this size But it deserves it. I mean, there are some really powerful people here. And the thing I like about it is that it's commitment to education, which I hope it never loses, is solid.

Okay, what else you got? Because I got to be getting out of here.

Galbiati: All right. What time do you have to go?

Long: Well, that phone call I got, I took my car to get fixed, and they called to tell me it's ready.

Galbiati: Oh, that's good.

Long: Yeah. That's why I asked you if you had a car, because I was going to hitch a ride from you, but you don't have a car.

Galbiati: I've got a bike.

Long: [Laughs] I ain't into riding out here. What else? But quickly.

Galbiati: Okay. So how did you view yourself as a member of the community?

Were you active outside of Wesleyan? How were you involved?

Long: I joined a church, got involved with a community group, PTA, stuff like that.

Galbiati: The church was the Cross Street one, right?

Long: Well, first I went to Shiloh Baptist, and then changed. I joined AME Zion, and my wife and kids went to South Congregational Church, on the green.

Galbiati: And so what was your involvement with—?

Long: I teach Sunday school, adult Sunday school class. You ought to come. Eight-thirty.

Galbiati: On Sunday?

Long: Every Sunday. AM.

Galbiati: I'm out of town this week and next week, but maybe in a few weeks I'll try to go.

Long: You out of town?

Galbiati: Yeah, I'm going to Boston next weekend.

Long: Oh! Going to Boston? For what?

Galbiati: For a funk festival. Music and dancing.

Long: Well, when you come back. Okay, what else? Next question.

Galbiati: I read somewhere that you were on the NAACP Education Committee. What did your involvement in that look like?

Long: Well, I was trying to get the schools, public schools, to incorporate learning about African American history as an organic, generic part of American history, and not just having a special month. All right to have a special month, but that shouldn't take the place of it being part of the curriculum. That, and also just overhauling the materials---just seeing what the dropout rates for African American kids were, and what we could do about it, that kind of thing. That's what I was involved in—with, in, by, for, whatever.

Galbiati: And do you think that, in terms of teaching African American history, it improved in the Middletown public schools?

Long: No.

Galbiati: No?

Long: No, you can't get initiative like that to just happen, you need in-depth pushing. You need the superintendent and the faculty and the parents to get involved, and it needs to be monitored, involvement like that. And the push was never sustained. Never happened. Then it just slacked back to where it was before. The only thing that sustains their interest in African Americans is athletics. They can tell you how many black kids that went to UConn, and from UConn to pro ball, and so on. But they can't tell you how many went to college and graduated. Follow the money.

Galbiati: I think that could be all for now. Thank you.

Long: Okay, well, thank you.

Galbiati: And I think I'm supposed to say at the end of the recording also that this was an interview—one of however many—with Professor Jerome Long on April 17th, 2012.

[End of Interview]