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## Jerome Long Oral History Interview, Apr. 30, 2012

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Interview Three with Dr. Jerome Long by Chandra Galbiati, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, April 30, 2012.

CHANDRA GALBIATI: This is an interview with Dr. Jerome Long on April 30th, 2012. Since we stopped last time, I have been meaning to ask you about the need-blind admissions. When you were talking about the divestment, I believe you said that was one of the things the University feared was divestment would mean they would have to be sacrificed.

JEROME LONG: I didn't say that.

Galbiati: No, well, that's what I gathered from my research. I was wondering if you were involved at all in that process?

Long: Okay, you had a divestiture committee that had students on it, I think, and some faculty. I was one of the faculty that supported divesting from South Africa. I was not the only faculty member that took that stand. Now, the other hand, I don't remember that if we cut back on divestment we'd have to get rid of need-blind admissions in exchange or anything.

Galbiati: I see. So they were just two things that happened around the same time?

Long: Right, right.

Galbiati: So tell me more about your experience on the committee.

Long: I wasn't on the committee. I say I supported the efforts of the committee.

Galbiati: Okay, you just supported the divestment.

Long: Let's see; who was on that committee? Dick Ohman, in English Department. He's retired now; he left the University, but he still is involved in University matters. He and a group of teachers from New England meet here once a month; they're called the Radical Teachers Association, or something like that. And Rich Slotkin knows more about the committee than I did; I wasn't here when it was set up. He could tell you more about it, and who's still

around that might remember. Also, another guy—he's about 500 years old---  
Bob Rosenbaum.

Galbiati: I think that one of my classmates is interviewing Professor Rosenbaum, or was, unless he just got sick. I know he was one of the people that we were talking about interviewing.

Long: You know that for a fact?

Galbiati: Yeah.

Long: Yeah, he's got a wealth of information. He is an institution. He's about 98, but sharp as a tack, so try to contact him. He knows where all the bodies are buried, and the shovels to dig them up. [Laughs]

Galbiati: Do you remember anything about the need-blind admissions struggle?

Long: Just snippets, bits and pieces. I remember that President Campbell said that no student that we admit to Wesleyan can be refused admission because of money. This was backed up by Dean Cunningham—who at that time was a dean of financial aid or whatever. Also, many of the first class, the first critical mass of black students—class of '69—I think, a lot of them came in with scholarships, or need-blind admissions, or some definite form of help, because Wesleyan is an expensive school.

Galbiati: Yeah.

Long: I mean, it's competitive in terms of its sister schools: Yale, Harvard, whatever. When I came here in 1970, Wesleyan had gotten a lot of endowment funds from the sale to Xerox, and I think that in some kind of crazy way the stock market zoomed up and doubled, tripled, quadrupled, whatever. But anyway, Wesleyan was suddenly touted as being the richest school per student of the Ivies. So part of this largesse went toward need-blind admission, among other things, like—oh, Wesleyan Hills. You know about Wesleyan Hills? The University bought property out on the edge of

town for faculty and regular commercial housing. They also did a lot of building on campus. Science Center and so on.

Galbiati: And—what do you remember about student and faculty reactions when they cut need-blind admissions?

Long: The faculty as a whole didn't too much like it, simply because if you cut need-blind admissions, you're going to compromise the diversity of the student body and the diversity of the faculty. And that would force you to change the configuration of your curriculum, among other things.

Galbiati: How so?

Long: Well, that means a lot of students who would have come here on scholarship aid would now have to struggle to pay. And so this would mean that you would have to accommodate them, accommodate the students in various ways. There's no point in giving them heavy academic loads that they couldn't carry, because they would have to have extra paying jobs on campus, and stuff like that. That's what I mean. Do you understand what I'm saying?

CG: Oh, yes.

Long: Okay.

Galbiati: Do you remember student reactions at all?

Long: Oh, they didn't like it. [Laughs] No, they were writing letters in the *Argus* and *Hermes*—you know about *Hermes*, right? Well, the talk among the faculty was that one of them was trying to find out who could out-liberalize the other one. [Laughs] And this was a built-in cause for both of them.

But again, Chandra, in the context of what we talking about—late '60s and the '70s—what we're talking about didn't happen in isolation. There was so much activity going on. Women had just been admitted as a critical mass in the student body.

Galbiati: Yeah, I don't think I got to ask you much about that. What was your impression?

Long: Well, when I came here, women were already on campus. By 1970, they had reached critical mass. Women came here in, I think, '68, so they had already made a firm footprint. Some departments, some divisions, particularly the Division Three, for example—the Physics Department—I think they were one of the last departments that hired women on the faculty. They would make excuses: “Well, we can't find any women, and we can't find any Jews,” even though the percentage of Jewish students and of faculty, was—well, there were more Jewish PhDs in physics than either Protestants or Catholics. I'm reading it to you, and Wesleyan is saying, “We can't find any.” That was crazy—insane. Made no sense.

Galbiati: What was the Religion Department like, in terms of that?

Long: I was the first African American tenured here. I think they had had African Americans give lectures and stuff like that. Martin Luther King was here; he got an honorary degree. African Americans had made a distinct presence here in the Music Department, and then there was, I think, an African American in Sociology, and in English. But I don't know whether they were tenure track or not, or whether they were adjunct professors or something like that. The Department of Religion was one of the few departments that spearheaded hiring African Americans. I think maybe American Studies and English were the next ones. Maybe Sociology and Theater was the third tier. I don't know about the strike and all that. I think Music was probably dominant in that effort. And Music is funny, because they have so many visiting adjunct professors. And when you look at all the black faces over there, you assume that they are regular tenure-track faculty; then somebody says, “No, they're adjunct.”

Galbiati: And they've also been here a long time, some of them.

Long: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And that makes a big difference, politically and academically. I forget what the percentage of African American faculty was in the '80s or the '90s. North College could probably tell you.

Galbiati: Yeah, I'm sure.

Long: And they'd probably break it down, too, in terms of departments.

Galbiati: Do you remember when they reinstated need-blind admissions?

Long: I don't—I'm not sure. Let me get this straight, because I don't want you saying something that's not factually correct. I don't ever think they just wiped it out. I think they lessened the amount of the budget that would be directed to that. But you should check all this stuff out. Rosenbaum would know.

Galbiati: They—well, they didn't cut financial aid, but they used to say: "When we're going to admit a student, we don't pay attention to how much aid they need." Now, they say, "When we're determining, we have to calculate differently. They say: "We can only do so much, we have to choose our aid students carefully, because we can only admit so many students who need assistance."

Long: Yeah, they put a cap on it.

Galbiati: Right now, they say, "Okay, we have admissions over here and financial aid over here, and they don't talk."

Long: Mm-hm, mm-hm, mm-hm.

Galbiati: But you don't remember when they reinstated it? Because it's in place at the moment, but now they're talking about cutting it again.

Long: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's all very complicated, because Wesleyan doesn't control the stock market, and an environment is created in such a way that something's got to give. I mean, they can't continue to do what they had

been doing—unless your grandfathers are going to give us \$6 billion or something!

Galbiati: Unfortunately, my grandfather is not Bill Gates.

Long: [Laughs] Well, they'll do something, something—maybe a repetition of Xerox. We'll see what happens.

Galbiati: How did you decide to retire?

Long: How?

Galbiati: What made you decide at that point? It was '96?

JL: '97. Well, I'd been teaching since 1963. '73, '83, '93, plus seven years—that's 37 years. I figured I had done my bit. Plus, the leadership of the University was changing—the president and top administrators and more—and we had hopes and visions of increasing the black presence in—well, in blackening the university, let's put it that way. And three or four years before I decided to retire, this was not going as expeditiously as I had hoped it would.

Galbiati: How come?

Long: Resistance on the part of certain departments. The other thing I was sort of disappointed in was that we were not recruiting students in as diverse an atmosphere as I would have liked. We didn't send anybody in the South, for example, and only a very few to the Midwest and so on. I mean, there are no white students here, for example, from Appalachia. There are no black students—very few—from the South. And this, in turn, affects the climate of instruction and so much more on the campus. So I decided, well, I'd put my time in gray, as they say in the service. Time to move on. Time to let somebody else teach, bring in younger people. They've got new ideas. Stuff like that.

Galbiati: So what was the process of retiring like,?

Long: There's no process. You just—as they say, you just put your papers in [laughs], and it automatically goes forward. I mean, there's no big excitement.

Galbiati: Were you involved at all in the process to replace yourself in your department? Was that a duty?

Long: Well no, it's tricky. I mean, once you decide to retire, then you usually talk it over with the department, and that's the level on which you say, "Well, will my courses be taken over? Will you replace me with somebody different?" The biggest thing about retirement for the departments is that they don't want to lose the slot, you see, and so they said: "No, we're going to keep the slot, and reconfigure the courses," something like that. And then often a big brouhaha would happen.

Take places in the sciences, for example—if you're working on an experiment or project, and it takes about six years to complete, and then you up and retire, and your team retires. Then you're in big trouble, see, because you got to finish your project. On the undergraduate level, you're not doing that kind of research, you see? I mean, you're not doing anything that can't be picked up, because you're not at such an elevated technical level where the students are concerned. It would be like—it'd be like if you retired, okay? And Mr. McMann---is that his name? The man who's running this program?

Galbiati: McCann.

Long: McCann. Okay. Let's say you say: "I've got this fabulous grant; I've got to go to Spain for five years," or something. You know, he just gets somebody else to pick up. But if he was in the midst of writing a work with six volumes, and you're essential to the project, you're on volume three, he would say, "Oh, my Lord, you can't do that." That kind of thing. But that

doesn't happen. It might cause a brouhaha if you were doing something with language, linguistics and stuff like that. But no, it's rarely a problem.

Galbiati: So what have you been doing since?

Long: Well, I'm on the School Readiness Council in Middletown. That's the program in which we advocate for a pre-kindergarten, and connect from pre-K to grade six. So we fuss and fight to try to get resources—public resources. I teach Sunday school. I'm working on a couple of projects, and I'll probably be working on them for the next 40 years. [Laughs]

Galbiati: What are the projects?

Long: Well, to put an umbrella on it, it's the treatment of African Americans in the military, specifically in World War Two, and that involves, before they all die out, interviewing them. That involves going to archives down in Washington, DC, and all over. And once you open a can of worms like that, you get excited about how these men were treated in World War One, and World War Two, and all the wars. So it's just fun, and frustrating, and good. And what do you want to do with all this stuff?

Galbiati: This information?

Long: No, what do you want to do with your life?

Galbiati: I think I'm going to try to be a teacher.

Long: What do you want to teach?

Galbiati: Probably high school English.

Long: Oh, yeah, you mentioned that.

Galbiati: Possibly little kids.

Long: Uh-huh. You want to teach writing, or literature, or both?

Galbiati: I like literature. I think I could also teach writing.

Long: Mm-hm. What era of literature you like, and what kind?

Galbiati: I like contemporary literature the best, I think, but I enjoy Enlightenment-era literature until—probably anything from the 17th century onward. But especially 20th century.

Long: Who are your favorite authors?

Galbiati: Mark Twain. Mm. I really like some contemporary ones. Let's see if I can remember names. I'm going blank.

Long: You read any African American novelists?

Galbiati: I mean, some.

Long: Who? Baldwin? Ellison?

Galbiati: Ellison. Oh, I loved Ellison.

Long: Yeah, that's good.

Galbiati: And DuBois and—I'm just blanking on names.

Long: Richard Wright?

Galbiati: Wright, yes.

Long: Jimmy Baldwin? Ernest Gaines?

Galbiati: Possibly Baldwin. I don't think I've read Gaines. There's another big one, though, but I'm blanking.

Long: Langston Hughes?

Galbiati: Langston Hughes. I love Langston Hughes.

Long: What level would you like to teach? College, or high school?

Galbiati: Probably high school. I think I would love to teach college, but I also know that the employment scene is very, very, very, very competitive right now.

Long: Well, you couldn't talk about teaching until you got a graduate degree, right?

Galbiati: Yes.

Long: And that would take two, three years.

Galbiati: But maybe things have changed. A PhD would take even longer than that.

Long: How are your languages? You know any other language?

Galbiati: I know French pretty well. I haven't used it in a while. I was sort of proficient in Arabic at the end of last summer, because I spent the summer in Palestine.

Long: Where did you learn Arabic?

Galbiati: Partially here. Partially when I went abroad in Morocco. And then partially last summer—

Long: Well, what were you doing in Morocco?

Galbiati: Learning Arabic!

Long: No, from high school, or—?

Galbiati: No, no, no. During college; I took a semester abroad.

Long: Oh, I see.

Galbiati: My classes were mostly in English, but we had three hours of Arabic language every day, and we lived in host families, and so I spoke a lot of French, but I also learned a lot of Arabic.

Long: Did you take Islam as a course?

Galbiati: Not specifically. In high school, we did a little dabbling, and there were classes in both history and culture.

Long: When you went to Morocco, did you study Islam?

Galbiati: We did; we had a history and culture course that had Islam in it.

Long: I see.

Galbiati: But---I've never read the Koran.

Long: But you did go on the hajj?

Galbiati: No, I didn't do that. [Laughs]

Long: I see. Okay. Now, what is the next step in this process?

Galbiati: I think I take the tapes to Professor McCann, who is working on how we're going to get them transcribed, and then I'll bring the printed copies back. Actually, I have a feeling that we'll be gone by the time they get the transcriptions, so they'll probably be sent to you.

Long: Does this become part of a volume, or series of interviews?

Galbiati: They go into the Archives at the library.

Long: What will it be called?

Galbiati: I think it's going to be "The Wesleyan Oral History Project." They're going to work on getting more and more interviews with many different professors.

Long: I see.

Galbiati: And so this semester we'll have five, and then next semester they'll maybe have five more.

Long: Will McMann try to see that you interviewers have more background information and stuff like that?

Galbiati: I sure hope he won't. It was—

Long: No, can you tell me if that is a part of the process?

Galbiati: We sort of did a lot of background. I mean, there's a lot more I could have done, obviously, but we did study background about the history of Wesleyan, and the various eras in its history and—

Long: Well, look, the names that I gave you last time—Ron McMullen, Judith MacRae—

Galbiati: McMullen, MacRae—yeah.

Long: Also Carl Sheibe, he's the director of the Wasch Center for Retired Faculty.

Galbiati: What I'm probably going to do is give those names to Professor McCann and say, "Maybe next semester, if somebody wants to interview these people, or if you want—"

Long: Also the first director of CAAS is Oliver Holmes. He's in the History Department here.

CG: Thank you for your advice, and for agreeing to work on this project. It's been really fascinating for me.

JL: Best of luck to you.

[End of Interview]