

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU History

Black Student Experience project

OH 2254

JAMI LATOYA GREEN

Interviewed by

Tilisia Williams

on

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YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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Interviewee: Jami Latoya Green

Interviewer: Tilisia Williams

Subject: YSU History - Black Student Experience

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TW: This is an interview with Jami Green for the Youngstown State University project on the Black Student Experience. This interview is being conducted using WebEx. Today's date is July 5th, 2023 and my name is Tilisia Williams. So, where are you from? Where did you grow up?

JG: I'm from East Liverpool Ohio, which is about 40-45 minutes from Youngstown. My mom moved from Pennsylvania when I was two and I've been in Ohio for my whole life.

TW: And what do you remember about your neighborhood that you grew up in? What are some childhood memories you have?

JG: You know we have like a little community. It was small. It's definitely a smaller city, so when I was growing up at least, it was the kind of community where kids can play outside all day and just do fun stuff. There were definitely a lot more things to do back then like block parties and they had a lot of stuff in the summertime and around the community for the kids. It wasn't a bad upbringing in the area. It wasn't as much as there is in some of the bigger cities to do but I still have good memories.

TW: Are you a first-generation college student in your family?

JG: Actually no. It's kind of hard to even pinpoint it because I have older brothers and sisters. So I know my sister did go to college too. I have a brother that's a year older than me, so he did everything first right before me. He went to college and played basketball, so I got to see everything- the whole experience. Like the year before it was my turn, I got to go through it with him.

TW: Did that influence you wanting to go to college later?

JG: I definitely would say so, because like I said a lot of people in our family had went to college prior. So I think it was just a thing for us to go that route at the time. There wasn't really any other [option]. Like right now, I know a lot of kids are doing technical school and different things. But back then, it was more like you just graduated and you went to college.

TW: What made you decide to come here to YSU?

JG: I remember when I was little, from a young age, even though we lived in East Liverpool, my mom always went to Boardman and Youngstown for EVERYTHING. So to me, I felt like that was somewhere that was close to home, but it was bigger than where I was from. And, you know, there was a lot more ethnicity, like people from my background that lived in the area. So I think my final decision was based upon just being close to home and, you know, some of those other factors.

TW: What was your freshman year of college like here? What did you major in?

JG: When I first went to school, I want to say that I probably was trying to major in psychology because I remember I wanted to be a child psychologist when I graduated. And my first year of school was awesome. Like everything about my experience was definitely great and a lot of good things happened, even before the school. We'll talk about that later too. I know some of the other things that you're gonna ask me. But even before I officially started as a college student, I was introduced to YSU. So I kinda had a head start, I would say, from everybody else on the college experience.

TW: You got an associates degree in arts, correct?

JG: Yeah, that was my first degree, was associate in arts. And then I got a bachelor of general studies in sociology and nonprofit management. And then now I have also a master's degree in nonprofit management for human services as well.

TW: All at the same university or at different universities?

JG: Associates and bachelor's [degrees] were from YSU. And then I went to Capella University online for my master's degree.

TW: Were there any important faculty here at YSU? Anybody who influenced you or mentored you while you went to school here?

JG: Definitely. We always called her Miss Dorothy. She was in charge of the summer bridge program at the time, or she was one of the main people for it. And she definitely was a major

influence because she helped us get started with everything and just introduced us to the college and all of that. Then there was Mr. [William] Blake. I remember he was in the... I want to say there was a department for African-American students [Office of Diversity], and he was over that. He was a big help. We could go to any time for things. I worked at the Williamson College of Business as a student assistant pretty much the whole time that I was at YSU, under Dr. Ann McMahon. I see now she even has a scholarship under her name. But she was probably my biggest influencer because she taught me so much while I was there.

TW: What kind of things did she teach you? What was your experience?

JG: Other than her just being a business professor, she had done a lot with diversity. She would have these campaigns and different projects with diversity, and I worked a lot on those projects. She not only taught me how to be an assistant and learn different things about how the professors work and stuff like that, but she also took me to [events]. I remember going to some of the projects that she would have, and just assisting her at those different events. I remember one time we went to GM [General Motors in Lordstown]. The big factory that was over there. I think they shut down. But we went there for a breakfast. I remember helping her get everything prepared for that. Then we went to a Dr. Martin Luther King breakfast in Warren. I remember Mom went with us. It was just awesome. It was a very good experience. I got to do a lot of things with her. She was a white lady, you know. I'm a Black student. She was a white lady, but she was very into diversity and equality and all that. So that's where I learned a lot about that from her.

TW: You mentioned a lot of events that you did and a lot of different things that you contributed to and participated in while you were a student here. What were some of your favorite things to participate in?

JG: The program that I was talking about was the summer bridge program. I don't know if they still have that, but I definitely did that the summer before we started my freshman year. And I feel like that just was one of the best programs that they could offer. It took a group of, I think we were all African- American students, and they put us in a dorm for a week. And we did leadership type of things. We did [activities] where we had to get to know each other, like communication type of roles. I remember we went to some military type [place]. I don't know if it was like a special place they had out there, like the ROTC place or something, but they took us there and we just did different activities. So, that was definitely a good memory for me. And I believe we like got to sit in on classes and stuff like that too.

TW: As a college student, there are often times a lot of places on campus that you consider your own where you feel the most comfortable. Where was that place for you on campus?

JG: Other than my dorm room: I stayed in Kilcawley [House] and I stayed in Lyden [House]. I also got the chance to be one of the first ones to stay in the Courtyard Apartments. So, all of those places felt like my own. And of course, Kilcawley Center and the dining hall... common areas like that always felt like a place where you can just go and feel comfort. You can meet up with your friends or whoever, your family and just feel comfortable.

TW: What was it like to be one of the first students to stay in the Courtyard Apartments?

JG: I think back then it was just like we were all excited because it was something new. And we were getting to be a part of that. Now, as I look back on it and how the campus has just evolved so much since then... There's so many other new apartments. It's just like we were the first ones that actually got to experience that, when they were transitioning and starting to build something new. But those apartments were very nice. I met a lot of good roommates. One of my roommates has been my best friend for years. She's helped me get a position for employment at a time. We've just been close ever since then. I met her my freshman year in the dorms. Then we ended up being roommates in the Courtyards because you could choose who you wanted to be roommates with. We met two other girls that we lived with, and the whole experience was just nice.

TW: Where you at YSU when the Rec Center opened?

JG: I believe I probably was at the end. I probably was just heading out of college, so I wasn't really going over there that much. But I remember at the time we were mostly still going to Stambaugh [Stadium].

TW: Okay, and Stambaugh was like, at that time, kind of like a Rec Center for you guys? Before the actual one?

JG: Yeah, we would go because I played basketball in high school and stuff like that. So I know me and some of my friends would go over there and play basketball, or watch some of the other people in the gym. That was pretty much the main area that I knew everybody went to do sports activities back then. I don't even think they had the outside soccer [field] that's over there [now]. I don't think they had all that when we were back then.

TW: Did you play basketball while in college?

JG: I didn't play for college. We would just meet up. There will be other people over there that would be playing and we would just have pickup games.

TW: What kind of people did you meet during those experiences?

JG: I don't even remember if we ever really kept in touch with any of them. I just remember one random game for instance where we met these other girls. They may have been on the basketball team because they were really tall. But me and my other two friends, we were close. One girl I had met while at school. The other girl I had went to high school with and we were roommates when we initially came [to YSU]. And we just met the girls there. I know the three of us: one was half Black and half white, and me and my friend were Black. And then the other three girls were white, but they were like so tall! They were way, way taller than us. And it was just awesome. Like I remember we had a really good time, you know.

TW: You said you stayed in the Lyden House while you were here on campus. Were you an Honor student? Was it an Honors dorm at that time?

JG: No, Cafaro was the main Honors dorm I think at that time. And Lyden was just a regular dorm. But a lot of people thought Lyden and Cafaro were much better than Kilcawley. I actually got to experience all of them. And I mean, the layout was newer, so it [Lyden] was nicer. But Kilcawley always felt like a home because everybody was there and you had Kilcawley Center. You could just go downstairs and be there.

TW; Yeah, that's interesting because now Lyden is an Honors dorm. It's only for the Honors students- that and Cafaro.

JG: Yeah.

TW: Did you feel connected to a larger community, outside of college? You mentioned earlier how you guys [Dr. McMahon] were going all over the place doing a whole bunch of different events when you worked as an assistant. Did you feel connected to a larger community outside of college?

JG: Well, because I was doing the nonprofit management, I think that was kind of a new thing too, back then. There was a group called American Humanics, a society group that we were in. I remember we had to go to D.C. for a weekend. And that was awesome. I met a celebrity while we were there. We had to go to all these different types of conferences and stuff. So I met people from everywhere. I think they were all college students, of course. I met a lot of different students at that conference I remember. It was just a really good experience. I like to socialize. I don't really have social anxiety, but I meet a lot of people that do. And I think for people that do, it was a good experience for them to kind of be able to break out of their shell and just get to know other people and different viewpoints from the world.

TW: You were a full-time student at that time, correct?

JG: Mhm.

TW: Did you have time to volunteer in the community and participate in community work?

JG: I know we had to do volunteer activities for a lot of the programs that I was in, especially like that American Humanics. I remember us going to the Boys and Girls Club. I can't remember what else we had to do, but I do remember going to the Boys and Girls Club a couple times.

TW: YSU is a PWI- a predominantly white institution. Did you ever feel, not out of place, but did you feel welcomed and belonged here at YSU?

JG: Yeah, I never had that issue because, and I really honestly believe it was because I went to that summer bridge program. So the group of people that we met, even though I might not stay close to everybody, we always had that group. We always had that group of people. So it was never like we felt alone, because you knew *somebody* that was like you. And then of course, with me coming from here and my roommate, my first roommate being one of my best friends from home. And we were both African American and that, of course, made me feel comfortable. And she was there for as long as I could remember. And then I just met a bunch of other people from everywhere. Honestly, I cannot remember a time when I felt racism or anything like that around campus.

TW: Upon graduating, do you feel as though YSU prepared you? Do you feel like they provided the correct tools that you needed to have a successful life and career after college?

JG: I do in most cases, but of course the world evolved so much since then, so you kind of just had to be up on technology. You had to kind of be prepared for everything yourself, because there was no way for everybody to know. When I was in school, we had social media, but it was nothing like it is now. So, it changed. I don't even know if it might have been like, as soon as I was getting out of school, Facebook was coming out. Instagram and all that, it's so different now.

TW: What was a typical day like being a full-time college student who stayed on campus? You seem like more of a traditional student. You're not a non-traditional student. So what was a typical day like for you as a traditional student?

JG: Basically, just make sure you get up and make it to class, especially those first years when they put you in those 8 AM classes. You just got to push yourself to get up. I had a good mother. She was my backbone. So she made sure I was going to succeed whatever I do. But some people just didn't want to get up at 8 AM, so they didn't. But I stayed on it. I went to all my classes. I rarely skipped classes. I definitely took advantage of the student services or anything like that, like some of the people I was telling you about- Ms. Dorothy and Mr. Blake. I would stay up on everything and just try to keep those resources on a daily basis to help me. But, a lot of my time

went to working in that office with Dr. McMahon too, and her secretary, Sandra Arnold. She was the secretary for all the professors in the Business department. I knew all of them because I worked in that office even though I wasn't a business major the majority of the time.

TW: You said you pursued two degrees at YSU: an associates and a bachelors. And you graduated from your associates in 2006. When did you come back for your bachelors?

JG: I don't think I ever stopped going to school. I graduated the next year.

TW: Okay. What was your experience like transitioning from the 2-year associates program and the 4-year bachelor program? Was the experience different?

JG: I think, initially, I was enrolled for a bachelor's degree. So, I'm not sure if they just switched it back and they were like, well, you have this many credits so you might as well go ahead and get your associates now. I think that's the way that it happened, actually. So, it was kind of just like, I already had all the credits I needed for an associate degree. So they were like go ahead and get that and then you only have this many more left to get your bachelor's degree.

TW: When did you graduate with bachelor's degree?

JG: 2007.

TW: Oh, so literally then the next year. So you didn't come back for another four years?

JG: No, no, I was done by then. Yeah.

TW: In high school, did you have any college credit classes?

JG: Not that I can remember. I see a lot of schools are taking advantage of that now. I'm actually planning on moving back to the area here in the next week or so. And I'm going to look at getting employment at Youngstown State. That's what I want to do now. I want to come back and work for the University. I want my kids to take advantage of the Early Rayen College and some of the programs they offer where they can come and get credits, because I think that's a great program.

TW: Yeah, most definitely. I went to Early College as well and within the first year of me coming to school to pursue my bachelors, I realized that it was very hard to stay focused- especially after being in such a vigorous program. You experience burnout and all these kind of things, and you don't want to continue school. Did you ever feel like that? And if so, how did you overcome that feeling? How did you stay disciplined?



JG: I did experience a lot of burnout. I remember one time I took 19 credit hours. That was like my last semester. I wanted to get out- and really, God. I'm a religious person, so I know God had to pull me through it because it was a lot. And I had my daughter after I got my associate's degree. I had my first daughter. So I think just having a child made me more responsible as well.

END OF INTERVIEW

*[The Webex connection with Ms. Green unexpectedly stopped and we were unable to reconnect.]*