

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU History

Black Student Experience project

OH 2251

DAWN TURNAGE

Interviewed by

Tilisia Williams

on

August 11, 2023

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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Interviewee: Dawn Turnage

Interviewer: Tilisia Williams

Subject: YSU History - Black Student Experience

Date: August 11, 2023

TW: This is an interview with Dawn Turnage for the Youngstown State University project on the Black Student Experience. This interview is being conducted in the Maag Library in the Archives, and today's date is August 11, 2023 and my name is Tilisia Williams.

Hello Mrs. Turnage.

DT: Hi, how are you? Nice to meet you.

TW: Nice to meet you, too. How are you?

DT: Good, thank you.

TW: Let's start off with where did you grow up. Where are you from?

DT: I am from Youngstown, Ohio. I grew up right here- born and raised, a graduate of Cardinal Mooney High School and then, also a graduate of Youngstown State.

TW: What was it like growing up for you, here in Youngstown?

DT: It was really good. It was a great experience that I was able to have. I was fortunate to have both parents at home, both hardworking parents from General Motors, raising three girls. I was the only one who attended catholic school, starting in the ninth grade, and it was really for that experience of a small learning class size setting. As we seen that, for me, learning in a smaller setting was much better. But other than that it was a great experience.

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

DT: No, I'm not. My dad also graduated from Youngstown State and during my process of attending Youngstown State, he also assisted me in some courses, especially statistics because I

had a hard time grasping that. So, he would actually go to class with me. He said "I'm an alumni there. I can go."

TW: Did your dad, being a graduate from here, influence your decision to go here? Like did you have any plans to go...

DT: Well, you know to be honest, in the beginning my dad really tried to influence me to come to Youngstown State. But did I respond to that? No. I still wanted to be that student who wanted to go outside, you know of the city. But I ended up right back and he did the whole "I knew it" type thing. But it was the best experience and the best decision I did make when I did come back, at home to attend Youngstown State.

TW: What school did you go to before you came back to YSU?

DT: Well, I call myself I was on a college journey. I first started off at Bowling Green State University. That to me was a little bit too far and coming from a family of hometown type feel. I felt like I wanted to come home every weekend. And you know it's kind of far. My roommates came together from Columbus, Ohio so they knew each other already. So, I then transferred to Kent State University and that decision was based on me and my friends going there. And my dad still said you can still come home to Youngstown. We got to Kent State and that experience I did not meet the grades. So, I was living with my friends, and my parents (both my mom and dad) let me do that life experience- make those choices and bad decisions on my own. Call it the journey of growing up. So then I got told I was getting expelled due to grades and had to write a letter to Youngstown State as to why I do believe I would be a good student. So that definitely is something that I do share because, not for embarrassment of myself or no one, but the reality of it is I was given a second chance when I came here to Youngstown State. Actually a third, 'cause I started off at another school.

TW: What was your first year like, here at YSU?

DT: My first year here was like, oh my goodness. I would never admit to my parents, especially my dad, that this is where I should've started from the beginning. Being on campus was just like being away. I never went home 'till the evening. There was always something to do, always something to be involved with or just to hang out with actually those friends who I had known since high school. Those that stayed here and went to Youngstown State. It was a great first experience.

TW: What events did you enjoy? You just mentioned that you were barely at home. You were always on campus doing different things. What kind of things did you enjoy doing as a YSU student?

DT: As a YSU student, I enjoyed going to the icebreaker parties that were held. Those were at the beginning of each quarter and usually were by the Black Greek Organizations that were on campus. So, that was great. I also enjoyed the football games and, especially Homecoming! I was on homecoming court while I was here. So, that was a great experience. I enjoyed meeting at the rock. You know, just meeting friends and painting the rock once I became a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, Incorporated here at Youngstown state. And then getting involved with the Pan-African Student Union here was a great experience. It helped me develop some guidelines on how to actually be a minority student on campus. But also, they were there to advocate for our needs as a student too. So getting involved, outside of that with other sorority organizations. AKAs did a lot with Delta Zeta, and we had the same colors, pink and green. We did a lot of community services and was honored with a community service award from Youngstown State during my tenure here.

TW: Can you describe more about your experience being a part of the sorority? How did you join the sorority?

DT: I have a lot of family members prior to me joining that was already members so it was more of just like "You need to go to Youngstown State" as more of "You will be a AKA." I came with academic probation, so I first had to see what the grade requirement were. When I first got here, I did not meet those grade requirements. So I had to work on my academics first. And then I'm going back to the sorority rushes. What they called them was the sorority "Pink Teas" when I was here. And then getting involved that way. I did the application once I had the grades and from there, there was a lot of individuals on campus who were also putting to mind who were interested. So that made it even cool to do. [I'm] Still actively involved in the graduate chapter and we are connected to our undergraduate chapter that is still here at Youngstown State.

TW: That's very interesting. You also said you were a part of the Pan-African...

DT: Then it was called the Pan-African Student Union...

TW: Yeah, now it's..

DT: Do they still have that?

TW: Now its called the Black Student Union.

DT: Black Student Union, Okay.

TW: So I'm sorry if I get the name wrong.

DT: Oh, no.

TW: What was that experience like being a part of that group?

DT: It was great to be able to go into an office and see individuals that look like you, that are black and brown students, who are either student workers or actual employees there. There were some that did not look like me, but they were from other cultures and then I was able to connect with them. [It was a] great learning experience. Learning and getting involved to see what other individuals' projects that they were doing and then participating in that here. And just having that advocacy where you can go and if you're having a challenge or a struggle with a particular subject or even a faculty member. Having that opportunity to sit down and talk to someone on how you can get through that.

TW: Did you have any particular mentors or people you looked up to like staff, maybe teachers, who helped you throughout your collegiate career?

DT: I did- Miss Sarah Brown Clark. I know she retired as an associate professor of English but back when I was here, she was with Black Studies. Very liberal educator, helped us in having that eagerness to learn is what I've definitely grabbed from her. Very encouraging. She demonstrated confidence in all of her students. To this day, I still keep in touch with her. And then she also recognized our individual strengths. So, she would pull you to the side, maybe a little bit stern, but still you got a lot of meaning out of her and I actually tear up thinking about it. So, that was a great experience with her. And then Robin Bradley. She also retired. She was a staff administration at the time of retirement, but she started here in 1989 in Kilcawley Center. She worked here. She was an office staff to the best of my knowledge. But she looked out for the overall well-being of every student. So we could be sitting in Kilcawley, 'cause that was the place you hung out at, and she would actually, you know, "Hey what are you doing? What classes are you taking?" She made sure that we understood that we needed to develop a positive relationship among each other on campus, but also education was very important and key. So when she saw you sitting around too much, she would definitely get on you. So we used to call her, we'd be like "Here come Mama Robin," coming around the corner. She too is someone that I continue to keep in touch with. Actually spoke with her most recently and seen how she was doing with her retirement. And she did the same thing: what are you doing? How's everything going? And then lastly but certainly not least June Snipes. She retired also, but there was a time when the campus bookstore was right in Kilcawley and she was the office manager. And she gave me my first job on campus, as an office assistant. I felt the pride and gain of professional experience, also in connecting, while earning extra money. I went to the office. I wasn't a cashier. Not that I was better than them, but it gave you more of like a sense of you're working in an office setting as a student. So I did a lot of accounts receivables and payables through her management and I developed the skills there that I utilize today when it comes to me and budgeting in my current position.

TW: And when you were a part of the other groups, the Pan-African Union and the sororities, you said you guys also did a lot of community work and you guys volunteered a lot. Did that help you to build an outside, like network or community...

DT: It did, It helped me develop relationships outside when it comes to network with businesses. As well as those in the community from nonprofit or community churches and just organizations as a whole when it comes to working with youth and children- which definitely was my passion. One other thing we did on campus was a Holly Jolly Christmas Party. We brought that to the Pub I believe, inside of Kilcawley, and it was an amazing experience. It came out of the ideas of us undergraduate members of the sorority.

TW: You mentioned earlier that you were here as a student for ten years. What year did you start school?

DT: Oh, I said ten years I was here? I'm sorry if I did that...

TW: Were you a student here for ten years or were you just active on campus? Like constantly visiting...

DT: Yeah, I was constantly visiting, active on campus and that came from my prior employment too for the City of Youngstown and then I'd come on to campus that way. So, what was your question then? 'Cause it wasn't ten years. I came here... graduated in '94. But I was only here for four years, maybe five.

TW: Okay. When you were a student versus when you came back and were visiting, what kind of changes did you see on campus? Like was there anything major that you saw that maybe was different from when you went to school?

DT: Yeah, I definitely liked that the idea that they kept along the family site orientation, of being actively involved. But also seen the growth in the diversity inclusion with our students and our faculty being involved too with our college. And then the changes with the recreation center and it being actively open to the community, whether for camp or as an alumni joining there, and the staff there collaborating with the city. That was very big for me, as my previous employment for the city. I like how they closed off the road. They gave it more of a home feel as far as campus is concerned. So those were some of the major changes I saw and continue to enjoy [when I] come back- at least during the football season I will definitely come back.

TW: Being a Black student at a predominately white institution, did you have any particular experiences here on campus that were significant to you? That may have affected your collegiate career or affected you as a student in general while you were here?

DT: I would say that I honestly did not have a particular situation personally that affected me. I think with me being able to always use my voice and be fierce with believing in myself, that if I

did have challenges, I brought them either to the storefront of bringing it to the table or my parents were very involved so, I would get them involved to a certain extent that they could - even though I was an adult. But I had heard experiences from my peers that they have had and with that I can only be a support as far as providing resources as to whom has assisted me, and the little experiences that I have and most of those times came through Panhellenic Council. One that I could recall was when I was struggling in Statistics, and a particular professor has stated "coming from my background and my culture it is to be expected." So, I knew that that didn't sit well with me and I know that wasn't the right thing to say. But it also did not define myself or anyone else going through that experience. So with that, that was a touchy situation where I did not feel I had the courage enough to actually approach it myself. So scheduling a meeting and asking can I bring my parents to that meeting is what I did. We were able to resolve it. And then, allow for my learning style, for my dad to get permission to come to class with me, and then we would go home and he would teach me the way that he knew that I could grasp it. So that was one that I definitely said I remember.

TW: Having your father here on campus with you, that is, like nontraditional. Not a lot of students do that.

DT: Yeah.

TW: So like, what was that experience like for you to have that college experience with your dad?

DT: My dad was always a kid at heart so he knew more people than I did on campus. He's deceased now, but once I even left campus and moved on, I'd give him a call. "Oh yeah, I saw..." and he would name off the friends he was hanging out with, that's like my friends at the football games or things like that. It was great. It definitely wasn't one of embarrassment. But he sometimes said that he felt embarrassed, and I was like "Dad, you can go sit over there." He was only on campus, except for football, if I actually asked him to come. And how that came about, he would have my sisters with him. My mom worked night shift and my dad worked days. He was that dad that took care of us in the evenings and my mom worked at GM while he was home.

TW: What did you major in?

DT: Criminal Justice with a minor in Sociology.

TW: Why did you pick that particular major?

DT: I picked that because I also wanted to help my community and through the eyes of administrative justice. Once I had the eagerness of probably going to law school and being an attorney. But I was always intrigued about the laws and regulations for individuals, especially

women and female rights. I was always intrigued too with unionization and just the abilities of individuals knowing what their rights were. I picked up the Sociology piece of it because I always have been a family-oriented person. Always had an eager for helping youth and children. I think that's why I selected that.

TW: What was your experience like being a Criminal Justice major? That's a very interesting major.

DT: I think it did help me overall to get where I was. I never did become a police officer or an attorney but working in the field of social services, I was able to have a keen aspect of how to look and review laws when it came to family rights and privileges for youth and the children rights when they were in court. And then even when it came to foster care and what that looks like as a prosecutor or social worker, doing home studies and things like that. Sometimes have to read criminal laws and some of the parents and what laws, arrests that they were allegedly being charged with when they came to making assessments for pretrial services... I did work throughout the court system throughout my career.

TW: Why did you ultimately decide not to become a police officer or go to law school?

DT: I didn't become a police officer 'cause I just felt like they were driving too fast. I don't think I could ever drive that fast even in an emergency. But I knew that there was a need for officers. But I was like "I don't know if I could do that". Then law school, I think it was more of a just I never really stepped up, I think I became more nervous that I wouldn't pass a test because I knew that test were part of my anxiety. So, passing that law school exam even to get in, I was like "maybe not."

TW: Do you think about returning to law school now? Have you ever thought about it since you left school?

DT: I have thought about it since I left school. I did end up getting a master's in administrative justice and security. I thought about it but, then I've also thought about too just receiving certifications and how to do writing skills, techniques, sort of things like that. But I have given it some thought in the last couple of years yeah.

TW: Did you pursue your master's degree here?

DT: No, I did go to University of Phoenix.

TW: Why did you choose University of Phoenix?

DT: At that time, I was married, also deep into my career and it was the best way cause it was an online project as well as a campus project. Living in Cleveland at that time, I was two days a week at a campus setting and then the rest of the week online.



TW: Earlier you mentioned that students often times met in Kilcawley. Did you have any other places on campus, besides Kilcawley, that you felt belonged to you or other black and brown students on campus?

DT: Yes, I would say other than Kilcawley, the Pub inside of Kilcawley. Was it that? Was that the right word for that back then? I don't know.

CN: Yea, but it's not the Pub anymore.

DT: Okay, Yeah. I haven't been in there since Dunkin Donuts and all that other good stuff in there. But Burger King, that was off campus right here on Lincoln. That was amazing. We used to hang out there and meet there sometimes. Then Pal Joeys. It was on campus, or close to campus, and we would hang out there. But you almost had to be a little bit older to hang out there- as long as you became like a junior or senior. Prior to that, meeting just outside of Pal Joeys was like the thing to do and you could see all the older people going in there. And then right across the street, that Mcdonald's has been there for a long time. So, even meeting there from high school, so that became the meeting place there too.

TW: Earlier you mentioned that you went to two other schools before you came to YSU. Why do you feel like your experience in those schools were different from when you came to YSU?

DT: For me, outside of the idea of me just kind of doing my minimum that was needed at those schools. I also know that at YSU, it was the classroom size descending up. Being able to have a relationship with your professors, versus in larger schools like Bowling Green and Kent State which you were just a number. Here at Youngstown State, your professors have the opportunity to know who you are, if nothing else at least learn your first name. You felt that home-y kind of feeling, like they actually wanted to invest in your future. That was something that was natural and genuine. I think too, being on a smaller campus- the security of it. Knowing that you can walk outside the door and find someone that you can connect with, cause you either knew them from class or knew them just from their face being on campus. If you needed to walk with them to your car or your next destination it was the safety of that.

TW: What do you do now as a career?

DT: Now I am currently the assistant director for Columbus Recreation and Parks in Columbus, Ohio. I am over the youth development division and I also oversee or do the job readiness program which is a year-round comprehensive work program for youth ages 14 to 23. I also am overseeing a reroute intervention program through youth involvement. That's a community based partnership in collaboration with Columbus Public Health Department. We help identify and reduce violence and crime. We locate and engage individuals with families with any services that we believe they may need in order to hinder the opportunities for them to make alternative decisions when it comes to crime and violence. And then we also have through my

division a program called VOICE. VOICE is violence outreach intervention community engagement. That's a hospital-based violence intervention program that we at Columbus Parks and Rec collaborate with the Health Department as well as Grant Hospital which is a local hospital there. This is shortly after being injured from some type of crime we provide services that legalize the incentive-based initiatives that they keep up with all of their doctor appointments. Then they would get an incentive-based gift card for example. We would also connect them to youth community services and making sure that if there are any youth in the home that they also receive whether it be mental health, self-assessments, anything to that nature to ensure that they get the services they need as when it comes to crime. That program is for ages 18 to 40. And that program honestly has been awarded an innovation award from the National Parks and Rec Association this year for 2023, and that award is through just the empowerment of community through innovative matters. We do have an outreach program through my division too, with the recreation and parks, where we directly engage with our community. We bring festivals and we bring the needs of the community whether it be from toiletries, to groceries, to remove some of those barriers of them having outreach to those particular needs. Lastly, we do have a program called CWOW, that's Center Without Walls. That is bringing recreation right to the community. Especially to those communities that do not have walkable or safe walkable distance to a recreation center. So we pull up in this large van and we just bring out any type of activities that individuals can do. Whether it be interactive family activities. A lot of ours are inclusive activities for those who may need that assistance in playing with play therapy too. We utilize that also through all our communities and then we wrap everything back up and get in the van and then go to the next location. We try to do this for a month and then when school is in, we actually go to right now to four of the public schools in Columbus and offer that type of same service.

I know I'm longwinded on that, but I still have to say I would not have had those experiences, opportunities, if I did not prior to this current career (which will be a year come here on September 1, 2023) I was the director of Recreation and Parks for the City of Youngstown and that was where, under the current mayor Tito Brown, I had the opportunity to do it for 5 years. It was an amazing experience. Definitely connected to my community a lot. [It] allowed me come back on campus and connect with other opportunities for youth, getting involved and actually actively involved. Like the planetarium- we would bring them there to our recreation center. We would have them go out there and engage and connect through outdoor activities and other aspects. Just coming to campus sometime, walking up here just for that experience was definitely, and especially during our summer camp time. Serving my community as a director for Recreation and Park allowed me, it was challenging to leave, but allowed me the opportunity to grow and my book came from right here in the Valley.

TW: How did you get started in your outreach programs? You said you started here in Youngstown. How did you get started in that kind of work?

DT: My mom and my dad were always advocates for outreach. My mother, she was very involved with the women retirees and then women especially working for General Motors. We would have to do volunteer work through that. Then it was just something that I always connected through my local church here, not too far from here which is Union Baptist Church, and we would do outreach and community service through there. That has always been a passion of mine. Just to do that experience. Just to connect to them. Always, my mom was like "You're always only two cents away from having the same needs." So, I would make sure I stayed connected with those individuals that way.

TW: What have been some of the heights of your career? Like, what have been some of your best experiences doing community outreach? I feel like it's a really interesting career, especially being in places like Columbus where crime rates are very, very high. There's not enough outreach programs. So what has been the height of your career?

DT: The height of my career has been just knowing that, if we could change just one individual's mindset that we have made a difference. I will say for my most recent career: our program when it comes to job readiness, which is very interactive. Prior to me coming onboard, the average participation from ages 14 to 23 was around 75. This summer here for 2023, my first season here, I had 275 youth that had participated and I had 240 that actually stayed and retained. We will be celebrating that. That's a big success win for them. As they get ready to go back to college, whatever they are, even high school cause 14 years old is when we start them. The incentive that those 240 have shared that they want to return. It warms my heart to know that if they're gonna go back to school and tell somebody else. We can continue to grow. We can continue to provide not only a paycheck, opportunity for them to make money, but also an experience for when it comes to life skills. From money management to how to dress in an interview, how to write a resume, into the basic necessities of what do you do when you don't have to live paycheck to paycheck. But we also give that career experience too.

Another highlight has been most individual youth in our early communities will relate to success and having to get a nice car or some toys that they consider to be on the higher end that you have to play basketball, you have to play football. What I've done this year was have a car show and that car show was actually for those in the Columbus community that I connected with that walked the same streets that these youth have walked in. If you look up like Linden area, you'll see that's the majority of where all our high crime is. For this car show, I brought in individuals from the black and brown community as well as our Latino community and these cars are their toys. But guess what? They were entrepreneurs. They have a neurosurgeon that came and he started from as the kids say "started from the bottom." Now look at them. Not to

take away from football and basketball, but just to get that other aspect. You can obtain and you can enjoy life's toys, life's experiences too, without playing sports. It can be by going to school. We had a military gentleman and his car. They were able to touch the cars and drive the cars but they shared their experience of how they saved money, how they got where they were. We had a Latino lady: really pretty bright yellow, canary yellow sports car. She pulls up and she started her business 'cause there was a need for her community to have that experience of renting halls and renting places for them to have their fiestas or parties. But they were a little bit intimidated when they would call and not be able to understand to get the pricing in their language. So she said "You know what? I'm gonna quit my job and I'm gonna up up my own business." That's what she's doing now. She now expanded to a travel business too, or renting limousines and taking it for them to go out. Yes this is open to everybody, but that's where she got started. And these individuals that's part of my program look just like her. So they were like "Oh, I know what street you lived on. I used to live there." So it was that connection. Those were some of my major highlights in my current career.

TW: What does that feel like? To see that you're touching the lives of so many young youth. Like, how you're getting them to look at the bigger spectrum of life and all the things even though people say you can't be successful in these things. You absolutely can, and its absolutely possible. What is that feeling like?

DT: It makes me feel like the work is still needed. The work is not done. And as long as I have breath and I can continue to do it, I will continue to walk that beat. But it also makes me feel I have to continue to bring someone with me. I'm always reaching back and having our youth at the table. Making sure they have a voice in what is needed. Which brings me back to an experience here, when I worked for Youngstown as the director of Parks and Rec. It was always a challenge with lifeguarding here at our only pool that is open. So while I was here, we went to where the students were. We went to those individuals, to their classrooms, and talked about lifeguarding, talked about the safety, to which operating out of that was a lifeguard academy. It is still up and running and strong. The crew here has always opened up on time and has had plenty- an overflow- of lifeguards, that we're able to share through our communities. It was really those lifeguards now, that are here are even speaking at our national conferences. Talking about their experience as an urban student in our communities. But its also another door to our friends and our partners that live in Liberty, that live out in Warren area that are coming to Youngstown State or have friends that come here. It's because they didn't realize right behind them it could be a lifeguard at a pool. That they too could get to know the safeties of the water and teach others. Knowing that I could grasp all aspects... my mom now says "You're just like your daddy- you just go-go. You don't stop going." As long as I can, I definitely will.

TW: What have been some difficulties that you've faced in all the years you've done community outreach? What have been the most difficult times?

DT: Most difficult times is being a woman in the field of outreach, especially in Recreation and Parks. And then a black female- 1 of 19 across the United States- has been a challenge. I would sometimes get the assumption that I don't know about a zero-turn mower. Or that a golf course has golf carts... the basic things, you know? There's something that I don't know... that takes a digger to dig, to do this type of job. And then there's something that I wouldn't be able to manage a budget, so millions of dollars. And if I go back to how life goes back around: having that statistics class, and having the opportunity to work at the bookstore, and math and all of that, helped me always stay above budget and never in the red in any of the positions I've had as a director. But the challenges of just being a female. Just being a female period. In making sure [that] with my soft voice that I stay at the table and I am fierce with my voice and that I know to bring someone with me. Sometimes those that I bring with me usually are not welcome to that table, maybe not by words but just by their actions as individuals, but making sure they still pull up and sit right next to me. Somebody did it for me, so I had to do it for someone else.

Another challenge for me was in 2015 I did have a mini stroke and I had to learn all over again. Thank goodness it was an opportunity. It was a F.A.S.T action. You know I always say F.A.S.T. Definitely that response was fast. I got to the hospital fast and I didn't have to stay there long. I left out of there. I did have to do some physical therapy a little bit as well as learning sight words to learn how to do some basic knowledge as far as how to read again. But I stuck through it. My family and support was there and I know that a lot of our families, people don't have the same support. So for that I stay very active with the Heart Association and I make sure I support those who may not have the support that they need. And which resulted in me being a 2023 ambassador for the Heart Association, in which there was only 12 of us across the United States selected to do that. So my ambassadorship for that is over in February of 2024 but it definitely won't stop me from being an advocate also for that organization too.

TW: What was your experience like being an ambassador of the Heart Association?

DT: It's currently still actively going on. It is an amazing, amazing experience. Having the opportunity to tell my story as far as what I went through as a real woman. So its called the 2023 American Heart Association Real Woman. "Real woman" meaning everyday life. We are these real women who have gone through a survivorship and some haven't. From mini stroke, to heart disease and everything that is real present in the urban community. That has been a great experience in order to use my voice to those who look like me, and not just me cause high blood pressure is rampant through all our communities. And bringing ideas and bringing opportunities, like health screenings and things like that to my community, even here in

Youngstown like I did, has been an amazing experience. Going across the waters to just speak to organizations and to doctors from the patient perspective. Goes back to me saying I've always been taught to be fierce with my voice. To make sure that I'm being heard, and if not by one person at least they know I was there.

TW: You also mentioned one of your difficulties being a woman in the field that you're in, in the outreach, and people assuming that you don't know, are not experienced in certain things. Has that contributed to you wanting to help other young black women like yourself or black children in general? Has that contributed to how much you put in to what you do?

DT: Yes definitely, definitely it does. That's a great question. Cause there are times, secretly, that I did not know, but they would never know that. So I would do my research and the homework before I knew there was gonna be a talk about the next zero-turn mower coming out. So I would do my research prior too that so I could be prepared. So reaching back and teach other African Americans women or even women in general about how to get through this whole project of being in this field. It is definitely a project of just a desire of wanting to give back to your community. You have to do your homework a little bit harder and you have to ask questions and you just have to prepare yourself and always come to the table with a question. And knowing the expectancy of you not knowing is always going to be one step- whether it be recreation, whether it be working anywhere. Just to always be one step forward, so when you do have to take two steps backward at least you know that ok, at least I can fall back on some of the research I've done prior.

TW: You also mentioned how your jobs here at YSU helped to prepare you the type of work that you do today. Were there any experiences that you had as a student that you feel may have helped you to prepare you? Do you feel YSU prepared you for what you do now?

DT: I do. I think that YSU prepared me because it was a very large. Even though it was a predominantly white institution, it didn't have a lot of predominantly black individuals, but that did not matter. That was that feeling of just getting to know everyone. It was a great opportunity to see your President of the University just walking by, and to see and to engage. So to engage with folks that look like you or maybe not even came from the same side of town that you grew up on. Everyone was family. It was a genuine feeling. So to be on campus and to get to know individuals and hang out with them and get to know "Hey, what are you guys doing? What's your organization? Or what are you doing on campus?" and to meet collectively in one location, has always been a great feeling to come on campus.

TW: When you came here as a freshman and all the struggles you had academically, compared to everything that you do now, all the amazing things, all the amazing groups you've been apart of, all the community outreach and all the work you've put in... If you could go back in time and speak to your younger self, and encourage your younger self. What would you tell yourself?

DT: I would honestly tell myself, start at YSU. Don't even worry about going away to college. I would tell myself don't be a follower, because that's exactly what I was doing, was following the footsteps of what was supposed to be the norm. I would tell my younger self, if you were at YSU, if you started there at YSU, you would have not been on academic probation, you would have not had the opportunity to write a letter as to why you would be a successful student. So I would tell myself, just go to YSU. Listen to your dad and your mom and just go to Youngstown State for that amazing experience, where you could grow and you can also get the nurturing that you need here in the home that raised you, and the Valley that protected you.

TW: What would you say to young black women and black males who are listening to this interview like maybe 20 years from now? They come across your interview, and they can relate to you and can relate to your problems and they can relate to the things that you went through as a student, the ups and the downs. What advice would you have for them?

DT: Oh wow. I think the advice I would have for them is to take advantage of looking in the mirror, to see exactly what the pros and cons of the choices that they have made and why they're making them. But also to record. Don't rely too much on your technology when it comes to your cellphones and all those gadgets that you could have. To record your journey by journalizing, and that means by writing. Taking an actual pen and paper. To journalize your life, journalize to those that possibly have helped you in making those decisions, cause that will help tell your story. My journaling did not come until I was much older. It actually did not come until 2012 after my dad passed that I started to journal. To journal early, 'cause you could go back and say "you know what, I remember that I did now." and "Ok, I should do this." Because while electronic gadgets are great when they're devices for us to communicate, they too can be gone. We do see to be the standard is the traditional brick and mortar of a textbook and writing. You can definitely go back to that even after you're gone. So somebody can see what your dreams and what your desires were. So they can either follow in your footsteps or also fulfill some of the things that you had not done in your honor.

TW: Is there anything else that you'd like to say?

DT: No, I don't think so. Thank you for the opportunity for sure and I appreciate the time spent. It's great to be back to a place that I'd never ever leave. This will always be home.

TW: Yeah, and I wanna thank you personally for coming in because as I do this research, I come across people who have done interviews like way back in the '70s and the '80s and its really cool to be a part of something like this for years from now. Like I said, people will come back to your story and it will have significance in their life and hear everything you've done for people, all the community outreach and everything. It might encourage them to give back to their communities. And a lot of people have mentioned that reaching out. Especially when I

interview older alumni, they talk about reaching out to the community a lot and how they see that a lot of older alumni don't do it enough so it's an honor to talk to you.

DT: Thank you.

TW: And knowing everything that you've done for our community. Thank you so much.

END OF INTERVIEW