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Francesca Moore '24-Nthato Selebi '94

Francesca Moore

Nthato Selebi

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Francesca Moore: Hi, my name is Francesca Moore. Today is June 1st and I'll be interviewing ...

Nthato Selebi: Nthato Mokohane Selebi.

FM: Okay, and for our first question, so why did you decide to come to Connecticut College?

NS: I suppose that means why did I come to Conn College as a student?

FM: Yes.

NS: I'm a soccer player.

FM: Oh, nice!

NS: And at the time, coach Bill Lessig, who basically built the soccer program here, was interested in rebuilding the team and literally trying to get it to be more competitive, et cetera. And he had seen me at the Olympic Development Program, I was playing for for the state of New Jersey. And he came and spoke to me. But I wanted to go to a school that was small, but I could actually still play soccer. So I came here because I got recruited to play soccer and it had the academic programs I was looking for.

FM: What was your position on the soccer team?

NS: I was a midfielder.

FM: Midfielder, okay I'm sure I've seen. I'm trying to get into soccer, so ... How was the team when you were on it?

NS: The team was actually quite good. I'm looking at the success of the team in the last few years and I'm very happy that even the coach acknowledges that the foundation for that success was the team that I was on.

FM: Oh, nice!

NS: We won the first ever championship of the College, in the College's history.

FM: Congrats, that's big.

NS: And the following year we made it to the finals and didn't win, but we literally made it to the finals two years in a row for the NESCAC conference, so, yeah, it was actually quite good.

FM: Nice. I was here when we won our last one. It was, like a year or two years ago?

NS: Yeah, when you won NAAs, yeah, I was following, I was watching, screaming ...

FM: Really. We went far this year too. I think we made it to ...

NS: You did, you did. I was hoping that there would be a second opportunity.

FM: Yeah. I was like, I wish- I wanted them to win another one before I left, but next year, next year. They're confident that they will make it next year, so I believe in them.

NS: Yeah, the program's grown.

FM: Of every team, I think it's the most popular on campus right now, in terms of, like, student-wise ...

NS: Wow, more popular than when I was here because- I'm sure, if you are saying it that way, because, I mean, the years I was here it was quite popular and we got a lot of support from the student body.

FM: Yeah, turnout was really crazy when the soccer team is playing, so it's nice. My favorite team here because we're good so you have to support them. Yeah. The next question is what, if anything, surprised you about college during your time here.

NS: During my time, I think what surprised me the most was how much of a minority I was. Where I come from, we're the majority, so it was a big- a big surprise. But at the same time, I never felt isolated or out of sorts or didn't belong. So, it was just a bit of an adjustment to, shall I say, the optics, but other than that, no, it wasn't much of anything, but it did surprise me that there were- there were that much- that many fewer students of color at the time, yeah.

FM: Were you- were there many international students here during your time here or ...

NS: So, so my situation is a bit- is a bit odd, inasmuch as I'm South African and I- and I grew up in South Africa. I left South Africa when I was thirteen to come to the US. So, my coming to Conn was- I was living in New York and I was going to a boarding school in New Jersey. So, that's how I came, so I didn't- I wasn't- I was an international student who wasn't international.

FM: I've lived here for, like, eleven years now. I'm from Jamaica. So, when I came here I was ten. I've been here for, like, eleven years now. Which part of- do you still live in New York?

NS: No, I- I moved back home. After graduation I moved back to South Africa.

FM: And you lived there ever since?

NS: Yeah.

FM: Wow, wow. Where were you living in New York while you were there?

NS: I lived in the Bronx.

FM: Oh, me too. Which part?

NS: Mott Haven.

FM: Mott Haven. Oh, wow. That's, like, really close to me. I live on Fordham. I've been living on Fordham.

NS: I know where Fordham is. Oh my.

FM: How long did you live- oh, so you lived there from, like, thirteen until ...

NS: Until I graduated.

FM: Nice. I hope to move one day too. But not yet. Like, where did you live and what was your residential experience like here?

NS: So, I lived in Branford my freshman year and it was- it was very, very interesting. My roommate apparently is here -- I haven't seen him yet and I haven't seen him since graduation -- and it was awesome, because the housefellow we had was a very easy person and he didn't really stress us too much. And then my sophomore year I lived in Blackstone.

FM: Okay. Was it substance-free back then?

NS: What does that mean?

FM: Okay, so people who live in Branford -- they're changing the building now -- but, they don't drink and

NS: Ah! No, no, no, no. It was just another Conn College dorm. Everything went. There wasn't- there wasn't- there wasn't any substance-free type of zone, no. It was just- smaller in nature, but- but- no, no, no such thing. And then in my junior year I lived in Freeman and then in my senior year I became the house fellow for Branford.

FM: Oh, you went back- you went back to Branford then?

NS: Yeah. I went back.

FM: My friend was actually the house fellow there last semester. I wonder if the room looks the same or if they renovated it.

NS: I wonder. I really wonder, because, I don't know, there was a part of me that was hoping that you could have access and have a look, but it is what it is. But I- I lived like a king, supposedly because I had- it was an apartment, really for all intents and purposes. So, my friends used to come visit and be like, "Oh, dude, how come you get this much space?"

FM: Your own- a personal bathroom. I've always been jealous of everyone of my- every year, I'm like, when the bathrooms get really bad on the weekends, I'm like why didn't I do the house fellow? Because it's- it's a privilege having your own bathroom.

NS: It is, but you know what? In terms of the work -- I don't know what it's like now -- but it was really tough because it's- I just remember it was- it was a situation where you were pretty much on call 24/7.

FM: Yeah, 24/7. I think, they have it at, until like two am, and it's like rounds, but it's a lot of work.

NS: What's happened? We were on call 24/7. Yes, you had a life as a student as well, but you had to be very- quite cognizant of the fact that you were now in charge of a residential space. And so you had to worry about your behavior. You couldn't necessarily go out and do stupid things, because ...

FM: I know. It's still the same. I had a couple friends who lost their jobs as, like, house fellows or floor fellows because they were caught doing things they weren't supposed to. But it- and they're making, the new head of Res Life, is making some huge changes. I think they are cutting down on the amount of house fellows. I think one person is going to be responsible for three buildings. Which, I am just- I don't think that's ...

NS: good. No.

FM: I don't know how it's going to work, but yeah ... My friend has- she has the toughest this year. So, she's doing Branford and Smith and Burdick, because they are getting rid of the house fellow there and turning the suite into, like, something- something else. But, yeah.

NS: That's unfortunate, I think.

FM: I know, I'm not a fan. The students aren't a fan.

NS: Yeah, because the kind of role that you play as a house fellow is more than just administrative and looking after the infrastructure, et cetera. It's also being a big brother, you know, or big sister. I remember that when I became a house fellow, it was very important for me that everybody understood that I had an open door policy and that we could talk about things. I

checked a lot on the freshmen, how they were doing, how they were transitioning and all of that. So, if you're now responsible for three dorms, when do you get the time to do all of that and still be a student. Because that's the other thing we have to remember, you're a student. You have to study.

FM: Yeah, and your responsibilities are still the same, so I don't know. Hopefully. We'll see, because this is the first year they are trying- they're making these changes, so, who knows. My next question is what did you study and do you have any memories of classes or professors that stood out to you?

NS: I majored in Sociology-based human relations and I did what would be the equivalent of a minor in Education. My- a professor that I really loved was Dean Hampton. He was dean of students and he also taught sociology. I loved his class because they were unorthodox. But unorthodox in a way that made everybody not be intimidated by the subject: the examples he would use, what things that I could resonate with, that I could understand. So, yeah, that- I remember his classes more than anything and I loved his classes.

FM: I- I did Sociology. I took an intro course and when I graduated recently, it was like, I kind of regret, like, not- like, even doing a minor in Sociology. Because I was thinking about when I got here, I didn't know what I wanted to do, like, at all and I was taking a bunch of intro courses and I think Sociology was, like, one of the favorite of all of the intro courses I took and I just- I don't know. People scare you away, because they're like, you won't make money and it scared me away from it. And I'm like, I regret not ...

NS: What did you major in?

FM: International Relations and Econ as a minor.

NS: So- so here's my view. This is my own opinion which is why I stuck with Sociology-based human relations. The work that I do has got nothing to do with Sociology, but the understanding sociology gave me in the study of human behavior is critical in the work that I do. So, I know that I am, you know, as effective as I am because I had, you know, the background of sociology and I would recommend it and also people that I know that had the same, aren't necessarily stuck in that box of being sociologists, They've- they've branched out into law, et cetera. I mean, I just completed my law degree as well now. So, it's one of those things that, it's an avenue that you can take to basically anything. It's unfortunate that you were advised ...

FM: Yeah, I wish you were here to tell me that when I was deciding. Professor Campos, is her name, she was a really good sociology professor right now, yeah. Can't go back, can't turn back time.

NS: No, you can't, unfortunately. You can study again.

FM: I can study again. What were you involved- were you involved with any groups or activities that were important to you, like, on campus?

NS: Yeah, soccer. I played on the soccer team for four years and I was very privileged at the time because it was a very competitive- was a very competitive team, because there was, as I said, quite an involved recruitment. But, I as a freshman I was starting which was ...

FM: Oh, nice! That is a big- a very big deal.

NS: It really was. I wasn't expecting it. Going into our first game, I just thought that if I could get some playing time, it was great, but then Coach said no, you're in the starting lineup. And that was great. I was also involved with Umoja. I was co-president, in my junior year, of Umoja and, yeah, that's the only other organized activity per se, those were two things I was involved in at Conn.

FM: Wait, we have a South African student on the soccer team this year and he is also a freshman who starts, so, like, that's nice. And Umoja now is BSU. I wonder which year was it? Last year, my junior year, end of sophomore year, Umoja kind of fizzled out and the students changed it into BSU, which, like, is the same thing.

NS: Yeah, but you know, today a lot of my classmates and I were talking about, just, Unity House and the fact that there are so many organizations now, et cetera. You can understand the rationale, but at the same time I think the thing that made us most effective was the fact that we didn't splinter, right? I think now there's a bit of a fission of sorts to almost an individual as opposed to the identity as a group to say, "I may be Hispanic. I may be this, I may be that, but, we are going to come together and form the kind of mass to be able to effect change with. Again, times are different. I don't know what life is really like on campus, but for us at the time, it was basically four- four student organizations out of Unity House.

FM: Wow. I don't know how much we have today.

NS: Yeah, I was told it was over 30. That's what I was told. I don't know if that's true, but I was told it was over 30. Because for us, Umoja- there was no difference whether you were an international student or you were an African-American. So, we came together under one bigger umbrella. But, yeah ...

FM: Just thinking of a few. I know that we have MOCA, Men of Color Alliance and you have WOCA, Women of Color Alliance, BSU, PACA, Me.Ch.A, the list goes- there's so- ISA, the international students, the Asian-Pacific Islander students club. Wow, okay maybe there are 30. There are many more I can think of.

NS: And I think that's the thing. We saw ourselves as students of color, now it's broken down into even more kind of specificity around my, you know, MOCA, my own issues that I feel need

to be addressed, whereas before those would have been addressed under the bigger umbrella, right? But, yeah, the times are different.

FM: There are benefits, with the times, there are some benefits to it, but, I can see how the larger, kind of, organization would create a lot more unity in students of color on campus.

NS: Yeah, and I think for me, also just in terms of issues. You know that this is almost ended and so you say, how do we focus on the bigger ones that impact almost everyone as a start. Then you get more nuanced around the issues, but you know that all of that which effects every single one of us regardless of how you represent yourself, is addressed and then you take it from there. That was more our philosophy now, looking at it, versus the way it is now. You are too individualistic.

FM: Yeah, it is. I don't think we have a strong sense of community, especially in my year, among the students of color. I blamed it on Covid, but maybe not, but I hope- I hope it changes. I hope so. Even Unity- Unity culture kind of died. We don't use Unity House any more.

NS: Do you know how we were just downstairs as Unity alumni, bemoaning the fact that there was a time when we were told for nine months Unity House was off-limits because infrastructure-wise there were issues? But we didn't know, as alumni. Had we known ...

FM: Oh, they told you for the first time downstairs?

NS: That's when we all found out. So the issue for us is just around that aspect. That, if you have -- and I think there's a time and place for it, but I'm not sure that it exists, that's just my opinion though -- the more issues there are to deal with, the less you do what you needed to do. Part of my growing up at Conn College was as a result of the alumni. It wasn't just the College. People who used to come back all the time on Eclipse Weekend, people who used to come back for lectures, for this. They were part and parcel of our community. There are people who graduated in '87. They are my sisters and brothers. I got here in 1990. Today I see them, I speak to them as if I was here when they were here. So- so, that aspect for me is what I think we lament with Unity House no longer being the center. Parties I went to on campus? Unity House.

FM: I heard about them and I'm just, like, I wish!

NS: The get-togethers, during Kwanzaa? Unity House. I said Eclipse Weekend. Everything that I did in my life socially? Unity House. And- and hence I didn't feel isolated and- and really, really find it a bit sad that you guys didn't have the same experience as we did, because ... of stuff. Yeah, hopefully changes.

FM: I hope so. I hope the people after me have a better time here.

NS: Yeah, I hope so.

FM: I think like, after graduating and reflecting on my time here and comparing and, like, talking to my friends from, like, other colleges, like, reflecting on, like, the community they have with students of color on their campus, I'm seeing that there really wasn't a big one here. And just, kind of seeing it being revived at the end of the semester was, like, wow. The experience here would have been so much more different if it was here before.

FM: No, definitely. Definitely.

NS: I know I think we tried- I think it was, like, sophomore year, we were getting into, like, using Unity more and then we come back in the fall and they were, like, yeah, no more Unity. It was just like, okay, back to square one and have to, like, finding a way to get students of color together somewhere else.

FM: Listen, we used to watch tv programs at Unity House, even though we have tvs in our own dorms, right? You just knew at a certain time it was A Different World. So, we would go rush and go sit and watch A Different World together. We would laugh and ... watched movies together. Listen, it was the hub. We would even cook at Unity House if you felt like it, because it was a place, you could- you had- you had access and were allowed to basically be, so ...

NS: Even, they had, like, a student- student lounge kind of thing on the second floor, it's never open. Rooms are turning into offices and the Pepsico room is just ...

FM: It's not what it used to be. Yeah.

NS: I always here from people and I'm just, like, wow. I couldn't imagine how fun and how much joy was on campus.

FM: Oh, oh, it was really, really fun. Yeah.

NS: So that's something I lacked my four years here.

FM: I hope they bring it back and unfortunate for you you are now gone, but I hope they bring it back because it was one of the essence of a student of color's experience here when I was here and those before me. Some of us in terms of our activism, in terms of our development in that area, was as a result of having those mentors, even though they didn't say, "I'm your mentor." You could look at them and see what they've done now professionally and how they were vocal when they were here, how your voice was validated here. But, it was at Unity House, you know. Yeah, it's a bit sad. It is.

NS: One- do they reach out to alumni a lot? Do they come back to campus and then give talks and stuff? Is that ...

FM: Via Unity House? Not as much as I think that used to happen. And, again, I'm of the view that it is because Unity House now represents something different, not in a bad way, but the

necessity of- of- of Unity House may in some quarters not be seen as paramount as it was back then. I wish I knew a whole lot more about what's going on. I know a whole lot more about what's going on with the soccer team, okay? I get- I get emails all the time from the coach about how the team is doing, when the next game ... I get nothing out of Unity House.

FM: Yeah. We have- I've lived here four years and I think we had four different directors of Unity House.

NS: Exactly. I'm hearing good things about the future.

FM: Chris is- Chris is going to do good things for Unity. I'm excited for the students. And the- and, like we're enrolling a lot more students of color, so hopefully, that causes a shift.

NS: Yeah, yeah. And that, yeah, I hope they feel welcome.

FM: Okay, so the next question is what was the campus climate like when you were here and do you remember any particular events or controversies?

NS: Yeah, the climate I think was -- and I will speak from my perspective. I arrived here in the fall of 1990. Nelson Mandela had been released from prison in February of 1990. So for me there were a great deal of possibilities regarding what was happening in my own country. And part of what was the hot topic of discussion even on campus was around the organization he represented and what was happening. I remember writing a letter to the Conn College Voice because some idiot had basically decided to write an opinion piece that spoke about how the ANC was a thug organization and how Nelson Mandela was a thug and a criminal being released from jail, now South Africa was going to be run by these criminals. And I remember being really irritated and my roommate said, "why don't you just answer back?" And I thought, okay, and I literally wrote a response to that opinion piece and it was published and I was chuffed. But the thing I was chuffed about was that people who read the opinion piece were like, "Wow, you, like, broke it down." I answered him sentence by sentence. So, you broke it down and I was like, yeah I had to, and people were like, "Oh, yeah, actually this makes sense now." So I remember that. I remember the Rodney King incident. I was at the time, I think, co-president of Umoja and it was a very difficult time because, for the most part, Conn was calm, okay? It was calm.

FM: We live in a bubble here on campus.

NS: A serious bubble. And even- even when I read the articles that were subsequently written and the quote- my being quoted in those articles, I go, oh my God. I can't believe I said that. But- but- but it was an issue that we felt very, very strongly about and we did something about it. Luckily, in agreement with- with the administration to say, okay, tho se things can be done, you do this, that, and the other and- and we- we- we voiced out opinions and let the community know that we in no way support what those four police officers did. And of course then at the end of my time, the South African election and I had an opportunity to go vote in Boston, so a fellow student offered to drive my fellow South African Lumkile Mkwalo drove to

Boston to go vote and it was- it was, you know, it was amazing. Just the idea of, even though I'm here, I'm actually casting my ballot. I've never missed an election since. Yeah. So that was what I remember most about my four years here.

FM: Thanks. We had- during my time here we had a Fanning takeover.

NS: Another one.

FM: Another one, yeah, the second one.

NS: Not the second one.

FM: Oh, wait, wait. There been more than- I think I've only known about one before.

NS: No, no, the history of the Fanning Takeover, I think if it's not four, it's five. Now, some of them didn't last long, but it's- it's more than one. The one that's most known about is the one that happened in the 80s.

FM: Okay, I think that's the one that I know about then.

NS: That's the one that's most known, because that's the most militant, I think, of the Fanning takeovers, but there's- there's been more.

FM: And then we recently had our Palestine, pro-Palestine protest, just, yeah ... I wanted to talk about your life after Conn and how did your experience here shape your life after graduation?

NS: My life after Conn, as I said I graduated with a Sociology-based human relations major and a minor in education. I pursued that and was certified as an educator. So, I started teaching and I taught for two years and that's when I decided to go back to South Africa. When I got back to South Africa, I taught there for another three years.

FM: What subject did you teach?

NS: I taught English and History and just up to that point, before the rest, which- which I'll tell you about was that Conn taught me that we have to kind of give back, so for me, I understood that my being on a liberal arts small college in New England was as a result of somebody else's effort, either in demanding that more students of color are accepted or in recognizing that as part of the fabric of the society inclusion is important. So, it was people doing that outside of themselves and that's what teaching was for me. I was supposed to be a lawyer, but I decided that that's what I was going to do and it was important. After that ...

FM: You're technically a lawyer now though.

NS: Well, I'm left with one bar exam. In South Africa we write four. I passed three, I've got one more in the year ahead. But I got this. After that, after teaching, I went into -- we call it transformation in our country, and I was talking to someone else here and they said, it's something like workplace development, something like that. Again, it's focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The unfortunate history of segregation in South Africa meant a lot of people of color did not have access to education to be able to become an accountant, to be able to become an actuary, et cetera. So, my work with a teaching background was to put together a program that would help develop Black chartered accountants, similar to CPAs in this country. And that's what I did for 21 years.

FM: And it was successful for them?

NS: Yeah, so far we had produced about 3,000- between 3,000 and 3,500 chartered accountants of color.

FM: Congrats. That's big. Huge.

NS: Yeah, it's- it's- it's- I'm very proud of- of having been part of that team. I then resigned in 2022 to pursue the law side of things and then at the end of that when I had completed my degree, I completed my articles, I then joined another organization that wanted me to come and do the same thing for them but for actuaries. So, now I'm the executive director for the actuarial development program. Pretty much doing the same thing and I've been in that job a year, today. Yeah, I was appointed- I started my job on the first of June.

FM: Happy anniversary.

NS: Thank you. So- so it's been a year. So, that's what it was and I think a lot of that, being able to stand up and speak unapologetically about things that were too much of a taboo situation, I learned at Conn. That you have to be able to stand up.

FM: You would love my friend Merritt.

NS: And- and- and that's how it really impacted my life in that I worked along those lines. At times, when I sit back and look on my- I was a bit ambitious, but nonetheless, the message got across. Conversations got started. Things started to shift. And Conn had a lot to do with that. As I said earlier, my voice was validated here. I never felt like it didn't matter. I never felt like it's not going to make change. So, so yeah, my life after that has been awesome. What does your friend Merritt do?

FM: Merritt? She's in Econ. I think she should have done something like Sociology, Government, one of those. She's a beautiful speaker, like one of- I look up to her so much. She's like, articulate in her thoughts. She's never scared to say what she wants and to let you know, like, this is what I think about that and ... beautiful. I wish she was here for you to meet her. You would really like Merritt. Yeah, so, did you keep in touch with classmates after Conn?

NS: I did, I did. I was fortunate because I spent two years here before I went back home.

FM: Merritt's, like, in Nigeria, my Nigerian friend. Yeah, yeah.

NS: Nigeria, okay.

FM: I have to let that be known, she loves it. That's important.

NS: Yeah, no, I kept in touch with friends. We are the Facebook generation.

FM: Ohh, okay.

NS: I'm not on Facebook any more. Funny enough. But I kept in touch with them and we would see each other even though I didn't come to Reunion. And once I moved back to South Africa, it became a bit more difficult. I think we all entered that stage in our lives where you now-- you become parents, you're married, professionally you are starting to ...

FM: Life happens.

NS: Exactly. And that diminished, but it didn't disappear. So, we have pretty much stayed in touch through your platforms today. Whether it be Instagram or LinkedIn, we basically stayed in touch all- tracking and being aware of what each other are doing, as opposed to seeing each other and speaking on a regular basis, which we hope to change now that we've been to Reunion.

FM: Oh, so some of them are here?

NS: Yeah, they're here. Actually, like, that circle that I was around, basically yeah.

FM: Nice. That's nice. Did any of your South African friends move back to South Africa?

NS: No, oh, yes. All of us who were here, the guys, ones who were here before me, all of us are back.

FM: Nice, that's nice.

NS: Yeah, because we had thing in us that we had to go back and do something.

FM: Did you- do you see those friends there?

NS: We talk more regularly and stuff like that and I think our experiences of being here and going back are pretty much the same, so, it's good to have that support system.

FM: Yeah, always very nice. We actually have a research program from here to South Africa, like, for the summer. It's like a month-long program to Johannesburg, I think. Yeah, so I have a couple friends who've been to South Africa before.

NS: And- and you see for me that's the other thing that I wish I knew a whole lot more about, because I live in Johannesburg. So- and the guy who was in my class, he also lives in Johannesburg. So, there would probably have been an opportunity to host ...

FM: And it always students of color too.

NS: You know, and for them to see, yeah, it might be, you know, decades ago, but nonetheless to have a fellow Camel there and say "Hey, welcome. This, this, this. If you need anything, here's my contact, et cetera, et cetera."

FM: Yeah, we need to do better. We need to do better.

NS: So, hopefully, hopefully that will be something that changes.

FM: Hopefully, after they listen to this and get some information, they can make some changes. Yeah. How do you like Johannesburg? I want to ask ...

NS: Twofold: remember I grew up there, so for me it's home, right? But then I left for about sixteen years. And then came back and it was very different for me because I was in a different stage of my life. I love Johannesburg. As a person who grew up in New York, grew up in the Bronx, I like the- I like the pace. I like the business of it. You have to be a go-getter. I- I- I like the variety it offers. It's become a very multicultural, multi-international kind of city. Yes, it still has its challenges, but nonetheless, I think it- if you're from New York City, you will feel almost right at home in Johannesburg.

FM: I hope to visit then.

NS: You should, you should, you should.

FM: Okay. I want you to read this last question because it's a very long one.

NS: Thinking about that, I think students today- I think we spoke about it earlier. I lament the fact that students today are not experiencing -- particularly students of color -- are not experiencing Unity House, in the way that I experienced Unity House: as a refuge, as a home away from home, as a- a- a place where you could study- study with this course- with this subject. Can you help me? And it's not going to be someone who is going to look at you and think otherwise. Or where you're not going to think otherwise of yourself about asking for help. So, inasmuch as it represented maybe more socially and politically certain things, it also impacted us academically because we all wanted to graduate. We didn't want to leave anybody behind. So it was a home, literally a home [away] from home because we looked after each

other and we supported each other as much as we can. I can remember a number- a number of the ladies who are here now who didn't play soccer at all drove to Williams for our championship game and they were there to support us and I was- I was- I was [unclear] nuts, because they - there were only three of us on the soccer team who were students of color and it was, like, awesome. So, I wish that experience could somehow be brought back. Technologically, you guys are experiencing- Conn is different technologically than when I was here. And I wish I had that, because I think a lot of that for me had to be on my own in my later years, trying to play catch up, right? And I just wish I had access to- You guys had, like, wifi. You know what that means, right?

FM: That's so funny hearing that. Because, it's like ever since, I've known wifi, like, ever since I was born, so it's like ...

NS: It gives you such access to the world, right? We didn't have that. How did I find information? I went to the encyclopedia. I had to know the Dewey decimal system and where I could find what. And how outdated that information was? It was current, because that's all you had. If you wanted something more up to date, you went to microfiche and you did the film. You loaded it on the microfiche film. My first experience fully with what we now call social media platforms was at the library, Blaustein and the computer lab, Blaustein. And someone said, "Listen, you've got to get into this chat group." What are chat groups? So- so, technologically what you guys are experiencing and what you have at your fingertips and what it allows you to do is something that I really missed. No online courses, can't be taught online. We physically had to go to class, do the thing. And so your choices are limited by where you can be at one point. And so that's the one thing I wish I could experience.

FM: Thinking, back in Jamaica we had, like, dictionaries. Just, like, what's the definition of a word, you find the first letter, the second letter, and then you had to search through and now you just pick up your phone. Hey, Siri, what's the definition?

NS: Exactly, I'm glad you said that. You don't even need to type your question. You just say, "Hey Siri, what is this?" and then that's what you get. So- so- and the students I think- I would have been brilliant. I would have been brilliant at it.

FM: But I think it's created a lot of lazy students though. Even though we have, like, AI and Chat GPT, I think it creates a lot of lazy students.

NS: I think it's- I think you're quite right. Even in my work currently, it's a debate about how do we handle the output of AI and I think the way it's been introduced is a bit unfortunate because I think AI does have space in education, but the space it has is not necessarily a finished product. It may be something that gets you going, that helps you not have writer's block, that helps you with a bit of research and, and, and, and ... But that's a start, not the finish. And I think, you're right, the laziness is because it was literally -- I don't want to say marketed, but presented as a solution, rather than as a tool and- and I hope we get around to it because more

and more it's been proven that it can't be- it's a tool that you use, that you start somewhere with, you know, it's going to help you, but some of the stuff that comes out AI is nonsensical.

FM: It was generated. It makes sense. How was like- in Harris how was the food when you were here?

NS: Okay, I have to- I have to give -- what's the word? -- I have to- a disclaimer. I was an athlete. I- my coach- I had issues. I could lose weight very easily, which was why thirty years later, I'm still ...

FM: Very slim. It's good though.

NS: So, my coach was always insistent that I must have three meals a day. So, for me, I could get up and go to the dining hall and have a meal. I had options. I could do stuff. I could- if there was an unhealthy option, there was the salad bar. I could go and build something and do something for myself. So I never- I never had issues with food. I thought that the food here was good, because I had options. I had options, you know? The alternative was not good. It would cost you more. It's not healthy. So, I had no problems with food.

FM: Now that I'm home, ugh. I would just get up and go get breakfast. It was prepared and it was there. Let's see what I want and now I have to fry my own egg, toast my own bread, make my own tea, make the water hot. I'm, like, you just press a machine and the hot water comes out and you put in a tea bag. I have to wait for the water to boil. I was privileged. It's a privilege having the dining hall. Were there, like- was it only Harris when you were here or did you have ...

NS: No. So, Smith was- there was a dining hall. In Jane Addams- Jane Addams and there was, obviously Harris. I think there was one more. Why do I think there was one more?

FM: I heard about Harkness.

NS: Harkness, in Harkness, yes. In Harkness.

FM: We only have Harris and JA only does, like, breakfast and lunch.

NS: So who does dinner?

FM: Only Harris.

NS: What? We had that situation on weekends. On weekends all the others closed and even if you lived in the south you had to trek all the way to the north.

FM: Yeah, JA closes on the weekends so no breakfast in JA on Saturday and Sunday. Everyone has to go to Harris and no dinner ever at JA, yeah.

NS: Wow, a lot has changed.

FM: A lot has changed and this next year they're bringing Oasis snack shop to JA, so I think there's only going to be one dining hall. I didn't hear anything about them opening another one, but that would be really different, yeah. It would be brutal. I know south to north campus, the walk is not fun. It's not fun.

NS: Especially in winter, especially in winter.

FM: Oh, God, when it snows.

NS: And I was not a snow person, no.

FM: I'm not a fan of the snow, yeah. That's why I tried to live as close as possible to Harris. I think I can't- if I- I would never live in Freeman for that reason, to, like, walk all the way to Harris. Oh, does a sports team, like the soccer team, did you guys try to live together all in one building?

NS: No.

FM: Oh, that's a thing that they do now.

NS: There's- there's- there's good reason for college-level teams to do that because you want them to bond better. We lived everywhere. We- we were -- I want to say renegades -- we just lived everywhere. We never lived- my roommate was not a soccer player. In the- Branford I was the only soccer player, so we just- that was only just an addition to you being a student. But, as I said, I understand it, because when you want to be playing at the levels that the team has been playing in the last few years and you want to win championships and stuff, you do things differently, the training is different, the support system around the team is different, which means more money, et cetera, et cetera. But, for a college kid, I'm not so sure. So, I understand it, I understand it.

FM: It's not required. First year, they place them together, the teammates, they place them together and, like, soph- the rest of the years you have the option, but they tend to all try to, like, live in ...

NS: Because they've been- yeah. I, no, I still think you are a student first and foremost, right? And that's why you are a student-athlete. First and foremost, I've got to know Francesca and I've got to know what she likes, and da, da, da, I've got to connect with her. If Francesca's not a soccer fan or has nothing to do with soccer, it means I'm not going to have a happy experience. So, my experience and my teammates' experience, and I was talking to two of my teammates who were actually here, about our experiences on the soccer team, and it was awesome

because we still had a life outside of the soccer team. Most of my classmates that I didn't know, actually knew me.

FM: There's one of the soccer players.

NS: They're like, "You played soccer didn't you? Yeah, I remember you." Okay you did, really?

FM: It's like, so funny because, like, you get to, like, see the famous people on campus, like the sports players.

NS: Well, that hasn't changed that much.

FM: It hasn't changed.

NS: That's what- and whenever we used to go to meals together, there were specific meals we would go to together as a team. People knew the soccer team was around.

FM: What was it like balancing your soccer and the academics?

NS: Coach didn't give us a choice. Coach wanted our academic performance. You dropped below a certain point, he had a conversation. So we were expected to maintain a certain GPA. Most people don't know that. They just thought, you know, oh we just played soccer and that's it, whatever. But when you look at the entire team, the varied degrees that we did, the complexities, et cetera, we were actually pretty smart guys. We weren't just jocks. But, like I said, Coach was very adamant that he didn't want the program tarnished because Nthato goes and scores goals, he is the little Big Man on Campus, but he's failing. It doesn't bode well for the program when he's asking for money or asking for recruits. It doesn't work. So, we had to- and I'm very happy, like, the guys, I think there were four, five of us in my year, we all graduated, you know.

FM: Did the 28- the 24-40 rule exist back then?

NS: What's that.

FM: I think it's like 28 hours, not 28, 24 hours before a game where you can't go out and party.

NS: Says who?

FM: That's what- that's, like, a rule now. Yeah, you kind of get kicked off the team if you break that rule.

NS: You see, that's what happens when you now start going to different levels. There's different expectations. There was no such- one person was living there, one was there, another one, there was no- amongst ourselves, because we loved the sport and we definitely wanted to do

well, which we were able to do, we were disciplined. We held each other accountable. It was never a thing of the coach having to make the rules. The only rule that the coach had, was that you are at the athletic center an hour before departure. And, literally, if you were- you came running and the clock hit, he'd tell the bus driver, "Close the door." And we would leave you there and we would drive off. That's the only thing Coach was very much a stickler about. But everything else, we didn't party, we didn't- people might have gone out to dinners and whatever, but there was never this thing that we had to conserve our energy, save ourselves. No, man. We were soccer players. We were soccer players. You go out there and you kick the ball around.

FM: Okay, that's all I have for you. We can end this now. Do you have anything else you want to say?

NS: No, no, that's it. I'm good.