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Ryan Rivera '25-Maarten Terry '83 and Annette Boykins-Terry '83

Ryan Rivera

Maarten Terry

Annette Boykins-Terry

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Ryan Rivera: So we'll just start off simple, just say your name, your class year, and what major you were.

Maarten Terry: Okay, Maarten Terry, class of 1983. I was a Sociology-based Human Relations major.

Annette Terry-Boykins: Annette, oh gosh, Annette Boykins-Terry, class of '83, Sociology major.

RR: All right, so just to start off, my first question would be, what is your connection to Unity House?

MT: I lived in Unity House my sophomore and junior year when the house was across the street. So, at the end of the night, the night of studying at the library, of course, I'd walk across the highway and always found the house to be a refuge. You know, I preferred the house across the street. I sort of liked the separation. It was a place to get away, a place to just, you know, be with some close friends. So that was my primary connection there. I was also president of Umoja for a year, and all of those activities happened at Unity House as well.

ATB: I'm going to piggyback off of that a little. It was a place for refuge, a place where you felt like home. I'd also come to Unity House to visit my friends. It was a place where I felt like myself.

RR: So, my follow-up question would be that, I was speaking to some people in the class of '93, and they were saying there were a lot of, like, diversity and inclusion programs, but did you feel like you belonged in these programs or felt, you know, like, welcomed in some way?

MT: A lot's changed, obviously, in 40 years, no question about that. I was the only Black male in the class of '83. Annette was one of, I think, twelve Black women in the class of 83. And the student affiliation groups were mainly Umoja. That, again, was where students of color can kind of come together. We had great rap sessions with each other. We brought folks in from the community to talk with us. Of course, there was a director of the house, and again, it had a homey feeling to it. It was just a place where we can all get away and just sort of be ourselves.

ATB: Yeah. Gatherings, parties, the director and the associate director were kind of like, you knew that they were really thinking about us, very protective in a way. It was like our second home. I mean, I felt very good there.

MT: And we should shout out the names of those folks there. It was Janet Foster, who was one of the directors for a while, and Rick McClellan. He started in admissions and then came down to Unity House, and again, they were our- you know, we looked to them for everything as we were trying to navigate this place that wasn't always perfectly, you know, suited for us.

ATB: And Griselle. Griselle Hodge.

MT: Grisel Hodge also, that's right.

RR: Okay, so my next question would be, well, for starters, where are you guys from like state-wise?

MT: I came here from New Haven, Connecticut, Hill House High School. There was a long chain of folks from Hill House and New Haven here at the college.

ATB: And I came from New Jersey and there was- I knew no one who went to Connecticut College. I heard of Connecticut College probably a year before I came here. And I came here and I fell in love with it.

RR: So why did you choose Conn?

ATB: Oh boy. I came here on a rainy day and had an interview and there was something about it. I can't tell you what I loved about it, but I knew I belonged here.

MT: And it's ironic after a year or semester of unrest with students taking over Fanning, I chose Conn because the week before I went to Amherst College and students had taken over the administrative building at Amherst. And I said, man, that's not for me. I just want to go to school. I just want to study. So, I came here and it was a beautiful spring day and folks were on the Tempel Green, just throwing Frisbees, and I says, you know what? I can see myself here. And now 40 years later, you know, we've had our fits and starts of some student activism and I support it a hundred percent, so it's funny, the thing that I was running from at Amherst is the thing I sort of embraced and appreciate now here at Conn.

RR: So, you mentioned the takeover, so how do you feel about the recent takeover that has happened?

MT: I think, and this will sound like a cop-out, students certainly had some concerns and some things that they needed to voice. And again, I think I appreciate the College giving them that opportunity to do so. Again, I didn't introduce myself as a trustee. I joined the board two years ago, so there's some things I probably would- I wouldn't elaborate too much in them, but I respected, appreciated, and supported the students. I thought they were incredibly mature, composed. I think they did a great job of expressing some of their concerns. And that's the beauty of the campus. It was not orchestrated, but the administration gave the students a space to do the things that they needed to do. And I appreciated that.

ATB: So, I'm not as familiar with the issue, but I was very supportive of the students.

Francesca Moore: As for Annette, [to Maarten Terry] what's your name?

MT: Maarten.

FM: Maarten mentioned that there was only three, 12 women of color on campus when you got here. Now we have a club called Women of Color Collective on campus. Was there anything like that when you were here?

ATB: No. Oh my gosh. That's amazing. That is absolutely amazing.

MT: So I'll say that's one thing I hope current students appreciate, that there are a number of affinity groups and a number of opportunities to check in and find support, find a cohort. We didn't have those things many years ago. So, yeah, I think it's a nice addition to the campus because again, this place can sometimes be difficult and any place and way that you can find support, I think it's a good thing.

FM: And I know you said you were the only black male in your class. And we, equivalent to the Women of Color Collective is MOCA, which is the Men of Color Alliance. So, yeah.

MT: I am familiar with MOCA. And again, it's one of those things that I hope the guys appreciate what they have. This is not a place of fraternities or those types of groups, but, you know, the bonds and the connections, the support that you get from a group like MOCA. Again, I hope- I'm sure the guys do appreciate that.

RR: It's funny because I'm in MOCA, yeah, so ...

MT: Nice. That's fantastic. That's great.

ATB: That's so nice. I love that. Because I felt like we definitely, in our class, I felt like we definitely had, like, a sisterhood, but that would have been even nicer. That's wonderful. Wow. Times have changed.

RR: So I guess this will be my last question, but how was it the change of environment from, like, your home to Connecticut College?

MT: So again, from Hill House High School, 98, 99% Black coming to Conn in a majority white environment, the level of academics from high school to Conn is dramatically different. The level of wealth, I mean, this is a campus with a lot of wealth and then some folks that, you know certainly don't have as much. So, all of those things created challenges, but I think they prepare you for the real world. You find your space in a place like this. I've said many times, it's not perfect, but you kind of embrace the things that work for you and if you do that, then I think this can be a good experience for a lot of folks.

ATB: So my high school was probably 60% white, so it wasn't a big shock to me, but I also came from a, like, real working-class, like, neighborhood where a lot of my friends did not go to college. So, I felt very fortunate to be able to do that. You know, like, a couple of my friends got married, like, right out of high school and had kids right away. But I also felt like with Connecticut College, I should say this, that I- you know when they say that there's a college for everyone, and I felt like Connecticut College, like you said, I mean, no place is perfect, but I felt like it was a really good place for me. And I'm so glad that I came here because I learned so much about the real world and I wouldn't have met my husband.

MT: That was the bonus. Can I say one other thing? Yeah. And I pray that this isn't taken as a humble brag in any way, you know, because we created a life from this place, because we have a real affinity for the College, you know, we've supported it in a number of different ways, both while students and then after graduating and, you know, now through some other activities, as well as financially. You know, if this goes out, if, you know, people of color from over the years who have some connection in Unity House are hearing this, then from the inside, from where I sit, I'd like to see us support the College as much as possible. Again, it's not a perfect place. There may be some scar tissue from our experience here, but this place has done a lot for many. A lot of us were able to go here just due to the kindness of strangers, people who came

before us, who gave and who supported the institution. And that's what we're trying to do now. And that's what I'd encourage everyone to do.

RR: Thank you.