

TRANSCRIPT - OSEI T. CHANDLER

Interviewee: OSEI T. CHANDLER

Interviewer: KIERAN TAYLOR

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KIERAN TAYLOR: All right, well, let's... we'll go ahead and get started here. And I would say if for the recording, if you could just say your name and where and when you were born.

OSEI CHANDLER: My name is Osei Terry Chandler. I try to help people with that pronunciation by having them think of The Star-Spangled Banner so they don't call me OJ or OC. I was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1946. I'm 70 years old. I can hardly believe it myself. I have to say it out loud just to make sure it fits in.

KT: What was your first musical memory?

OC: Adam Parker asked me that recently, and I had a chance to think about it. The first song I can remember was "Mama, Look a Boo-Boo". You know this song, anybody? It goes like this. The lyrics are something like this. It's a calypso song. (sings) "Mama, look a Boo-Boo they shout. That is your daddy, shut up your mouth." Oh, jeez, I can't remember that. Oh, "Oh, no, my daddy can't be ugly so." That's what it is. They call him - Boo-Boo is the name of the father. That's what they're teasing him as, and the song says, "Mama, look a Boo-Boo they shout." She says, "Don't say that. That's your daddy." "Oh, no. My daddy can't be ugly so. Shut your mouth. Go away. Mama look at Boo-Boo dey."

My father was a... he was a musician. He had his own calypso band, and he also played jazz, as well. And so, he was a calypsonian from Barbados, Alleyndale, Barbados. I didn't grow up with him past nine years old, seven years old. My parents were already fighting when I was seven and so we kind of got scattered around to different foster homes and stuff and by the time I was nine, they were divorced and we were staying with my mom. Yeah.

KT: And this was in what part of New York City?

OC: Brooklyn, New York, Yeah, Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood.

KT: So, your... so, it's a musical family, obviously, with your father. How about you in terms of playing an instrument?

OC: Well... me and my father weren't close when I was growing up, but I tried to be close to him. He was a saxophonist, and when I was in high school, I joined the band, tried to learn how to play saxophone, but they didn't have any more saxophones. I had to play the clarinet. And I was so good that Mr. Fisherfeld, the band director, would often say, "Chandler, you just finger. Don't blow." You know, so, I wasn't real good at it, and my father didn't help me with it at all.

But my mother had a lot of music around the house also, and I was grateful for that, because she had people like Sarah Vaughan and Ella Fitzgerald and she loved the music of Nat King Cole and Nancy Wilson and Ray Charles. So, she was singing all the time. She had a beautiful voice. Yeah. She wasn't a professional, though.

KT: Yeah. Tell me, what, you know, growing up in Brooklyn, what was your relationship? You know, I'm thinking in your early teens here or into your teen years. What would be your relationship to Harlem? Would Harlem be a place you would visit?

And I'm thinking here of the rich kind of musical culture and, just more broadly, African-American culture in Harlem. What's that like for a young black man in Brooklyn?

OC: Well, I didn't get to Harlem too much until I was a senior in high school. We had some problems at home, and I started playing what we called hooky back then my senior year. And I spent a lot of time in Harlem then, but not with music but just looking around and looking at the culture and seeing people like Daddy Grace and Malcolm X speak.

See, in 125th Street, I'd been to the Apollo a few times. And so, that was very interesting. But Brooklyn is very, very rich with a musical history of its own. And I do recall seeing a lot of music in Brooklyn. For example, you have Motown Revue. They wouldn't call it that, but you had one band, and you have Marvin Gaye. You'd have The Shirelles. You'd have The Supremes and all those people performing three or four songs each. The Temptations and Smokey Robinson and The Miracles. So, we did get to go to some of those shows, and it was very - three dollars and you get in and see everybody at the Fox and the Paramount and things like that. Yeah. It was great.

KT: And you went pretty far away for college, though.

OC: I went as far away as I could go, because it was going to be — when I finally did get back into school, in those days, the guidance counselor helped you go to college and send in your application, help you send in the application. So, I was out of school for about thirty days, almost thirty days, almost an entire month. It probably was February into March. And my guidance counselor came to my house and did everything but cuss me out, okay, kind of, sort of. "Get your behind back in there."

And so, there was like — I was accepted at Howard University, which is in

Washington, D.C., a short, six-hour drive, and I had a roommate that was going to be one of my good friends and we were going to party. And I realized that I would need, if I was going to be successful and be the first person in my family to go to college and graduate, I'd have to not be coming back home on a regular basis and not be partying so much. So, I went to MacMurray College, excuse me, in Jacksonville, Illinois. And it was so far, it took me a twenty-four hour bus ride for me to get there. I made number eleven out of a thousand students. Eleven of us were African-American. It was a culture shock for me and for them, you know.

KT: Why MacMurray? I mean, who had heard of MacMurray, of all the places to end up?

OC: I was — I had choices of Cole College, Kent College, all these little schools. I guess it was integration time and they needed the federal funds or whatever, so they had to get a few blacks in there. And I selected MacMurray out of them, because they had the best financial break for me, you know. I had scholarships and grants, and it was just like I could have picked it out of a hat, you know?

But my whole four years there, no one was ever able to — no one ever came to see me except my good friend, Mark, who was going to college at Central Michigan, and he came to visit me on the first Christmas when I was still on the basketball team, which I didn't have a basketball scholarship. I just — they just figured he's tall, he's black, he can play ball. Little did they know.

KT: Had you played in high school?

OC: No, I did not. I played in parks and, you know, gymnasiums, but, no, not really, yeah.

KT: Was there an African-American community in Jacksonville?

OC: There was, and I'm happy to say in my sophomore year, end of my sophomore year, beginning of my junior year, I organized a Black Student Union, which we coordinated with a college across town called Illinois College, another small college, and with the students there, and we formed an organization that helped tutor for remediation and acceleration the black kids, black high-school kids.

It was a bit of a challenge, because in those days, "Negro" was the going word and if people in the — the black people in the community there, they didn't like the word "Black." So, what we had to do was go to the churches and explain to them why we were trying to be part of a new national movement to provide some identity, positive identity for the students. And eventually, they did let us do that, so that was a good experience.

In fact, I got a letter last week from the college, and they wanted me to come back for Homecoming. I'm going to get a Distinguished Career Award from MacMurray College. Yeah.

KT: Are you going to make it back to Jacksonville?

OC: I'm going to go. I'm going to ride in the parade. I'm going to ride in a convertible and how do you all do it like that. I'm going to do that thing like that.

KT: And this is the fall of '64 when you start.

OC: I started in the fall of 1964.

KT: And this is just, you know, this is immediately after Mississippi Freedom Summer, and that part of Illinois is, in some ways, more connected to the South, right, than it is -

OC: Exactly. Jacksonville, Illinois was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Let

me tell you a quick story, if I may.

KT: Yeah, please.

OC: Okay. I, going back and forth was difficult. So, often, I did the Greyhound. One time our bus broke down somewhere in Ohio. And so, I said I'm going to do like my schoolmates do. They talk about hitchhiking all over the place. So, I hitchhiked, and I got to about thirty miles outside of Jacksonville at a truck stop. It was like two or three o'clock in the morning. I had a cup of coffee and got out on the road and tried to make it back to my last thirty miles. I'm on the road. I'm walking. I got my stuff is in a duffel bag, like an Army duffel bag. And I'm walking down the road. It's nighttime. I've got my thumb out, and a car is coming up. I think they're going to come at me, and it's aiming right at me. I had to dive off into the bushes and get out of the way.

Now I'm scared crazy-like, you know? So, I wait a while and then I get back on the road and worry. What am I going to do? What am I going to do? I stick my thumb out again, and these guys pick me up. Two guys in the front. I jump in. I said, "Man, thank you so much." It's been, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah. And they said, "Boy, you almost got our young'uns in trouble there. We're going to take you where you got to go. But you know niggers ain't supposed to be out past 11 o'clock around here." I was like, whoa. So, I'm not saying nothing. They told me to ask certain people, certain black people in town to learn what the... what the flavor is around here, you know? So, that was the end of my hitchhiking career. They took me right to my dorm and I got out and I was like, phew, you know?

KT: But that was a sundown town?

OC: Yeah, that's what it is. And so, they had a history of, you know, racism in

there. In fact, there's only ninety miles from St. Louis, Missouri, so, two hundred miles in Jacksonville to get to Chicago. So, you know.

KT: Right. And so, what did you do after graduation?

OC: Well... I was the oldest of my mother's four children, and for me to go to — be away from school for four — to school for four years, not hardly coming home at all, except for the summers, maybe. I worked two summers in the steel mills. So, when it came time for me to graduate, I was short two classes, and I had taken everything in the book, in the catalog, but I did not have a good relationship with my advisor. So, I never used him except to sign off. And so, it turns out I was two classes behind and I had to go to summer school.

I raised a little hell with the Dean of Men and the President. They each gave me a scholarship and I was able to buy a Volkswagen with one of those and I brought my two brothers out. My brother next to me, two-and-a-half years younger than me, he had been kicked out of high school for holding a demonstration and taking over the administration building at Boys High. And they agreed to let him come to MacMurray and get some courses that he could get his GED. And I had a younger brother than him. He was about eight years younger than I, and he was a little hustler. You know, he would shoot crap and steal money out of the vending machines and all that stuff.

So, they let them two guys come. And they both got in trouble, and I had to send them back. And so, I went to summer school and graduated, and I went to Colorado, California, Chicago, up and down the East Coast before I came back to Brooklyn. But I finally came back and had to take care of the youngest brother, who was now was getting out of juvenile detention center, Spofford Juvenile Detention Center, and he had to have a

place to stay. So, he had to stay with me.

I had to get an apartment, had to get... inspected and passed the inspection. The lady came and looked at my apartment, and I said, "Here's a mattress on the floor for him, a mattress on the floor for me." "So, well, he has to have a bed." So, I had to get him a bed. Anyway, so, I came back and finally went to work with the Department of Human Resources for the City of New York, and I ran a couple — I supervised a couple of the summer programs and programs that were designed to help low-income persons become — get careers.

KT: In the late sixties, then, in New York, what was your involvement with music? Were you just strictly a fan?

OC: Yeah. I went to a lot of clubs. I went to the Blue Note. Jazz. I love jazz, and I was privileged to see a lot of people like Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Pharoah Sanders, and Slug's, went to Slug's. And, oh, man, it was just a beautiful scene, Brooklyn and went to some clubs in the Village and stuff like that. It was really a great time to be around music. We didn't even know how great it was until now we look back and say, wow. Yeah.

KT: But jazz would have been your main focus musically?

OC: Well, yeah. But, see, Brooklyn, they used to call it a melting pot, but it's more like a patchwork quilt as far as communities. In fact, in my high school years, in a neighborhood called Bushwick, where the people went three blocks, Evergreen and Central Avenue, it was a German neighborhood. You went four more blocks this way, it was an Italian neighborhood. If you're going the other way, it was a Puerto Rican neighborhood, and then it was a West Indian neighborhood. And so, everywhere you go,

you got music and sound. You got sounds. You got aromas of food and languages and accents and everything. So, it wasn't really quite a melting pot.

So, we had a great number of musical influences. In fact, two of my best friends are Panamanian, and we go to Panamanian dances and things like that. And when we went to house parties, which we gave some, as well, you'd have your R&B, but you'd also have what we call Latin, you know, salsa kind of music. And all the parties would have a break, a salsa break somewhere in there where now you do this and that, just salsa stuff. Man, it was great. I was good at that.

KT: What about, because your passion, you know, through the radio program, or one of the passions, is Caribbean music. And I'm wondering if was that part of that experience in the late 60s, early 70s?

OC: Yes. We had what we call a — we called it the West Indian Day Parade around Labor Day, every Labor Day. Eastern Park, where one of the bigger streets cuts right through Brooklyn. They'd have a parade that ended up in Prospect Park. And it was like a — it was almost like Carnival, but not quite.

But it was, I would say, and I'd tell anybody this. I have Jamaicans say, "Why are you playing my music on the radio? You're not from Jamaica. We're right down here." And I say, "Well, we got more West Indians in Brooklyn than you all have in any — in Kingston, Jamaica." So, and it's true. Any capital in the Caribbean, we would have more of those people in Brooklyn, all right? So. Brooklyn would be the fifth-largest city in the country if it wasn't part of New York, New York City.

KT: And what brought you to Charleston, South Carolina?

OC: Well, that would be my lovely wife, and may she rest in peace. She passed

away about seven years ago, and she was from here. And I met here in Brooklyn. Her mother passed away when she was around thirteen, and her sister married one of my cousins. And I told you about graduating from college in '68 with the help of all my seven aunts and two uncles, care packages and three dollars a month here and like that. And so, when I finally came back, I owed it to my family to go around and show them the diploma. I mean, I was one of the first ones to graduate among my many, many cousins.

And when I went to Bud and Pearl's house, which was Sadeeka's — my wife was Sadeeka and her sister was Pearl, who was married to my cousin Bud. I went to their house. There she was. Six feet tall, Afro, mini skirt. What could I do? I was smitten. So, she eventually came. We had a little split. She came down here, and I eventually came, came down here, as well, on a visit and stayed. And in addition to our two boys, we ended up having a baby girl, and we were married for over forty years when she passed away.

KT: And she's a native of South Carolina, of the Lowcountry?

OC: Summerville.

KT: She was born in —

OC: Ridgeville.

KT: Okay.

OC: She was born in Ridgeville, grew up in Lincolnton and Summerville, yeah.

KT: When did she move to New York?

OC: She moved to New York when she was thirteen. And now she was eighteen when I met her, and probably she was 21 when we split up for a short period of time.

KT: And what did you do when you got to Charleston and just I'm curious about that experience and Charleston. And was this 1977?

OC: Yeah. November the fourth.

KT: You know the exact date?

OC: Exact date, yeah. I do. Well, when I was in college, they had a radio station on campus, which I immediately took to. And in the high-school years, we had a social club and we gave a lot of parties and I was the DJ. So, now I'm in college and I see a radio station and my eyes light up and I start, and I had an R&B, rock-and-roll show, which I had mixed the music of Mick Jagger with The Temptation, Beatles with the — everything, I kind of mixed it up. It was really a great time. I met another fellow and a young lady and we started a jazz show, as well. We had a jazz show and I had an R&B show and with them, I had a jazz show.

So, when I came to Charleston, I was working with the South Carolina Department of Labor, and a friend of mine told — and my coworkers told me about a jazz show on the radio run by a guy named Tony Robertson, who has now passed away. The studio was on Broad Street right downtown in what they call the — I forget, The People's Building or something like that. Anyway, so, a building right there on Broad and State with two lines on the — out front. And Tony, I called up Tony and asked him if I could come by. He said, "Sure. Bring a couple of your records." I came.

Now, this is real. It's almost fantasy, but it's real. I got there. It was like six o'clock in the evening. The place was closed except for — he told me I had to come upstairs. I got in and I met him and I said, "Wow, this looks like the studio we had in college." He said, "Really?" He said, "Would you like to play, spin a couple of records?" I said, "I

would." And he said, "Well, look, I'm going to go downstairs to the Hungry Lion and get something to eat. Play a couple of records, but don't open the mic." I said, "Okay."

I think I played Yusef Lateef and Rahsaan Roland Kirk tunes. He came back and said, "How did it go?" I said, I told him, showed him what I played. He said, "Okay. Go ahead and back-announce those," meaning say what you played. I did. He said, "Well, look, you look like you know what you're doing here. Today is my last day. Would you like to take over my show?" I said, "Sure." And he gave me the keys, told me what to do to make it — localize it, because we were connected to the network out of Columbia. "When you come in, flip this switch, do that, do that, and when you're finished, do that and do that."

So, I did all of that. And I must have been on the air for a month and a half or two months before anybody noted, I mean, the local people knew that I was there, because they leave at five. I'd get there at six-thirty for the seven-to-nine show. And that's how I met Jack.

KT: Well, was he, I mean, was he setting you up? I mean, did he have you in mind as a possible replacement, do you think?

OC: No. We never met before. This was my first time meeting him. And he was not — he hadn't told them he was leaving. He was just going to walk away from it. He was a volunteer. I was a volunteer. So, it wasn't like anything had to be done in HR to get the money, right? So —

KT: So, you met Jack, though, in those early years.

OC: I was on the air and I was playing John Coltrane, Miles Davis or something and Jack McCray and Walter Rhett, who was another guy you might want to talk to, he's

a historian, they were coming back from Orangeburg and they heard me on the air. I hadn't met Jack yet. He called up and said, "Man, who is this? They don't play this stuff in Charleston." I said, "Yeah?" So, we talked, and he came by, came by the same night and we hung out for a while and became good friends.

And he began to help me with the show, because the station asked me at some point — it must have been about three months later, they had a spot on Saturday night they wanted to fill with another jazz show. And Jack and Walter — I bounced it off of Jack and Walter. I said, "How about we do a roots music karamu?" Karamu is a Swahili word that means "feast." I said, "We can play — we can play a feast of African-rooted musics." Anything with a drum and bass is rooted in Africa, in my opinion.

So, I had — the idea was to play blues and highlife and juju and reggae and calypso and soca and just kind of mix it all in there. And so, I sold that to the station, and they said, "Okay, whatever. Do whatever you want." And so, Jack McCray helped me with the jazz show, and now I got two shows in one week and a regular job and three kids and a wife. So, Jack helped me with the jazz show. He eventually took it over, and I continued with roots music. But then, you had this guy Gary Erwin. Do you know Gary?

KT: Was he a reporter?

OC: Gary Erwin is a blues guy. We call him Shrimp City Slim. He came on. He had a blues show.

KT: Sure.

OC: And then he had a South of Louisiana show. And he had another — he had three shows on his station. He was kind of cringing in on my territory, so I kind of camped out the Caribbean and held tight there. And then, you had Afropop Worldwide

was a syndicated African music show. And so, I kind of camped out on the Caribbean and made it mostly reggae.

KT: That was your niche.

OC: Yeah.

KT: Yeah.

OC: So, that's how I got there. But I love reggae music, but I love jazz, I love R&B and I love country music. I mean, I've been blessed. Yeah.

KT: You also began promoting shows, right, and...

OC: Yeah.

KT: ...and then, you know, further down the road, you know, working more with the city and with some of these festivals.

OC: Exactly.

KT: But can you, yeah, tell me a little bit about working with Jack in the...

OC: Well, the first time —

KT: ...70s and 80s and the kinds of things that you were doing then.

OC: Jack McCray, Walter Rhett, Tony Robertson, Bob Small, and I, we founded, we were called the Group for Integrated Studies. They formed the group. I joined in. And we got a deal to help do the first, well, second Piccolo Spoleto Festival, and we contracted with the city to do ten events — fourteen events in ten days. And this is one of the greatest things that ever happened to me.

Jack and Walter knew all these local musicians who were now working as cab drivers and waiters and schoolteachers and principals and stuff, and he formed jam sessions all over town, living rooms all over town, where these guys actually came

together and played music. George Kenny. You talked about Lonnie Hamilton. And we did that, and we also had some avant-garde jazz, which was unheard of. We had —

KT: Here?

OC: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Carlos Garnett and the Universal Black Force was at — at that time and around the Market there was a Gourmetisserie. There was a food court inside. And several buildings down, but they're not even there anymore. But you close down the food court and at night, we'd put up a stage and brought all of these artists in there.

And the city was like you're never going to get anybody in here with this avant-garde jazz and this reggae stuff. And we said we would, and we had a little debate on how we were going to split the money. And the cultural-affairs coordinator at the time said, "Well, you guys keep whatever you can get, because you ain't going to make no money." Man, we had lines around the block two nights in a row for the reggae, first time ever in Charleston, Reggae 1979 — no, it must have been 1979 or '80. And it was, whew, we made a lot of money.

KT: So, '79, '80 was — and was this a DJ spinning records, or this was live reggae?

OC: Live reggae.

KT: And who would you have brought in, then?

OC: We put in a group called Denroy Morgan & the Black Eagles. And they were—

KT: From Jamaica?

OC: Yeah, but they were living in Brooklyn, and I knew them. I knew them from

Brooklyn, because, well, I don't know if the statute of limitations is up on that yet, so I'm going to hold off on that. But I knew them from Brooklyn.

KT: Oh, do tell. We'll edit later if it's a problem.

OC: Okay. Well, there was a blackout and there was a big hullabaloo all over Brooklyn and I remember seeing these guys — I'm not going to tell. I'm not going to tell. Because now... Denroy Morgan, he lived around, a couple of blocks from where I lived in Bushwick. I didn't know him personally, but I had seen him. And we decide to contract to bring them in.

And we went to pick them up, and we didn't know about you got to fly these guys. We drove up, me and Bob Small drove up in an RV, put a U-Haul in the back of it and brought the band down so that they could play. And he had a bunch of kids in their garage playing reggae music. Eventually, they became one of the top five reggae groups in the world, Morgan Heritage. If you ever heard of Morgan Heritage, this was their father and uncle that we had here for the first Reggae in Charleston. Yeah.

KT: And people just responded positively to reggae from the beginning.

OC: Well, I would say yes.

KT: I guess Bob Marley had already made it as an international figure and others, so.

OC: In fact, 1981, we had Peter Tosh at the Gaillard Auditorium. That was with the help of Larry Walker and the owners of a club called Miskins. And that was crazy. But, yeah, so, at that time, ninety percent of my audiences would be white. Most black people in Charleston did not like reggae. At least, they thought they didn't. But my opinion on that was that they hadn't been exposed to it.

Because you look on, of course, any bridge here, you see a bunch of boats. And those boats go places. They've been places. But it was my experience that native Charlestonians, black Charlestonians, if they lived West of the Ashley, they may come downtown, but they don't go East Cooper or North Charleston, and vice versa. So, they hadn't been anywhere.

In fact, when I had, when I was working for the Department of Labor, it was my job to work with migrants and seasonal farm workers. And I had a secretary who lived right downtown off of Columbus Street. And I had three social workers and her. She always was at the office, and one day, she asked if she could go with us to the community. So, we said okay. And we were going out to... Adams Run and we got to that bridge right at the end of Spring Street there and the bridge was open and she had never seen the bridge open before. So, I say that to say that they had not been exposed to the music.

In fact, the guy named Tony Jameson, who was the music director of WWZ, WWJZ, he hired me to play from midnight to 6:00 A.M. on Saturday and midnight to 6:00 A.M. on Sunday, reggae. And so, I took the job, but I was playing and people would call me up, "Take that crap off! We don't need to hear that monkey music! It was blackface and black-oriented music."

I said, "Tony, I can't take this, man. I'm out of here." He said, "No, just don't answer the phone. They don't know. Just don't answer the phone." And I was also deejaying at a club around the same time on Sundays from 9:00 to 2:00 and from 9:00 to midnight, I was supposed to play reggae and from midnight to 2:00, mix it all up. And the people in the club were cussing me out, too. "Take that! We don't want to hear that

banana-boat music!" And so, I started playing Michael Jackson, and the owner came and said the same thing to me, "Play what I hired you to play."

And lo and behold, over time, the audiences became more and more, let's say, integrated. And by the time we hit the 90s, I was having big shows at the King Street Palace: Third World, Steel Pulse, Burning Spear, or Lucky Dube I had, or the Mighty Diamonds or Coach, I mean, all the world-class groups. And then, so, the audiences were becoming more and more black. I said, "We're going to make a lot of money next week when we bring in the Third World," because we were about almost fifty-fifty. But then the white people fell off the — fell off the cliff. Yeah, we got too black.

KT: Interesting. So, what happened? It became too black.

OC: Yeah. We still were making money, but —

KT: Reggae became too black for the white audience.

OC: Yeah, yeah. And it's strange now, because in the clubs, if you go to the Music Farm or The Pour House to see a show, it's going to be mostly white folks there, but it's going to be a good sprinkling of blacks. But for the free shows, like Moja Festival or Piccolo Spoleto Festival or even a less-expensive show at James Island County Park is going to be highly integrated, a good mix of people. And I would always say that's why I like reggae music. It brings all kind of people together. Yeah, one of the things I love about it.

KT: Tell me, I mean, there's so much I could ask you here, but tell me about — so, what role, when Peter Tosh came to the Gaillard, did you play any kind of particular role in that?

OC: Well, I had brokered the deal, I mean, because I had contacts with the music

world, being on the radio. And I had been a volunteer all this time, and people would make fun — some would make fun of me, "Oh, you volunteered? They could never get me to volunteer." Well, you don't know what you're talking about, because I met all of these people. So, I got Peter Tosh in. I was the emcee at the Gaillard Auditorium. Wow.

KT: So, you introduced Peter Tosh?

OC: I did. And —

KT: Do you remember what you said?

OC: I do. He had a song called "Stepping Razor." "I'm a stepping razor. Don't watch my size. I'm dangerous." You know? And so, when I introduced him, I gave a litany of many of the songs that he was famous for, "Downpressor" and "Get Up, Stand Up." And now, ladies and gentleman, boys and girls, show your love for..." I pulled a big dagger out of my waistband. "For Stepping Razor!" Things went nuts. Oh, Lord, I went nuts! Man, he came out. Boy, they put on a heck of a show, a hell of a show.

KT: I hope there's a picture of that.

OC: There is. My friend Wendell Johnson took a photograph of that. I got it. I had on a black shirt with a shiny green front, like sequins almost, and I had a shirt with a flock, red shirt, tee shirt underneath with a black line. Oh, man, it was great.

KT: What year was the Tosh show?

OC: That was 1980, maybe '81. And the people that were backing it up, they were wondering, uh-oh, we're not selling enough tickets early, which happens a lot in Charleston. And so, they put Charles Earland, who was an organist, a jazz organist, they put him on the bill, and then we brought in a guy named Rolly Gray. We had three acts. Rolly Gray was a Trinidadian, so he had a lot of calypso and steel-pan music. It was a

great night of music. Oh, yeah. We broke even.

KT: And then, how did you, you know, with promoting the shows at the Palace, I mean, you played a similar role sometimes emceeing...

OC: Yes. All that time emceeing —

KT: ...but also kind of serving as a middle person and making it happen.

OC: Yeah, which bands should we get? I would broker that. And I was getting like 10 percent of the gig, not the gross, but the gig. Oh, man, the net, I mean, ten percent of the gross, not the net, yeah. So, that was a great time. And we made decent money each time. I mean, I think the lady was Mary Feldman was the — she was running that facility, and she consulted on which group should we bring and that's how that worked out.

KT: Who do you know? Who's going to draw?

OC: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

KT: Do you have a particular Charleston musical moment that just really stands out as the, you know, the show that you wish you could transport yourself back to, or the song, even?

OC: Oh, I had so many great times, it's hard to say. But that Peter Tosh show was great. But before I brought Peter Tosh, I was trying to broker a deal to bring Bob Marley. And the guy that was running their — the Gaillard Auditorium at the time, he ran the numbers and said, "You're not going to make any money with Bob Marley unless you have two shows." I said, "Well, let's have two shows." He said he wouldn't. He wouldn't approve it. And I didn't know how to get around him.

And then Bob died the next year, and that's how we brought in Peter Tosh. So, if I

had the opportunity, I think I would be a little more — I'd go back in time and put my arm around — my fingers around his neck — no, somehow convince him that this is going to work, okay? Let's bring Bob Marley here. Yeah. But the Peter Tosh was the militant of the group, so, I mean, in Charleston, South Carolina in 1980, '81, I mean, this is phenomenal, phenomenal, because it was protest music, his music, yeah.

KT: Do you remember any kind of, any — how did that play politically and, you know, was there any kind of resistance or backlash?

OC: None that I know of, but I can tell you this. During those four or five years that we had that run at the King Street Palace, I lived right across the street, and Charleston Police Department required us to have a certain amount of their officers as security and we had to pay them and etc. And looking at what was happening at the King Street Palace when my reggae shows, we had to have more security than they had to have when they had white shows, country-music shows.

Now, reggae music, Walter Rhett wrote an article about me, and he said there's never been any bombs at reggae shows, whether in the park, the Customs House, or in the clubs, never. But after, what do you call it, Western music, Country Western music, there would be — my lawn would be littered with beer bottles and stuff, yee haw, all that kind of stuff. But they had less security and all of that. So, that kind of stuff played out.

In fact, they had a hip hop show that the police almost provoked it there, going to riot. Oh, and another time — no, I'll hold off on that. It'll come up.

KT: Well, I was going to ask you, did you then, you know, at some point, did you start promoting hip hop shows?

OC: No.

KT: Never?

OC: Just jazz, a few jazz shows and reggae. Some avant-garde jazz shows with Jack and Walter when we brought The Art Ensemble of Chicago or we brought, I can't remember, Donald Berg, the trumpet player.

KT: But who would come out for the AACM, though?

OC: Well, about 250 people in the Gaillard Auditorium, which was like about 2,500, so ten percent.

KT: But that's about 200 more than I would expect to show up for avant-garde jazz.

OC: Well, we had a contract with the College of Charleston to promote that show, and when they learned who was coming, they'd dropped all the promotional stuff. So, we had to put out our own — I might have one of them. We had to put out our own newsletter to promote it, yeah.

KT: You had mentioned Miskins, but what were some of the other clubs to hear, you know, not just jazz or reggae, but in, say, in the 1980s, what were the clubs?

OC: Yeah, the club on Meeting Street that just reopened — I don't know if they used the same name — called Touch of Class. If you go to Meeting and Line, make a left, and it's right there on the right-hand side up from Church's Chicken. There was another club called Moulin Rouge on Rutledge Avenue, and across the street from the Moulin Rouge, there was Wright's Place, W-R-I-G-H-T, Wright's Place. We had some good times there. There was the Faculty Lounge. We had some jazz shows there, which was probably wasn't as big as this room right here, a really narrow, narrow, narrow facility. And we — then there was a couple of places out in Mount Pleasant and Johns Island.

KT: Some of the small clubs?

OC: Small clubs, yeah, on James Island, as well. And then there was a Graylord's, which is one of my favorite clubs, over in Maryville, which is no longer there, but it was a nice, nice venue, as well.

KT: Yeah.

OC: Yeah.

KT: And those, it would be a mix of kind of rhythm and blues and soul and...

OC: Yeah. Yeah, and jazz. But the — not the avant-garde jazz, avant-garde, just rhythmic jazz, you know, with a nice beat and everything. And it was more socializing than music appreciation, but it was good. It was a good time to be had. I miss those days, you know.

KT: Well, can you help me understand? I've been Charleston eight years and -

OC: From where?

KT: I grew up in the Midwest. I'm actually a Chicagoan.

OC: Is that right?

KT: And but most immediately, I was coming from Chapel Hill. And but I'm curious in just in getting kind of the trajectory since you've been here. Was there a — can you say, was there a high point?

OC: Yes.

KT: Like the early 90s and then things go down or, you know, the 80s.

OC: I would say all up until —

KT: From your perception, yeah. How?

OC: I think the trajectory went up, up, up all the way until the mid-90s or

something, you know, and then as... as we got older, we kind of started falling back, you know? So, I would say until the mid-90s or even almost the 2000s, it was really jumping. My sons, both of my sons play music on the radio, reggae music on the radio, and take my show from time to time if I can't make it. And they got their friends involved. In fact, some of their friends ended up being in reggae bands and went on to reggae bands. Da'Gullah Rootz came out of that. Papparabi came out of that, you know?

So, that was the high point. I think we have been in a lull, but I don't think this a declining lull. It's just a kind of right there. I think it's poised to come back when the next generation takes over.

KT: When you're talking about a lull, are you talking about reggae in particular, or are you talking about just the music scene in general?

OC: I'm talking about reggae in particular and some of it with jazz, because jazz now, you can hardly catch real jazz in a club. It's going to be a concert, you know? And sometimes I think reggae is kind of getting to that. I couldn't bring the Marleys here now unless you got a big, giant venue, you know? So, it would have to be a concert. Excuse me. But, so, that's where the lull is. And I don't know what this next generation wants to do, and so it'll be up to them to figure it out, you know? Yeah. Because I did what I wanted to do, and I had a ball.

We used to do boat rides. I mean, I used to deejay boat rides, three or four boat rides a year for twelve years. I mean, it was great, get out on the river, Reggae on the River. That's what we used to call it. Moonlight Reggae Harbor Cruise, two hours floating up and down. I had a deejay playing the reggae for me, because I was the ambassador, so I had to go around and dance with the ladies and carry on, you know.

KT: You just had to.

OC: I had to. It was my job.

KT: Well, tell me about that, though, because, you know, you've been deejaying since you were a teenager, basically. Tell me about that. You know, what do you like about that experience of being the DJ?

OC: Well, I remember when I started deejaying. I went to public school. I went to Catholic school till the fifth grade, and then when my parents separated — we got real poor real fast — I went to public school. And in public school, I was so far ahead of what they were doing at my grade level, that I became the audiovisual guy, the school crossing, anything extracurricular I got to do. So, I played records in the classes for the teachers when they needed that, showed films.

And I remember in junior high school, I was going to every — once a month or so, we'd have a dance at the gym. And it would start out like the guys on one side and the girls on the other. And so, you'd walk all the way across to the other, the whole gym, and ask the girl for a dance and she'd say no. Then you'd ask her friend, and she'd say no. And you're so afraid. You know what's going to happen. You go down the line and everybody says no, and now you got to go back across the room and your friends are snickering at you, right?

So, I said I'm not going to continue that. I'm going to be the DJ. And then, you know, so, that's how I started deejaying. I had a social club called the [00:40:38 Syntherians], and we'd give parties and help out with — sometimes it would be waistline parties. Whatever the size of your waist, that would be how much you paid, thirty-two cents or twenty-eight cents. And we got jackets and things like that. And then with the

extra money, we took the kids in the neighborhood to the zoo and park picnics and things like that. We were a good — we were what you'd call nerds or geeks or something like that. I don't know. We were good guys.

So, that's why I started DJing. And when I got in college, like I told you, I got on the radio station there, and the rest is history.

KT: But I'm wondering, it's... I'm just thinking about this, the job of a DJ or the passion of a DJ. And there's got to be some impulse toward, you know, it's your excitement for this music and this, you know, desire to share that.

OC: It's true, and it's a lot of pressure on the DJ, because people think they know what they want. But they don't really want that all the time. So, for example, I would be hired to play a wedding reception or a bar mitzvah or something like that, and you want to make the people dance. But reggae music doesn't really make you dance, per se, you know? So, I've got Bob Marley going and I've got Steel Pulse and Third World going. But if I want to make the people dance, I got to put on The Mighty Sparrow or some calypso, and that gets them going. Then you put the reggae on and they stay with it and they stay with it and then it kind of dies down and you got to pop in another calypso.

But it's a lot of pressure, man. I don't like DJing anymore. I can't do it anymore, because, you know, argh, you know. I don't know if I can make the people dance or not. I had one guy, Lance Stark, who is a reggae guitarist and had his own band. And I got him a gig at [00:42:27 KOR] and I went out to see him play. And he has a song called "Get Up and Dance," and everybody was just sitting around and he's playing "Get Up and Dance" and then he started to berate the crowd, "Why are you all not dancing? I'm playing this music." I said, "Lance, you can't do that. Don't do that. If they're not dancing,

that's your fault, you know?"

And that's the way it is with the DJ. If they're not dancing, that's your fault. You got to figure out how to make that work. Yeah. So, certain songs would make them get up. Yeah.

KT: But it's that combination of giving the people what they want but you want to challenge them a little bit.

OC: Yeah, exactly. So, like being on the radio, when I told you about the I'm not playing for a month, not answering the phone for a month, and then when I answered or started answering the phone again, they say, "Man, play that song by the yellow guy." There's an artist named Yellowman that's very, very rhythmic, a very good guy. "Or play that one by — talking about the night nurse," Gregory Isaacs. And so, once they heard it, they see that as not impossible and it gets into them.

It's a heartbeat, and when you talk to reggae artists, in those days, they would say reggae is the music of the beat of the heart, you know. I think it had a little more to do with smoking marijuana, because before that, before that, they were playing what they call mento and then there was ska and they're both upbeat, like almost like calypso. I think them guys got together and started smoking them blunts and stuff and it's slowed — "Hey, slow that down, mon!" You know? And [beats out fast rhythm] went to [beats out slow rhythm]. Don't tell anybody I said that. It's not documented.

KT: It makes sense. It makes sense.

OC: Yeah. So, it's been a great ride. In fact, I guess I will make it known here, probably this is going to be my last year doing the Moja Festival reggae, black bands. So, if they want to continue that, maybe one of my sons can do it or maybe they'll get

somebody else. Yeah, but, you know, like I said, I'm 70 years old now. It's been a great time, but it's getting to be a little stressful and less fun.

I look at the audience, anyways. There's nobody out there, not very many people 65, 70 anymore. There's a different group, and those other folks that I was playing music for and with, they were my friends, too. You know? So, it was great. Yeah.

KT: Well, is there a... you know, you've also, you know, being involved in the local music scene, and I've been trying to pull this out of all of the artists who visited the class, is I'm curious if there are things that you think are unique to Charleston's music scene or unique to the music of Charleston.

OC: Well, one of the reasons I think that I was able to bring so many bands here to Charleston, reggae bands, that is, is because the geography, the topography is similar to many of their homes in the Caribbean. So, those guys, when they would come, Reggae Band Mojo Nigh or Identity, or any of those guys, they'd come on a Friday. I might get them two nights at the clubs, and in those days, they'd spend the night at my house here for two thirds of it, to limit their starting to meeting the girls and the girls started taking them home. But they'd sleep on my floor. They'd cook [00:45:25 eye towel] food, I mean, good food.

And at the time, I was founder of the Ebony City Soccer Club, the first African-American-oriented youth soccer club, but we had kids of all races. But I didn't know how to play soccer, but those guys did. They'd come out and play soccer with us, man. They'd show the kids some techniques and some defense techniques and skills with the ball that those kids could now practice on their own. I thought that was unique. And so, so that flavor of the Caribbean, that flavor is here, you know?

You know probably the relationship between Charleston and Barbados, so that's Caribbean. That's documented. And so, I think that's one of the unique things about Charleston, is its topography and its relationship to the Caribbean and Africa. Remember, sixty percent of Africans that came to America were imported through Sullivan's Island. They came through Charleston.

And the same way they talk about Gullah Geechee, I think that influences that... that Gullah Geechee thing had me thrown for a good little while here. I told you my best friend, two of my good friends are Panamanian, but I could hardly understand their parents' speech when they were talking to me, because they had that heavy accent, patois. And when I moved here, it was similar. And I remember playing something about punanny on the radio, and a Jamaican guy called me and said, "You can't play that on the radio!" I didn't know what he was talking about, so.

But there was a time when my daughter used to go to a daycare center. It was right across the street from a grocery store that had a license that you could go in the grocery store and drink beer there. So, it was always a gathering place, right on Line, right down the street here, Line and Ashley. And my daughter would go there from the — they would pick her up from the daycare center for me until I could get there. And those guys, and they would be drinking and talking. I didn't know what the heck they were talking about.

And then one day, it clicked. I understood what they were saying. Then I understood what the Jamaicans were saying, and I understood what the Panamanians were saying. And so, that whole thing is all, it's related. Just like I said, the roots music karamu, to show all those things are related. And I learned that firsthand through that

experience.

I think the guy who ran that store, his name was Yadi. And Yadi, which is — which I don't know how he got that name, but it didn't mean the same thing to him that it would mean to somebody from Jamaica, where they say they're from "yaad." So, they're yaadies from Jamaica. They're yaadies. Yeah.

KT: What about in terms of like do you think there's something unique about jazz? If you hear Charleston jazz or jazz from Charleston natives, do you think there's anything unique there that stands out?

OC: I don't believe so. Jack McCray probably would differ with me. He preaches a mantra that said jazz was not born in New Orleans. It was not born in St. Louis. It was born in many places around the same time. It all came kind of crumbled up together and spread out and fell back down.

So, I don't know of anything in the jazz genre that is unique to Charleston, although they have had some great jazz musicians from here, but they went to other places. And I guess they took whatever they took with them from their Jenkins Orphanage experiences, etc. and added that to Duke Ellington's band or Count Basie's band or Dizzy Gillespie's band. But I couldn't say, "Oh, that sounds South Carolinian.

KT: Right, right, right.

OC: But I can tell the difference between — often, not every time, but between Jamaican reggae and USA reggae.

KT: I was going to ask you about that.

OC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's a... it's a little less rootsy, US reggae, but some of those guys do their own work, and they can really sound authentic and then give it — you got

to give it — then you're doing music, you got to give it what is you, you know? You can't just mimic and copy. So, I can generally tell the difference, but it's not less good. It's just it's different, you know?

KT: The American sound is cleaner, maybe more kind of — would it be more rock?

OC: It sounds — let me think about that for a second. It's more predictable, is what I would say. It's more predictable. And sometimes, those bands get a little lazy, and so they're not pushing the beat. They're falling back onto the beat, whereas I think they should be in front of the beat. That's the best way I can tell it. So, sometimes I will tell that to an upcoming band. There's a band here in Charleston. I forget the name of them. They've been around a long time. But they just don't push the beat, man. They just make you tired. Ugh.

KT: It's too laid back.

OC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, they think that's the way it is. Come on. Get on top of it. Be on top of it.

KT: I guess maybe not having gone through a ska phase, maybe they're completely divorced from that tradition, whereas the Jamaicans would have been, many of them, would have, you know —

OC: I don't expect —

KT: What — oh, go ahead.

OC: Nowadays, almost everything that comes out of Jamaica is called reggae, but I don't believe that, you know. To me, the music I play on the radio is uplifting music. I'm not going to play hip hop reggae, unless it's positivity. I say we play that old-school

reggae and the contemporary reggae that has that old-school flavor. That's kind of how I put it, you know. Like Morgan Heritage would fit that, or NKulee Dube, Lucky Dube's daughter, would fit that. But not everybody that comes out of Jamaica, not every song that comes out of Jamaica is reggae, not for my show. Yeah. Okay.

KT: Let me open it up here. Are there questions from the students? Anyone?

Question: What's your favorite artist? Who is your favorite artist, sir, coming up and now, growing up and now today?

OC: It's hard to have a favorite, except in reggae. Every week, I play a Bob Marley song, at least two. I got two hours on the radio, and in at least one of those hours, you're going to hear Bob Marley sing or hear one of his songs performed by someone else. So, Bob Marley by far and away is my favorite reggae artist. As far as other music, I love John Coltrane, Miles Davis. I really love Alan Move and I like a lot of blues. Oh, Jimmy Reed is my favorite blues artist, you know. So, that's the kind of stuff I would mix up on there. Thank you for asking.

Question: I got a question. I am curious about the education of a DJ. Where are you getting your information? Are you following somebody? to keep learning about the music that you love?

OC: It's difficult in Charleston, because I'm the guy, you know? People want to know, they come to me. But, so, it's kind of difficult. But in this age, it's not as hard. Back in the day, back in the used-to-be, they would send me LPs to promote on the air, and they'd also have a sheet that comes with the music that tells you about the artist, some biographical information about the players of instruments and the singers of songs. And so, that's where I would get my information.

And now when I travel back to New York and go through D.C. or whatever, I'm always flipping the radio to hear what's on, what's on and who's playing what and I make notes and then I come back and I look those people up. But so, that's why I say on the radio, I'm not a DJ. I'm a producer. I'm a host and a producer, because a DJ, in my opinion, on the radio, they just play what is told to them.

And this was one of the questions you had - no, you didn't ask me that. Adam Parker, you did ask me. They play what's told to them. I play what I want. So, for example, I mentioned all the music I play is positive. It could be about love between a man and a woman. It could be about love of your people. It can be about politics, what's happening in the world, not strictly politics, but something positive. So, that's what I play.

And you asked me, I believe, do I think music, how it influences people and what kind of thing it can have on you. I think subconsciously, it does get into your brain. I'm listening to songs. I'm knowing the words to songs I hate, because I'm listening every morning. I listen to the Tom Joyner Morning Show. But I don't like the music, but I like to hear what they're talking about. And so, I can hear a song, and I know the lyrics to this stuff. I mean, it's crazy. I don't want that in my head. Let it out of here. I'd rather have "Get Up, Stand Up," or "One Love," you know, ringing around in my brain.

KT: Were there particular radio personalities who've had an influence on your approach to being a host?

OC: Well, I would say yes, in terms of I, growing up, I really enjoyed Wolfman Jack. We had a good guy named The Magnificent Montague, Jocko, a guy named Jocko. I really would like to have been him. He had a little thing he'd say. "Hey, hey, tiddly dock. Yo, this is the Jock, and I'm back on the scene with the record machine. The correct

time now, 8:15." And the Magnificent Montague, he'd come on with these girls singing, just, "Montague... the Magnificent... the man with soul to entertain you." I mean, they were elaborate. I mean, they were personalities. And so, I did listen to that stuff, and I guess it did influence me.

Vaughn Harper, up in there, went to Boys High when I was there. He was a very popular nighttime DJ. What did they call that music from like 10:00 till 3:00 A.M.?

KT: The graveyard?

OC: No, no, not the graveyard. It was like — oh, they had a term for it. I can't remember. But it was like Velvet Soul or something like that, because it was all slow songs, like, "All right, good morning, ladies and gentlemen," you know, that kind of stuff, talking like he's going to melt your heart, you know.

KT: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. The Venus Flytrap played that on WKRP in Cincinnati. That was his niche.

OC: Yeah, exactly, exactly.

KT: Other questions?

KT: I was wondering if you can point to, just in terms of being a local taste maker, can you point to concrete —

OC: For the people that ask questions.

KT: Oh, great. If you can point to particular — you know, what's been your legacy on Charleston's music scene?

OC: Well... I'm happy to say that over the years, my involvement with jazz has uplifted local musicians, which they deserve. Over the years, we have brought reggae. I brought reggae to Charleston. Nobody was doing this before. Miskins, around the same

time, they had a band playing called, named Crusher, but that was in the club, sixty, seventy people. So, I brought reggae through Charleston. I got it into parks. I got it into schools. I would get a band.

If I got a band playing two nights here, like Friday night and Saturday night, they'd be in the school Friday doing something that Burke or James Simons School for the people. And everywhere I'd go, almost everywhere I'd go, people would say, "Oh, he's the reggae guy." So, in addition to having had a career in education, where I helped adults go to college, through the Educational Opportunity Center, that was my real job, but my legacy is that I brought people their culture, because there's reggae.

Even though it comes from Jamaica, it's our culture. That Gullah Geechee connection is here, I mean, more than almost any other place. I mean, there are other places, I'm sure, but it's essential for here. And it has opened the doors for me to do other cultural things. I work with the Avery Research Center. I do the — conduct an annual remembrance program to remember those Africans that perished in the Middle Passage who often get overlooked. We talked about slavery, but we don't talk about how did that happen. And it's important, in my opinion, to bring that forward.

So, there's music. All my life has been, like everything ties together. My kids, my wife, I mean, they supported everything I did, and not only supported but were involved with those things, as well. And they're still carrying that forward in their own ways. My daughter, right now, she works in the US Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica. She's in the Coast Guard. She's a Chief Petty Officer, and her job is a Special Assistant to the Military Attaché to Jamaica. And the head of their Defense Force has just retired. She had to host a party for him. Oh, well, a reception or whatever you call that. I don't know.

So, I mean, you know, I've just been blessed. It's been a blessing. I think I've been a blessing for the community, and I know the community has been a blessing for me. It's — I never would have thought I'd come to Charleston, South Carolina, period, you know what I mean? Charleston? You must be crazy. I remember my father would tell me. He played — one of the bands he played in was Billie Holiday's band, and he remembers coming through Charleston, through South Carolina and not being able to eat or sleep anywhere, you know? They had to send somebody to a restaurant to get sandwiches and stuff and bring them on the bus. He said he'd never come back here.

But he did tell me this, and he had an eighth-grade education, but he was smart. He said, "When you go to Charleston, you're going to have cousins there. I don't know their names, but they took the same trip on the same ship. We just got off in different places." I told you he's from Barbados, so he knew that. And it took me years to really learn that from the Carolina Caribbean Association. They did some documentation of that. You might want to talk to Rhoda Beck or...

KT: Green.

OC: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Rhoda Green, yeah.

KT: Yeah, yeah. Did your father ever record?

OC: Yes. He recorded a couple of albums with a bass player that just passed away from the Savannah area. His name was Ahmed Abdul-Malik. Yeah. And my father wrote two or three of the songs that's on his album.

KT: And your father's name?

OC: Taft Chandler. T-A-F-T, Chandler.

KT: Okay.

OC: Yeah. Yeah.

KT: Great. Other questions? Last chance. How about anything that, you know, we may have touched on that you wanted to elaborate upon or maybe something that I failed to ask you that you want to offer as some final thoughts?

OC: Well, the number-one thing is what time is my show on the radio? Every Saturday night from ten to midnight. I started it. It's on 89.3 in Charleston, but it's also heard in Columbia and in Greenville. And those stations are also a hundred thou. I think two of them, Charleston is 100,000 watts. Greenville is 80,000 watts, and Columbia is 100,000 watts. So, we cover the state.

But in addition to that, I do, I host a jazz show. It's part of a thing called Jazz Works. My jazz show is heard on 140 stations, none in the South, all in the Northeast or Midwest. In fact, I got a call recently from an old schoolmate who lives in Iowa, I-O-W-A, and she heard my show and wanted to know if that was me. And I hadn't been in touch with her since 1968.

KT: Oh, wow.

OC: I mentioned to you that I'm going back to my college for to get a Distinguished Career Award, and I was talking to the Alumni person, and she says I'm - she saw my resume that I do. "How did you get into radio?" I said, "I got into radio at MacMurray." She said she didn't know that they had a radio station back then. So, things have changed quite a bit, and I was able to tell her, "No, that's where I got my start, and I'm still doing it." So, that's going to be — that's going to be an interesting — it's going to be an interesting trip.

I want to say one more thing, and it's got nothing to do with... music so much. But

in 1966 or '67, I can't remember when it was, I had my Black Student Union on campus, and we were allied with the SDS and a couple other organizations. And when Dr. Martin Luther King had a march in Cicero, Illinois, we all decided we would go up together and be part of that. But you couldn't just go be part of a march. You had to learn how to be and that kind of thing, so you could remain nonviolent. And we had to go through two or three days of training in how to be passive in the face of that situation.

And at that time, I didn't think I was nonviolent. I thought if somebody hits me, I'm going to hit them back. But that was the most hateful experience I ever had in my life. We had a phalanx of police officers from different towns and around us as we marched through Cicero, Illinois. And the hatred that was coming out of those people calling us niggers, this is where Martin Luther King got hit with rocks, okay? That was an experience, as well. And I guess it informed my passion for trying to do things that would uplift my community and let my people know that they're part of humanity, not less than. So, that's an aside.

KT: So, you were part of Dr. King's Chicago Movement in '66...

OC: Yes.

KT: ...or played a role as a student?

OC: Yeah, yeah.

KT: Wow.

OC: In fact, I heard from a young man recently who found me on Facebook who succeeded me as the president, a coordinator of the Black Student Union, and he had told me that, how much that meant to him, because when I left college, I had never been in touch with those people until recently with this Facebook business. So, it was really

interesting.

And he also told me about when Martin Luther King got shot, it was on a — I think it was a Friday. Whatever day it was, school, we didn't even have a break that way. Well, we took over the radio station and we played tribute music to him. And the next day, everybody went their separate ways. And I was riding back to New York City with a guy named Dan Millstone, who was in the Students for a Democratic Society, with his mother and his soon-to-be wife. And we remember coming through Washington, D.C. and seeing tanks and armored car carriers and soldiers with guns in the streets there, and it was like, wow, this is crazy.

Don't have nothing to do with music, per se, but it does, in a way, because some of the music I remember playing — I play music that reflected that time. Gil Scott-Heron, for example, would talk about those kind of things. A guy named Johnny Moore talked about the bombing in the Alabama church where the four little girls were killed, and they went to church, because their mother didn't want them to be part, to be in trouble, in danger, with the march. So, "You all go to church and pray," and they get killed. It's... anyway.

KT: Can you remember? Were those songs that you played on the — for the tribute show?

OC: Yes. Well.

KT: You remember those, playing those specific songs?

OC: I don't know. I don't. I don't, because they might not have been out yet. They might not have been out yet. I guess they were. Martin Luther King had died already, so, yeah, he was in that town, yeah. I played John — that's where I got this — I still got that

record from WMMC, yeah. I played that, played that one.

KT: Well, thank you so much for joining us today. I really appreciated this.

OC: Oh, you're welcome. I got a couple of CDs for you.

KT: Okay.

OC: I want to give one to this fellow here. Even though he didn't ask a question, he's been paying attention, so.

KT: Who's this, now?

OC: This is just music. I don't know.

KT: Who were you talking about? The research right here? Yeah. Joyner is a family name, right?

OC: It was my wife's name. Yeah. J-O-Y-N-E-R. And I didn't know you knew that. So, the music that you have there, when I go to the studio now, I don't get to take my LPs anymore or my CDs. What I have to do now, because we had a local facility, but budget cuts made that not happen. And in fact, they closed them, all the local stations down. It might have been seven cities around the state that had their own stations, but now it's all coming out of Columbia.

But what I have to do now is I put one hour - one hour's worth of music on one CD and the second hour's music on the next CD. And I go to the studio, give the CDs to the engineer, and I said, "Okay, between — I'm going to open up the show with readings. 'This is the Roots Music Karamu Special Edition. We're talking about,' whatever, whatever the topic is. And then between seven and eight, you're going to That was, this is,' you know. And between ten and eleven, I'm going to say, 'This was, you just heard, and coming up next is.'" So, that's kind of the way we put it together. What you have

there is just the music.

KT: It's all just digitally edited, then.

OC: Yeah, exactly. And Denise sends it to the — Columbia sends me a copy. So, all you have there is music. You don't have my raspy voice today. All right.

KT: Good. Well, thank you very much.

OC: All right. You're welcome. It's my pleasure.

End of recording.

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