INTERVIEW WITH CARYLON TYLER

Shianne Forth: This is Shianne Forth and Amber Dey. Here with Carylon Tyler. Whenever you're ready we can go ahead and get started.

Carylon Tyler: Okay. Well, glad to meet both of you and I'm glad to be a part of this program, our history as it were. Basically, I was born and raised in Texas, born in a little town called Smithville. It's not little anymore. But Smithville, Texas. My dad was in the military, stationed at Bergstrom Air Force Base and Bergstrom is no longer around, either.

CT: So we moved in Texas a bit. We moved from Austin, and was here a couple years in elementary school. And when he was stationed at the base and wound up going to high school in Houston, although his family lived in Corpus Christi. So I spent some time in Corpus. Graduated from high school in Houston, that was the beginning of my journey.

CT: Lucky enough... I went to junior high in Corpus and high school in Houston. Lucky enough to get a scholarship in high school, went to Cashmere Gardens High School. Once I realized I could go to college, I... Because working class family and those days, college, nice but didn't really have the resources for that. So a lot of us like African American kids, whatever, unless their parents were doctors or lawyers, or well off, the average kid didn't get to go to school, or university kind of college. I don't know what the community college scene was then. I didn't even think about going to college until I got this scholarships.

CT: Then I applied for various schools. I was applying and all these schools were math, because I was told I was good at math. You'll find this interesting, it'll all kind of come full circle in a minute.

SF: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

CT: I took, when I was in high school, started high school that was the first year that they started automating doing class schedules via computers. Up until then, it was all handwritten stuff. The first computer glitch put me and my best friend at the time, who was this woman, young girl, in an architectural drawing class, mechanical drawing class. It was such a big deal to fix it that we just decided to stay in there.

CT: So I realized, "Oh my God! I like drawing." I mean I'd always liked drawing but this is pretty cool.

SF: Yeah.

CT: So I talked her into, "Ah, let's stay another year." I talked her into staying another year. She didn't like it but she liked all the guys in there. We were the
only girls in the class, right? So she liked the attention. So we stayed. Then the next semester, you graduated to another level. You went to mechanical drawing then you went to architectural drawing.

SF: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

CT: So you start drawing house plans. And I went, "Aw, man, I really like this." She goes, "I'm tired. I'm going back to homemaking," or whatever. I went, "Okay, I'm going to stay." Anyway, all through high school I stayed in the drawing classes and once I realized I was getting a scholarship, I was telling my instructor. He says, "Oh, congratulations. I hear you got a scholarship." I graduated number two in my class, so actually close to number one but my best buddy was the valedictorian, I was salutatorian, so we could live with that.

CT: He says, "Well, what are you going to major in?" I said, "I think I'm going to major in architecture." And he goes, "That's really hard for a girl." And I went, "What?" You do that now, but then I went, "Uh." Because I had no preconceived ideas. I was like, "Uh, okay, well yeah, but I'm going to do it, it's what I want to do." Cool, so then I started applying for schools, to schools and I applied all the other colleges in math, but UT, for some reason, I don't know why, but that's the only school I applied for architecture. I figured, well I want to do architecture so I'll apply there.

CT: So I start getting these responses back from the different colleges. My dad had already said, "You're not going out of the state of Texas." So, that was sad because during those times there was a lot of unrest in colleges, and things like that. And he goes, "No, you got to stay here in Texas." I went, "Boy."

SF: At that time, your family was living in Houston, right?

CT: At that time, we were in Houston, yes. And that's my senior year. I figured, "Aw, man, I just want to move away from home." Right? I mean, I just want to. So I got accepted to University of Houston, blah blah blah.

SF: Yeah.

CT: I want to go to UT. One day I came home and my mom goes, "Oh there's a letter on the table for you." It was from UT. I was like, "Oh my God!" Got that sinking feeling. Then it says, "Okay, you're accepted in architecture." Yeah! I was all excited. So that was my segue into UT. I had no... First of all, I had no idea I was going to ever go to college. Secondly, I just went there, that was the only school I applied to for architecture, for some strange reason. I'm a believer in destiny and journeys and faith, by the way. Not so much religious faith, but I use faith.

CT: We don't know why we do what we do.

SF: Yeah.
CT: And if you let go, you wind up being on whatever journey you're supposed to be on in this life. You kind, of got it that way. As much as you resist you still wind up going that way.

SF: Yes.

CT: Anyway, so I wind up going to UT. Even then, I had no idea what I was going to be up against even at UT, because I was raised to believe that whatever you attempted to do, you could do it. You were your biggest setback. You're just as good as anybody else, if you don't try it, you don't... Never play it safe, because my dad was like that. I mean, my mom tells me that he was a restless spirit which she would tell me many times you got his spirit. Which I thought was a good thing. But that means I moved around a lot and did things and I just did things because my philosophy has always been, why not? As opposed to, "eh, I don't know" kind of thing.

CT: I wind up at UT. They were all excited because I wasn't going to be far from home. At that time they were still burning crosses and doing that whole thing, you know, on people's lawns and stuff like that. And the further south you got, the worse it got. My dad was a truck driver, he drove pipes across the United States, mainly in Texas. And he would always say, "None of you guys..." I was the oldest so I got more of that from my siblings later on. He says, "You guys are not going past Galveston." Because of the whole... The time, the racism and the Ku Klux Klan, all kinds of stuff during the days. When I was coming up, they were real deal, right? They're kind of now, but they were real then.

CT: Anyway, that's why I didn't deal with the south, and went to UT and was like la la la la. Waiting for my room to be assigned to me, excuse me, I got a full scholarship for four years, architectural program at the time was six. When I graduated it went back to four, which it should have been to begin with but that was out of my hands, right? My scholarship was for a full scholarship for tuition and dormitory, you know and books. Which is unheard of now, and I'm not even going to tell you how much it was. You probably blow that in a weekend.

CT: I go check into the dorm and they said, "You know, we have an area set up for you in the lobby area." They had created a room for me in the lobby area because they had to get permission from the girls' parents to have a black roommate, right? I think I stayed in that lobby area for, I want to say a semester? It was awhile. I was like, "Wow, okay." I would write home to my parents and tell them what was going on and it was interesting because the girls, at the time at the dorm, they had never seen a black person before in their life, except for the ones that clean their house. Few wealthy and a lot of them were, or took care of them when they were babies or kids or whatever. But in terms of just social or whatever, it was truly amazing. I learned a lot.

CT: So what would happen is these women would come in and introduce themselves to me and hang out and stuff. They would come out and tell me, "You know, I've never talked to a black person before." And they introduced
themselves and said, "Would you mind having a convers..." I mean, this went on and on. Cool, okay. So a couple of them I got to be friends with and stuff like that and then it got to the point where I was helping them with their homework and stuff like that. Because these women, you know Texas, UT... Very wealthy kids went to that school. The alumnus-

SF:        Yes.

CT:        It's one of those. A lot of the girls, they didn't really worry about whether they passed their grades or not, their goal was to go there, find a guy that Daddy approved of and get married, right? That was their thing. So they didn't have the same kind of agenda that I had. Not that I had an agenda, other than just go to school, go to my classes and start my adulthood, right? Eventually... Then what started happening, this is really funny, a few of the girls started like saying, "I can't believe this. Really? This is why this person's here?" So they start going to the dorm mother if they could be my roommate. I guess at that point the dorm mother decides she needs to accelerate this or this is going to get a little dicey, right?

CT:        Anyway, out of that, I made a couple of really good friends. I ended up getting a roommate and it was all good. Nice, actually, a lot of the women were very... Actually, I didn't have any bad experiences other than that and it wasn't a bad experience, just an experience, right? Because the women were really cool, the girls just some, the ones I hung out with or got to know me, not sure all of them were but I didn't know all of them. My dad's thing was, and I think this got me through a lot in life, period; never judge someone, never judge a whole, just until you get to know them, judge the individual. Get to know the individual, don't just judge everybody because you go through life with this giant ass chip on your shoulder and you won't get anything, you won't meet interesting people and you won't get much done.

SF:        Yes.

CT:        You know what I'm saying? So I took that opportunity... I didn't look at it as a horrible thing, and everybody I ran across. Now I was suspect and didn't turn my back and was in real life, but if I meet new people, I always gave them benefit of the doubt. You know what I'm saying? Not everybody has a racist agenda. But you're in a point in time where that existed and you just have to deal with it and try to navigate it.

SF:        Yes.

CT:        Anyway, I was at Kinsolving, had a place to live there, so that was cool. Then the school of architecture was very interesting. That was a story. So I go to class the first day, right? It's all guys. And there was me and two other women in the class and three black guys. The professor comes around, you know how they announce, "This is Architecture blah blah blah A102, anybody that's not in this
class, leave now, but look at your program, make sure you're in the right class." So he's chatting and everything, he says, "Oh well, roll call. Guess you guys are here to find that guy? Are you in Interior Design?" And all three of us majored in architecture.

CT: No, we were not in Interior Design, we were in the right class. He goes, "Oh, okay." Then it wasn't like now where if a guy says that, they're skewed, you skew them and then you flay them and they're done, right? In those days it was just the way it was and not that you liked it. Because you didn't feel like you got respect or anything. But that's just how it was, right? So my thing was, you had to prove yourself otherwise, while the average guy in that class, they were going to Daddy's firm, they didn't have to worry about it, they had no consequence... Not that all of them there, but 95% were. They did the same thing there, they were looking for a wife, or whatever. They didn't have to finish high school, I mean college. They probably had goals they're parents wanted them to but it wasn't, didn't make an impact on their lives, right?

SF: Yeah.

CT: We got through that and then the professor, once he realized that we were in architecture, he was like, "Okay, cool." Now, two of the women, I think they were there a semester, a year, you know, two semesters. I don't know what it's called now, but then it was a year was two semesters. Two of them, after about a year, they decided that they wanted... One went to RISD, they were very smart girls. One went to RISD and the other went somewhere in L.A. and kind of split up and I stayed here at UT. Then I got to be really good friends with the black guys that were left, obviously. So the four of us was like us against the world, it didn't feel like that but you have to kind of watch each other's back.

CT: One of the guys was Mormon. I was shocked, I'd never heard of a black Mormon in my life. But at some point, after the second year, he had to leave and go do his journey or whatever you call whatever they do. If you're a Mormon, you have to go on some kind of, it's not called a journey but it's... You know where they go and they talk to people and they... You've been when they knock on your door and want to sell you Bibles and talk to you about the Mormon faith. It's something they have to do at a point in their life. So he left, I never really came across him again, don't know if he came back. The other two guys, I know one, he was younger, he finished I believe and the older guy, he was a little older, he was going back to school, he was already had a family kind of thing. But he was cool too. Me and him kind of hung out.

CT: We're going through school and every semester, the professor, seemed like the same professor, he would say, "Oh you're back?" And I'd go, "Yeah. Hey, what's up?"

CT: Oh, you're back. You're back again? I'm going to finish my course, of course I'm back. Anyway, after a while I gained the respect of a lot of professors but they realized, okay, you are kind of the real deal, here. You're going to blah blah blah,
finish school. Which I did. When I left I had a lot of the respect of the professors there, actually graduated you know. What changed my life, I think, I've had little guardian angels all, for every integral parts of my life and followed... Let me think about this.

CT: They had what they called visiting professors. I don't know if they still have those, but where you would have a professor, that I guess whoever that department, I don't know how they select who comes but they come and they teach for a semester and usually happens I the studios, when you're in studio level, they'll come. They will teach courses. So what happened this one professor, she was a woman and she... I can't remember if she was from L.A. or something, but she was invited. I figured she must be pretty amazing if they're inviting to come teach studios and she was awesome.

CT: Everybody was like, "Whoa, you're so different!" She was, at that time, edgy, we would consider her edgy and by the time I had to come out, just come out, and the guys I hung out with, they were these gay guys, we had our little clique in our studio. Two or three of them. They were very talented and very awesome, too, in studio. We were... Some of our colleagues or other classmates were looking at us like, "Yeah, you the snooty, smart group." Kind of thing. Like, no, we just did our thing. What the deal was is that by the time we got in the studio, you would be given a project, they didn't care about your other classes, you had 24 hours... different times, you had to make something, to design something. It wasn't study, study, right? Although you had study, study.

CT: Are you guys in... What are your majors?

SF: I major in special education.

CT: Okay.

Amber Dey: Human development and family sciences.

CT: Ah, okay. So, not hard... Well... Just. I'm sure you went through the same thing when one professor doesn't care about what the homework the other one gave you. You just got to make it happen. But what... The other layer on that for us was just discovering all these new things, like your sexuality and stuff, we'd go out to bars at night. We'd go out and party all night and still make it to a class the next day. Let me tell you, when you're 20 something you can do that and still it was nip and tuck, but it was also very fun because you were doing something no one else knew about. Because all these bars and different places were very underground then. You have to know someone, you had to know where they were. You would not just stumble across them because in those days, like I said, they were still beating up people and things like that so everybody was on the down low and the men and women hung out together.
CT: So we would go out, come back 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, finish what we were doing, go back to the dorm, clean up, go back to the studio. That went on for a minute. Luckily I had a really good roommate. I remember sometimes I wouldn't be in my room for two or three days and I'd finally go home and crash. I said, you know, "Please wake me in a couple hours because I am so tired I could just keep sleeping." Anyway, that was fun. But this professor kind of took us under her wing, I guess now we would call her a mentor? At the time, we were smart ass kids who just wanted to go play and do what we had to do. But we loved architecture and it came easy to us on some level because we always did well, but that took time and was important that we pleased her and stuff like that.

CT: I remember she would do things that our other professors didn't, on some level. We'd walk in and she'd pass out a paper. It was a program, which what a program means is that there's different requirements at this building or structure or piece of land or whatever had to have and you had to design and draw this stuff. She would say, "Okay, see you in six hours." We thought, "What! Six hours?" Or she would say, "See you in 24." That kind of thing. She goes, "Well I'm just going to prepare you for real life." We had no idea what she was fucking talking about, until you got to your life.

CT: I loved college. It was fantastic and so I wouldn't trade none of the experience for anything because also, besides going through school of architecture with all these guys and being the only woman in that entire program, at the time, only black woman. I'm not sure if a black woman graduated before me or whatever, I have no idea. But I was the only one at the time. One day she took me, she said, "Sit down, I want to talk to you." She goes, "If you do nothing else when you graduate, I want you to stop partying enough. I want you to get your license and I want you to get your license sooner than later. If you do nothing else, you get your license. Don't get your Masters, don't do nothing, get your license." She said, "You can always go back and get your Masters, but you..." She kept saying, "You need to get your license."

CT: Here again, I didn't know what hell she was talking about. I just took her at her faith. I said, "Okay, I will. I will. I will." That was a whole other path that took... What she was saying, as I learned later, is that because you are a black woman, because you are in a predominately male profession, that will give you the edge. To this day, I do not let that license expire. Also, that license has allowed me to do things that I wouldn't have been able to do if I didn't have the license. Even the men, now, that don't get their license, still have an edge.

SF: Yes.

CT: You know what I'm saying? They can be project managers, they can be principals. Okay, you don't have your license. But the first thing they ask a woman if she's even wanting to compete on that level, which most women do now, is do you have their license? That's gotten me through a lot of stuff. When I as at UT, I remember there was a time when I wanted to move out of the
dorm. Here again, I thought, I want to get an apartment, I thought, "Cool, get an apartment." Right? Me and my roommate at the time, we had gotten to be kind of close. She was really nice and she, during the course of the time, we stayed roommates for a while. But she met this guy, they got engaged, he was cool too. They were just really nice pair and we became friends and stuff like that.

CT: I decided to get an apartment and I went for this apartment. It says 'for rent' kind of thing. I applied for the apartment, they said, "No, it's not for you." I went, "Okay, but the sign says..." She says, "No. Just rented it." So my roommate's, I think her name was Susan and her fiance was named Richard, she goes, "That's bullshit." So the three of us, one day, he goes, "Let's try something." So we went and found this apartment near campus, I applied for. He says, "I'm sorry, we just rented it." Five minutes later, the two of them go and say, "Hey," and ask for the same apartment. And go, "Oh, yeah, let me show you that apartment." We wound up suing the complex, not because, it wasn't my idea, but Richard said, "That's not right. Just sue them for the hell of it to shake them up a bit."

CT: It was a lot of that was happening... So what you did during that time if you wanted an apartment, you got someone that was not black or whatever. And they go apply and you, "Oh, yeah that's my name right there." There was a lot of that going on too. But for me, fuck you, that's not nice. Nice had nothing to do with it, that's just what people did.

SF: Yeah.

CT: That was a lot of that here, at the time. It's so diverse now, that all that's probably just a story. But it really happened. You had to really... If you had a white friend, you'd make them go and do some stuff because you weren't going to get anywhere because people were still... But it was cool.

CT: Coming out was interesting too. Laurie asked me one time, she goes, stop me at any time and ask questions.

SF: I do want to ask, with suing the complex, how did that pan out?

CT: We won. We weren't suing them for money or anything, we were just suing them for discrimination.

SF: Yes.

CT: We won although I didn't wind up living there. I think I wound up living someplace else. But we definitely took it all the way through. So we definitely sued them.

CT: Oh, what's that? I thought that was a bug.
SF: Oh.

CT: Because I'm dealing with some bugs. Learning about bugs in Texas.

CT: Anymore questions? I can pause. I feel like I'm rambling on.

SF: You're doing great. Your roommate, you said was Susan, did you end up living with her off campus?

CT: Susan, no, eventually her and Richard eventually got married and I was at her wedding. I was a part of her wedding, which was really cool. We lost track of each other over the years. At that time I came out, so my life went a different path, too. Although we kept in touch and she didn't give a shit. She was so cool. But no I didn't live with her.

SF: All right.

CT: Where were we? Laurie was asking me, one time, when we were chatting about... She knew some other African Americans at that time, a lot of the, what was happening there on parts of campus and stuff. Because I said, "You know, I have to make a decision." Because she... Architecture school, I handled. I mean that was obvious. That's why I was there, I enjoyed what I did. I could handle the professors and stuff because that's just a matter of proving you knew what you were talking about. And you finally graduate to spite all your [inaudible 00:28:55].

CT: That wasn't an issue. Then you had your life outside your classes, right? So during that time, you had the Vietnam War was going on with [inaudible 00:29:06] All of this stuff I hope you guys still study or know about on some level. That was happening so the campuses were unrest. You were getting a lot of riots and belligerence and demonstrating and got tear gassed and all that kind of stuff. There was just stuff happening from different places and then we had the black power movement started with Martin Luther King and everything and started filtering down through the campuses. It was exciting, but a lot going on.

SF: Yeah.

CT: And on UT too, because they didn't think when I was there, it was like 40,000 kids and like 500 minorities. They just lumped us all in together, that means international students too, you know? It was a different time. But everybody had one thing in common, it has always been a political school, right? So, we're going to demonstrate. We demonstrated against Vietnam and then the black students on the campus start mobilizing and blah blah blah. Then the gay students start being more out there and stuff. I wish I could have more gay stories for you but my friend, that I turned Laurie onto, you should seek that pair out that's interviewing her. She's a great storyteller.
But we demonstrated together and stuff. On campus, during that time, there was the black student movement and then the gay students started getting more vocal, too. So everybody was wanted this and that, blah blah blah. But what happens, the black students didn't want to have anything to do with the gay students. They actually like, "We're not fighting your cause. You're on your own." And the gay students couldn't be a part of this. It was two different things. And the black students, specially the men, hated the gay students.

I said, "You know what? I'm a black woman, who just came out. So what do I do? Do I go support the black movement? Do I go and support the LBGQ community?" So that was easy, I supported the gay community. Because also, I wasn't really crazy about how the black community, what I see on the campus, the chapter, whoever's running it. I discussed this with Laurie, I know the women had their say, but the men were the more aggressor on some level. And I just didn't like the energy. I said, you know what? If I'm going to put myself on the line, I'm going to do it for the gay community because they are the ones... That's my life down the road. I said, that's where my support should be.

Eventually, both got it together but at the very beginning, during those days in the 60s, whew, it was rough. By the way, we had time to support the Vietnam War, we were out there protesting, getting tear gassed and everything. I left before the gay group really got moving.

I said, "I'm graduating. I'll see you, I'm out of here." So I chose to support the gay community as opposed to the... It was interesting because when you start being politically active, then everybody kind of knows what your story is. It changes how you look at things and how you perceive stuff. For Austin, was the place to be during those times because that's where things really happened. You had the other universities and stuff but this was the hotbed, still to this day people make us the hotbed. But then it really was. It was, yeah we had people get beat up, we had a couple people pass away. It was rough, but at the same time, I wouldn't trade it for anything. It was the most exciting time of my life.

It put me on a really good path. Because I know when I graduated, I didn't go to one UT game. Couldn't do it. I didn't feel like I was embraced. I didn't feel like I was a part of it. I got a scholarship here. I'm going to school here against all odds because you really don't want me here but I'm going to go to spite you. So the feeling that I had there was really different to say if I went not. I mean I was invited to an event recently at UT, because I'm trying to get to know the area again, whatever. It was an event, so I was asked to [inaudible 00:34:28]. We went around the table and introduced ourselves. They said, "And who are you?" And I said, I asked Leslie, "Who should I say I am?" "You're an Alumni." I went, "Oh, yeah, I'm an Alumni." I never think of myself as an Alumni, because when I
left this place it was like, "I can't wait to get the hell out of here because you're messing with my head."

CT: But, not really. When I graduated, well, I'll tell you how I got out of here. I was sitting in the student union one day, I don't know, it's probably different now than when I was there. We were just poor kids hanging out. One of my buddies, his parents had just given him a new car for his birthday. He goes, "Oh, let's go to San Francisco, let's drive to California." "Okay, cool." Well, why the hell not? You know, you did that shit then. Now, it's like, can we fly?

CT: So I said, "Sure, sure." So we drove, we did a little cross country thing out of Texas. I remember we went through L.A. and we went through... That's when there was maps, there was no navigation, there was no iPhone or anything. Everything was a map. So we took this one road and turns out we're going across this... We're in California and we're headed up to San Francisco, we decided to take the culture route because it looked so pretty, looked like a cool drive on the map. We're headed through this Naval base, military base. Beautiful and all of a sudden we start seeing the ocean, right? Everything is so green and lush and of course, it's beautiful but it's... You've got all the white houses and the lawns and really big space in between houses and everything. The geography is so different.

CT: We actually go to the road where it intersect with Highway 1. I don't know if you've spent any time or driven to California at all. It's the most beautiful thing we'd ever seen in our lives. It was so blue, the water was so blue and the flowers were so vibrant and it was like, holy shit, this is fucking paradise. So we drove up the coast and heading to San Francisco, it was an experience I'd never experienced. Then a friend of ours, who was still in school, said, "Look, if you make it to San Francisco, these are my friends. Look them up." They lived in the Haight. We said, okay. We didn't know at the time but the Haight was the Haight was the Haight, right?

CT: But we did know that San Francisco had a really big gay community and they didn't trip on a lot of stuff that other people trip on so we said, okay, while we're here we're going to hit up all the bars and stuff. Which we did. We had a great time. But more than that, I realized, I said, "You know what? When I graduate, I want to live here for a while. I want to be here for a while." Not only were you a lot freer, but you also noticed it's so much more diversity. There were things going on there that nobody really thought about. It was no big deal. Every culture on the planet practically lived there. Wow, this is so different, it's like another country.

CT: So I came back to Texas and once I graduated, I told my parents I was moving to California for a year. I'll be back. I didn't even go to my graduation, I had my diploma sent home and I said, "You know? I'm out of there. I can't do this anymore." But anyway, I was looking for a different... California, what the trip showed me was what life should be like. Not that California's perfect, don't get me wrong. A lot of stuff was going on. But they didn't trip on the stuff that here
was such a big deal. Right? They didn't care whether you were black, white, green or yellow there. It was just you existed, co-existed kind of thing.

CT: Living there most of my adult life, I do realize that no place is immune to racism and stuff like that. Lovely, wonderful California had racism and you still get the skinheads and shit that... But as a whole, it's a whole different ballgame. Actually, the difference is you had opportunities... As long as you could say you could do what you could do, you had the opportunity. It wasn't like people looked at you and said, "Hell no. It ain't going to happen. I don't care how smart he is." It happened there but it's a little different. You still had the ability. I could go in a get a job based on my credentials. I could do this, I could do that. It was a matter of proving what you can do and blah blah blah.

CT: But here that was an effort. However, back to Texas. Stop me if you want. Pause if you want.

SF: I want to ask, jumping back a little bit. You were talking about the lawsuit. Do you remember what year that was?

CT: Well since I got here in 69, had to be... I graduated high school in 69, it had to be like... And I lived in Kinsolving for a couple years I think. So it had to be like 71, somewhere around there, I imagine. Early 70s.

SF: And what year did you graduate UT?


SF: Trust me, I'm not going to go looking it up.

CT: No, I have it, but I'm like... I don't know if they still have work study now?

SF: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

CT: Work study is like you could actually get a job. I mean, like different companies... I'm sure every department would have a work study program of some sort I guess? Or no?

SF: I think so. I think you have to apply through the college, itself. Like through UT. And then you have to apply to specific positions.

CT: Oh, so you see then what happened a lot of people... Say like in the architectural department, other architects, real firms locally, were looking for apprentice or people to work for them or whatever. They actually applied through what they called a work study program at UT. Then UT would post those jobs.

SF: Okay.
CT: Then you would go and apply for those positions. Because I did that for a planning agency, which allows you... What that allows you to do is to work while you're going to school and I was lucky that I was able to find jobs within what I was studying for.

SF: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

CT: Because that helps out a lot, not only do you go to school now, but you're also working in the field so it makes school a little more useful or real. So you get theory. A lot of people get theory but they don't get real life until they get out in the field. But I was lucky enough to work for an architect's office so I really knew what my skills were and applied to and what was important and what wasn't kind of thing. That was really good.

CT: I got a job from this guy, who did really high end architecture. That was when we used to draw, called drafting. That was way before computers. Everything was drawn, lines, stuff like that and he was very cool. He was a really nice guy and he showed me, he gave me my confidence. Like, "You know what? You can do this and you're smart and you're good at this, so you need to be doing this." He taught me a lot of things. He's a white guy in a white firm and everything. Small firm. He had other guys in the office, he had the only other woman drafter who was the head drafter. This guy was gay and his partner was the financial, kept the books and stuff, he was great. I think that helped me. I think if I'd had a bad experience the first time it would have been a different outcome a little bit, mentally. But he was very supportive, so that helped me realize that okay, I've got this.

CT: Although I had a lot of hair-raising experiences here, for the most part I had really good experiences. You just have to stand up for yourself, what I'd find out. For a kid that was rough, but I had a military dad so I did fine. This was all in early 70s, this all took place, if my diploma was 75, this all took place between 69 and 74, 75. Then I left. I said, "See you, Texas. I'm done." I didn't do the... Now it's interesting because my friends, Austin's always been a big college town. Now we go to the games and stuff like that. My friends are really into the Lady Longhorns and just sports, but mostly Lady Longhorns. They take me to the games with them and we're standing there singing the song, Gable blows his horn and blah blah blah and I'm like, it takes you a minute to start singing it at the very beginning but once I get into it, I'm okay.

CT: Because when I left it was like, I didn't want to have anything to do with this school. I'm done with it. I got what I came to get, I got my education, my degree, so I'm gone. Who'd ever thought that years later you'd go full circle, you'd come full circle.

SF: Yeah.
CT: Which goes back to my original thing about life being a journey and you're being guided. Always listen to that little voice. There's a reason why I'm back here. Well, I know a reason why I'm back but there's got to be other reasons why people wind up places.

SF: Is it just recently that you moved back to Texas?

CT: I've been back almost 9 months.

SF: Wow.

CT: I moved here July 22 of this year.

SF: You were in California all that time?

CT: All this time from no gray hairs to current gray hairs. But my family's here so I would come back, when my parents were alive I would come back and visit of course, Christmas and different holidays and stuff. Because they lived in Corpus Christi so I would go back. Now, [inaudible 00:46:19] I won't go there just in case. But anyway, yeah, but I lived in California the whole time. I lived between San Francisco, Oakland, back and forth. I traveled a lot, I lived in L.A. for a while. I just started living life, so to speak. That was really fun and then I decided about 2016, I decided California, the Bay Area has changed so much and is getting to be so expensive.

CT: Have either of you every spent any time in the Bay Area? Oakland? San Francisco?

SF: My family's from Sacramento.

CT: Oh, then you know the area.

SF: I do.

CT: Yeah, it's a cool place. You should put it on your list, both of you should go back. But it's gotten to be so expensive now and it's not the place I knew when I moved there. Everything changes. It's still a place where I go hang out because I made obviously great friends and buddies that live there, but I decided, well, you're not getting any younger. At some point your marketability is going to go. The thing about architecture, as long as the brain works, you can work if you so desire. I figured, you know, I'm not that 1% so I'm not going to be able to maintain a lifestyle in California on... You need a few bucks to live there. So, what are you going to do? I was tired of the traffic, tired of all of it, right? I said, you know? I'm done. I decided to move back.

CT: My friend who lives here still, I would have these conversations with her about I think I'm going to move back and I have siblings that live in Corpus, but we're
not close, whatsoever. Once the parents passed away, it wasn't good. But anyway, I decided. So, where could I move that I could probably afford to live decently and still be like California. In terms of being people you can relate to and cool places to go, things to do, because I'm not ready for the wheelchair, yet. I was thinking, well, I'll just go back home, which is basically this place.

CT: So I was able to come out year before, she helped me figure out the neighborhoods and stuff like that. I said, "Well, I don't want a house." I've lived in a condo before, but I had a house, but it's so much work in a house. I'm not in a relationship anymore so it's like that's a lot to do, and I just don't want to spend all my time on a house. So I decided a condo was fine. It has some issues, but at least, it's a home, it's a place, so wound up finding this place. Then the minute I found this place and signed on the bottom line, I got called back to the Bay Area for a job to work.

CT: So I said, okay, I took the job. So a year, this place stayed empty for a year while I went back and forth and my friend took care of it and stuff. July of this year, the contract ended in June, so I moved back, permanently. So now, I'm living here and it's been very interesting.

SF: If you don't mind me, jumping back-

CT: Oh no, I'm ready for questions or let's just fine tune it and stuff. That's kind of my life.

SF: You were talking about you were part of the gay student movement on campus. When you think back to that are there any specific events that come to mind?

CT: The organizations hadn't been jailed, yet. There were couple of clubs and different things that we used to go to... What we would do, Laurie sent me a list of a time table of the LBG... the lesbian-gay thing here, my friend Diane who stayed, got more into it than I did. By the time I left there were a couple of bars who went down. I remember one of the bars was Pearl Street Warehouse, and that was on that list. That was our go-to place. It was a bar that you... Like I said, you had to know it was there. You just couldn't... If you weren't gay, you didn't know, right? Then what we'd do is we would meet at people's houses. We'd hang out...

CT: Oh, let me get that. Oh, what? I've never used this before. Ah, so there was no motion...

CT: So we would just meet at people's places and stuff like that. Like I said, it was men and women together. We hung out together. There was no organization. I think after I left, the organization started becoming more. This is the other thing, I wasn't a political person.

SF: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
CT: I was a party person. Although I had a conscience and I hung out with the political correct, because we all hung out together. My friend was more of the, she was a part of the movement I would say, in terms of there was a paper, an underground paper that we had. The group started being formed. And what you might want to do is once this scenario is over, I'll ask my friend who interviewed her-

SF: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

CT: And maybe I'll let you know, I think her stories would be interesting so you could actually... She'd probably give you more of the history in terms of what happened and stuff like that. I think you'd find that very interesting. Because once that started happening, it was already taking off, like out of there, people. But during that time there was underground papers and stuff like that. A lot of those people, which was good, a lot of the key people who started the gay movement, they're still around. One or two are still around so that's where you're going to get your real deal interviews when this happened. I went to the Pearl Street Warehouse a lot.

CT: Then we'd get together, we'd drive, there was a couple of bars, I can't remember, in Dallas. We'd go up there and do that and come back saying like, we're so blessed that we didn't, oh yeah. Now, we couldn't do that as much because number one, the traffic and the cars and yeah and the cops are out watching you. Smoking pot. That was more fun too, because it was illegal then, I guess it was more like subversive. It wasn't out in the open. Now, it's not fun because it's. It's okay. I don't know about here, but in California it is though.

SF: You were also mentioning having come out while you were at school. Did you come out to your family?

CT: Oh, boy. Well, it's one of those deals where we didn't sit around and talk about it but they... You know, your parents always know before you know. My family didn't talk about it, but one night we were in studio and these guys, you know they were gay guys. I knew they were gay. One night, one of them said, "You know what? It's going to be your birthday in a couple days. We're going to go out and party."

CT: And I'm like, "Oh, okay." We just hung out. "So, we're going to take you out." I thought, "Okay."

CT: They took me out to Pearl Street Warehouse that night and I'm like, "What the, whoa! This is very cool!" So that's when I came out. They said, "It's time that you embraced yourself." So they took me out and I'm like, "Oh my God, this is so cool! I didn't know this existed!" That was the beginning of my acknowledgement of my sexuality thing, coming out. Then when I would go home with my parents, I would take my girlfriends, whoever was staying with me and stuff like that. It's that typical thing, they figured it out pretty quickly, right? But I didn't sit down and say, "Mom, Dad, I'm gay." It's not like TV. But they understood. They accepted me, they always embraced who I was. They
weren't judgmental or anything. Any person I brought home from Houston, they treated them like family, they were very nice and everything.

CT: To my brother and my sister, none of my siblings, but they already knew. We didn't have a formal conversation. But they were very accepting, that didn't change. They didn't kick me out or be dramatic or anything. It was a relief off of my shoulders now I can be just who I was. During those days... Also my... Fuck I got to figure out what's going on. I guess you just... I just turned it on when I came in. We'll just see, we'll keep playing.

CT: Anyway, I had no repercussions and then once I moved away from home, I was on my own. I wasn't really close to my siblings really so there was no impact there in terms of that, as adults. Even then, we were that kind of family. "You happy?", my Dad would say, "You happy?" I went, "Yeah." He goes, "Good. Good for me. That's all I ever want is you guys to be happy and take care of yourself. Don't take no shit." Military guy, you know? And don't judge. That was a big thing.

CT: You know when your parents, did your parents tell you all this stuff? And you go, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." And you don't really think about it until way down the road, oh that's why they said that. As if they were never young, right?

SF: Yeah. Do you have any questions?

AD: Could you describe more of your place in the lobby in...?

CT: Oh, my place in the lobby. Well, it was, they had panels up, they created a room for me as well as you could do. I think I used the corridor restrooms so I used the restrooms, but it wasn't in the rooms, but I had access to showers and stuff. But I could not, I actually had a bed in there and a dresser and a little study area. They fixed me up a nice little room, I just had no roommate. I was different myself. Which was kind of weird, excuse me, for me in that I had left my home, the comfort of my home and here I am in this little cubicle out in the middle of nowhere and some nights it was weird because you didn't know anybody. You're just there by yourself. Which I think was the hard part, just being there by yourself. Because all of a sudden you're in the middle of all these, this whole different scenario all by yourself.

CT: And the dorm mother would come by, but yeah, that was rough. But it was also okay. I became everybody's little place to hang out after a while. "What's you doing?" It was just like four panels and yours’s truly hanging out in there and people would come visit, sit and chat. I survived.

AD: Do you think that affected how you approached student life? Because you felt like shoved to the side?
CT: I don't think it affects student life as much as... Well, I certainly didn't trust anybody and I realized right then that I wasn't someone, it wasn't like I was going to find any buddy kind of thing. It was definitely when you realized that I was not there because people wanted me to be there. I just got thrown in there and they had to deal with it. Everybody that I met and stuff like that, I automatically realized that these people are only chatting with me because they have to or whatever. So I didn't have any friends outside of my studio, until I came out. Because then I had friends but then we had something in common. But yeah, definitely affect how you look at things.

CT: Then, also, I got to UT during affirmative action period. It wasn't like I applied to UT, although I was salutatorian of my class, at that time, affirmative action was around and UT was one of these universities that had X amount of students that they had to admit that were not mainstream. You know, X amount of minorities, X amount of this, X amount of that and that's how I got in. But even then, you had to be a certain percentile, they couldn't just arbitrarily say, "Okay, come on in." You had to have all these points. I think if I hadn't been valedic.... salutatorian and had the kind of grades I had I wouldn't have probably gotten in either during those times. Because they didn't really want us there, but they had to.

CT: That's why I have mixed feelings now about doing away with affirmative action. It's still not a level playing field, right? So how do you make it level? I don't know. I know that my life changed being able to go to college, changed my life, in a lot of ways. Not just education wise but how I look at life because you're exposed to something totally different where as if you hadn't gone to school, to college and you stayed wherever you were, you would look at things differently. You'd probably be a good person, but you would... because that's how you were raised, but you would probably look at life differently. You wouldn't... I just think everybody should have an opportunity to, you know, to have access to that type of education.

CT: I don't know when it went from what I was paying to $40, and $50,000 a year and people graduating with quarter million dollars in debt, I don't know when that happened. It's like, what the fuck? My generation, when we graduated, we didn't have that kind of debt.

AD: Yeah.

CT: It didn't cost that much to go to school. How are you guys doing it?

AD: I work two jobs during the school year.

CT: Mm-hmm (affirmative)- I had to work the last couple years too because that's why I asked about work study because once the scholarship left, then I had to fork up, but still I worked, but it wasn't anywhere near the cost now. But yeah, to answer your question, it did change how you look at things. Once you got in,
it was important to me, I wasn't going to squander the opportunity. I enjoyed my classes. Once I got past that whole poor me thing in the lobby, people don't want me to be around; then it got to be like, I'm going to do this, do this and then you realize, you just relax, they're just people.

CT: So I went back to that whole thing about the people I met, judge everybody individually. Even the professors, after a while, finally, had to admit that they liked me, so. But yeah, it did change things. I don't know, I'd say, "Why don't people like me, Daddy?" "Because you're a Longhorn." No, just kidding, but yes, it did.

CT: You guys take good notes.

AD: I feel like we should have more questions.

SF: Yeah.

CT: Do you want to hit that button and think or-

SF: Actually, do have one question right now. The other black women that you knew, how did... Did you hear about how housing went for them?

CT: Oh, there wasn't any other black women in architecture. In Kinsolving, there were two other black women. We weren't close, but they lived in another dorm. And one of them's father was a doctor, so I think she did okay. The other one, I can't remember what her dad did, but we kind of at the very beginning hung out but see here again, even though they were black, we had nothing in common. So we didn't really... My dad, working class truck driver, five kids and her coming from... Her dad was a doctor. She had a whole different lifestyle going on so we didn't have that much in common.

SF: Yeah.

CT: But they did okay. I don't know if they... I would imagine that she finished school, but we lost track of each other right after that first semester.

SF: And they shared a room together in Kinsolving?

CT: No, they didn't. They were in another section of the dorm, I believe. But Kinsolving was pretty big. I don't know if they shared another. I don't think they shared a room together but they didn't share a room. But, I don't know. I didn't particularly care for them very much. But I know it was just the three of us. They were okay. I would imagine they had to do the same thing though. Because they were African American, so. I don't care what their parents did, I'm pretty sure they had to get permission. Because I remember the dorm mother coming in and standing around and tell me that, "Well, we have to get permission from
the girls' parents to have you as a roommate." I'll never forget her saying that. I went, "Oh, all right. I got this." Thanks, lady.

CT: She was nice though, as she could be, I guess.

SF: So they told you that once you already got there that you would have to stay in the lobby?

CT: Oh, yeah. I didn't know that before. I thought I'd get a regular room and everything. I guess they thought that it was okay in terms of the room was okay because it was already arranged, it was already made up and everything. Just funky, that's all.

CT: You know you guys can always, if you think of something call me or whatever, too.

SF: Yes, yeah, I think...