

## Dr. Jennifer Giddings Brooks Interview Transcription

May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### **DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

This is Sylviane Greensword, I'm here with Dr. Jennifer Giddings Brooks. We are in Rees-Jones Hall and today is May the 18th. The year is 2021. We are here for the Oral history project, with the Race and Reconciliation Initiative. Dr. Brooks, thank you for joining us today and for agreeing to share your testimony, and your wonderful words of wisdom for this whole project called reconciliation. So, we're going to go fairly chronologically, starting with childhood, and ending with your more recent achievements. Can you please tell us about your childhood, the way you grew up, where you grew up, where are you even from?

### **DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, my childhood, you know I always talk to my children about their blessings, but I grew up in a loving home, very blessed. My grandfather was someone who had a college degree. My paternal grandfather, which was certainly unique in terms of an African American man having a degree in the 20s and 30s, and things like that. And so, he was able to provide things for his family that other men of his generation could not, and so those blessings moved to me and my very younger brother who is quite a bit younger than I am. I had an opportunity, through my childhood I lived in a Garland TX for the first few years of elementary school, where my mother grew up. And after that my parents bought a home in the Cedar Crest Golf course addition of Dallas, where I then grew up and went to high school and everything. And that was in a period of time when that community had been a predominantly white community, and so there were some social issues that had to be addressed as African Americans began to move there. But growing up was great. We had wonderful neighbors, and everybody celebrated and supported one another. And I also had that within my family. My paternal grandmother died when I was relatively young, but she was there and lived with us when I was in my early years of elementary school. So, it was nice to come home because my mom worked to tea cakes, which I don't know if that many people make anymore, and homemade cookies, and milk, and to have that that person to talk to. She was not a High School graduate but she understood the importance of high school; and I mean did everything she could in terms of all of her grandchildren and talking to us about that. But as I said, she died when I was relatively young.

My maternal grandmother, on the other hand, also was blessed. Her father came from a situation where he was able to acquire a lot of land that ultimately became North Dallas, and so she grew up with a lot of blessings within her own life, which again, she was able to provide for her family, which passed down to my generation. And so, my parents, you know who provided and made sure that I had a lot of opportunities, not only in terms of you know, learning how to give back, but also you know in terms of travel and you know, going to charm school or taking baton lessons, which I never really learned how to do. But I certainly took the lessons and things like that, but that was a part of things that they wanted to do to help me. But I had two aunts who

were so instrumental in terms I think helping me to develop my personality, they did that in terms of there are a lot of needs in the community and you need to always remember to give back, which was kind of this, you know the same message I was getting for my parents. But they also along with that talk to me about, you can do anything you wanna do or you can be anything you want to be. And so. You need to remember that you're smart, you know you're attractive, you're this, you know. I mean they would always do that, not only for me, but for me and all of my cousins. And so, we grew up believing that we could do things and we have the ability to do things and all that. And even during that time of segregation and other things that certainly were not right. They led us to believe that we could make our mark in the world. And so, that's you, know how I grew up and it was really wonderful in terms of that love, that commitment that my family had to the next generation in terms of trying to help us to grow, and to be all that we could be. And then things that that I know other classmates or other friends did not have, having those blessings also and kind of taking them and putting them together and moving forward in terms of how I can then give back because of the blessings that I had. So, you know I, and as I mentioned, I have a brother I was getting ready for high school when he was born. That was really hard. I didn't understand why my parents were bringing this other person (laughs). So even at that age, I'm wondering, I'd love being an only child, you know, and now I have a brother, but he has been such a blessing certainly. And because he was born, my parents were older, you know? That has you know, was such a blessing for them before they passed? And so, I'm delighted you know, now as you get older, that this certainly happened in my life and but it took a couple of years. You know why am I getting this other sibling, you know? Yeah, in my life.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

(Laughs) you have to share your space.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, I have to share, we have to share things now (laughs).

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Any particular spiritual influences in your life that have really helped shape your personality, your convictions?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, well, I grew up... like, there was a family church that my family started and chartered in North Dallas.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Called Saint Paul AME Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church. And so, I grew up in that church. Again, another thing about going to a church and being a part of a religious environment where you know everybody their cousins, or if they're not really good friends with the family, it

was an opportunity providing that now where was it, you know, during the day. And we would go and we'd have trips and we would do you know other kinds of things, that I just felt like that my growth in Christ really began to develop during those times when I could feel comfortable about asking questions, and about, you know, raising my hand saying, "I really don't understand, how could that really of happen," and you know those kinds of things. And it was great to be in kind of that safe environment-

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

To be able to do that. And so, I certainly, was a member of my family church until I, you know, I married and you know although I was going to other churches, I just felt like I still could have that connection where I was to the church because of what it provided for me.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

I think it's such a big part of the Black culture in general. You know, just having that connection and the church is part of that village, you know? And it keeps you grounded.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, absolutely.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

I noted that you said that you have the aunts, that really affirmed you as an individual and as a girl, you know telling you you're attractive. Can you talk a little bit about your definition of beauty? And we're gonna go back to it afterward when we will discuss the afro (laughs). I'm a hair person myself. Don't let the weave fool you, I'm a big promoter for natural hair care. And actually, my original research is about Black hair care.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Right.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, my whole dissertation project was just about that topic, so there's no way we're not gonna talk about it. But limiting ourselves chronologically to your childhood years. So, you have those aunts that kept telling you, you're smart, you're attractive. That sound like a scene in *The Help*, "you is kind, you is smart." (Laughs).

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Right, right, when I heard that's part, I thought that was similar to the kinds of things they used to tell us, you know, yeah, (laughs) right.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, did you have a lot of interaction with kids of other ethnicities?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I really didn't until I tried out for the Girl Scout choir. When I was in elementary school, I was a brownie and then I was a Girl Scout and my mom was, you know over the brownies and then when we moved, I was Girl Scout, a lot of the young ladies that I met were trying out for the Girl Scout choir, which was an integrated choir which students from various area schools and Dallas could participate in. And I smile because I am- you know people can tell you I really don't have the very best voice by any stretch of the imagination. But these you know, four of my friends were gonna go try out, and I thought well if they're gonna try out I wanna try out. And a couple of them had actually been a part of the choir earlier, and so I'm going to try out and I was selected, which I think shocked my mom. I think it shocked everybody (laughs). I was elected. I mean I would sing in the church choir like that, but you weren't trying out. But that was an experience really, the only as a young child, the only experience I had in terms of integration with a lot of a number of other white females. You know there were not any males in that group. Occasionally, you know we would participate in something where there was some integration, but for the most part it was not.

And I think, you know, as I think back about that time, you know, and I know you guys are doing research and things like that. But a lot of times when you read the research people are thinking, that kind of when the integration came, when things really started changing for a number of African Americans. Because during the segregated period; for instance, if you attended a school, and you wanted to be cheerleader, you wanna captain of the cheerleaders, you probably got a chance to do that. Then when integration came, and you went to an integrated school, and you were trying out for cheerleading along with young ladies who had gone to cheerleading camp or who had it, you know had other experiences that you did not have, your chances of probably getting selected to be on the cheerleading squad are certainly being captain were greatly diminished. And so, a lot of the research is saying that it was not necessary, people who didn't necessarily believe in the whole integration as much as others. It was not necessary for a child to sit next to a white child to be all they can be. What was needed was to have the money, and make sure that the schools were equal, and to have the equipment and things like that, to make sure that everything was equal. It wasn't about necessarily that I had to integrate. You know, so a lot of the, you know, researchers they go back and look and talk to people, they think in terms of that because that did pull away some chances, they feel like for some African Americans.

And so, other than kind of that stereotype of the athlete who is you know big and can run and can do all these things in terms of being a football player, basketball player, baseball player, whatever. Some of the other things were you possibly would have gotten a chance to be a leader if you had been still in that segregated school or community. You didn't get a chance to do that, and I think that that's something that sometimes people, you know, don't really think about. You know they're thinking well, you know everyone has integration, and we want everything you know to be great, and thinking I don't wanna not be allowed to do that. The thing, it wasn't so much in terms of not being allowed to do it, it was also, "am I gonna also have the opportunity to

be? To be the captain of the cheerleading squad,” or to, you know, get to be president of the Honor Society, or get to be in the Honor Society, or just whatever you know. And so, I think that those are some things that are sometimes not looked at as much.

So, you know when I say in terms of my blessings with my life, it was you know- certainly I know my parents and grandparents went through all kind of things, and just in terms of you know, voting with the poll tax or you know, not being allowed to do certain things or not probably get an opportunity to apply for a certain job and those kinds of things, but they certainly try to make sure that that my life, and the life of my friends, and other people that I know were, you know, lives to celebrate. And I mean and providing for us opportunities that they could, within what they could do. And so, you know, so you didn't feel like, “oh gosh, you know I'm, you know, oppressed or I can't do these things” because they did what they could within what they had. And so, and again we were extremely blessed, I think with that.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

And going back to things like having a lot of girls in those integrated schools, not being able to be part of the cheerleading squad. We have representations of Blackness, like in the media, on TV, or in the magazines. What was your definition of beauty in those things?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, you know, I've never really thought so much in terms of that- you know kind of an interesting question- I never really thought so much in terms of beauty, you know. Certainly, we all see attractiveness of somebody who is attractive here, but my grandmother used to always talk about the inside of a person and although you know it was something that you know- I mean, it's different in terms of the inside of a person that you think is really attractive and the inside person that you didn't. But you know I really didn't even think so much in terms of that. You know I was, I think what my aunts did for us, you know, when they would tell us that and then we would, you know, look in the mirror and think oh, you know, yes, I'm, you know I look alright or whatever. But I went through a period. I mean my hair was really long and my cousins we, you know had long hair and things like that. So, it's kind of like as we got older and we began to express, particularly during the civil rights movement, our, you know, I guess expressing what we thought should not be happening and we're going to express that with whether it's the raised fist, or you know, changing our hair, or putting some kind of texture on it or something like that. Then I thought, well, that's beauty. And then when James Brown did you know I'm Black and I'm proud you know? And looking at all of the different forms of beauty, you know, Angela Davis with her Afro, and her no makeup, and glasses, and dress you know how she would always dress, just in a very plain way, that form of beauty. And then you've course you had the ones who maybe opt not to do that and that. So, I saw beauties from you know through multiple lenses in terms of, you know, a person. And I never really even though in terms of that person is pretty, that person is not, you know, I just kind of got to know the people. And by getting to know them, you know, because it had been kind of placed into my hand all those years, you're truly getting to see the inside.

And so, I didn't really think about that. You know, I had relatives that would, you know, sometimes say things about "oh, you know she's so pretty you know her hair is so long, she's so pretty 'cause-" you know. And of course, there was a period during that time where was the lighter skin, you know, African Americans compared to the darker skins, and this. 'Cause I have one cousin who is absolutely gorgeous, very dark skin and she's absolutely beautiful. But in growing up it was always she's dark, you know they bring up, "I mean she's beautiful but she's dark skin," as opposed to she's just beautiful-

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Beautiful, right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know, and so you know, different people had all these different lenses and I never really thought about it, you know so much.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

And you didn't have a person like, you know I've seen some girls do with, you know, some of those celebrities you're like, "oh wow, she's so pretty. I want to be like her," or anyone like this that you particularly admire?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, course you know when Diane Carroll came on television with Julia. I certainly thought that she was pretty, which you know, she certainly had it. And then when she became an actress on Dynasty, I thought you know and she was older and she's thrilled, was even prettier. But I always thought that she was really, you know, just such a beautiful, beautiful lady. But again, you know outwardly she was pretty, but she was also doing things in her own way within, you know her industry and trying to make a difference. And you know, speaking up in her, you know, in her own way. You know, of course, as a young person, it was so unique to just have an African American on television. I mean, somebody was telling me recently in their neighborhood if there was, you know, a Black person on a show that people were calling each other on the phone. "You know Nat King Cole is on, you know, the Ed Sullivan show," or whatever and everybody is calling everybody to make sure and you know, I think back about that. I don't really recall going through that, it was kind of like we just kind of turned-on television and you just didn't anticipate really seeing diversity.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

That's true.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

And then when it started happening, it was really pretty wonderful because-

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Finally, someone who looks like me.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, like I said, Diane Carol is great, to have her with her own show, and I certainly thought she was beautiful.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay, so we're gonna transition now to your affiliation with TCU, and I know that you actually transferred from another institution. Can you talk to us about your first college years?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, yes, I went to Chapman College in Orange, CA and basically, I attended Chapman because it had a program called World-Camp afloat/Semester at Sea program. Which was a program where you lived and studied on a ship for five months, as you traveled around the world, and you took your classes on ship and everything, and so I had the opportunity to participate in that program. And the semester, when I selected it each semester kind of had some different opportunities and countries for you to visit, but as I mentioned before, my parents were really, you know, probably ahead of their time in terms of travel and an opportunity to see something outside of my own community and environment. And so, when I said that I wanted to do that, you know they were, you know, go for it and again, my blessing of my grandmother, who, when my grandfather passed said to her, you know, with land and other things that they had that you know his focus was to provide for the next generation, in terms of anything that's related to education. And so, you know, so that was one thing that she said, you know, "if you want to do something," to all of us as her grandchildren, that's related to education, "yeah I want to help you with that." So, I was really excited that they thought well yeah that's a great opportunity.

So I was on campus that fall semester, and then you start the process of getting all the shots you need. You know your typhus, and your tetanus, and your yellow fever, and all that. And then that January I participated on the program. And so, we left the port of Los Angeles, going into Honolulu, and then doing all of Asia. You know, Osaka, Yokohama, Hong Kong, you know all around Malaysia, Sri Lanka, you know and one of the reasons why I selected the program because we're gonna go to at least six ports in Africa. And so, we started East Africa; Mombasa, Kenya; then all the way around to Cape Town, South Africa, and then you all the way up to Djakarta, Senegal and you know, through Sierra Leone, and then up to Casablanca, Morocco. And so, we're gonna do all of all of those countries which I just felt like if I could do that now, 'cause I might not ever get back here to do that again. It's going to be such a great opportunity for me, particularly in my historical look in terms of wanting to know more about my life as a person, you know, whose ancestors certainly came from Africa. And so, then from there we did ports in Europe and then came back across the Atlantic to New York. So, we completely went around the world, and the key thing that hit me, in all the places that where we went... You know I've talked about this is because I sometimes will do a little recruiting in terms of trying to help students of color to look at this program, which is still going on now, Colorado State has it now. But in terms of talking to them about what that meant to me. And so, when you get to say, India, and you see children having to beg for everything that they get, that impacts you.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yes.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

When you're in Thailand and the people have to drink, bathe, and wash their clothes in the same water source, that impacts you. And if it doesn't, then you know you have to go back and think about things.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Have a little heart to heart (laughs).

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

We saw people with leprosy, and we saw people with elephantids. All of these things, it will impact you, in terms of your life as you think about your life. And so, by the time we know, Asia was wonderful, and we learned a lot in terms of, you know, religion and so forth and so on. But we didn't really hit some of these I guess issues that- and now unfortunately sometimes we see here this homelessness, and these people who had no food, and the and the people you know, bathing and drinking the same water source, and things like that until we then started going and you're getting into you know places like, Thailand, and India, and you get over to Africa where you're gonna see some of those kind of things. And that really hit me on, we you know went to Goree Island, the island where you know Africans were picked up by slave traders and brought over to America. And we actually stood in there, in the same place, and they would say, you know, they put so many here and so many there, and you know those kinds of things. That really hit us. And by the time we finished with seeing all of that, the last country in Africa was Morocco. And so, they probably, you know, one thing in terms of doing the trip, they probably say, okay, we've gotta try to end, (laughs) you know where they're not seeing so much because we had people who would fly to the ship and they would lecture us until the next port. And so, we had a number of those kind of things so we could have some conversations. And by the end of- particularly with Senegal, you had a lot of questions and a lot of things to say, and so from sailing from Senegal up to Morocco was really an opportunity. We had seen all of this now, and so we're seeing okay, I need to be able to express myself, and I need to be able to think about what is it that, what is it about me? What can I do now? Where will my heart go?

And so, after leaving Morocco and go and then going to Europe, you know, and that was, you know, really nice. But then when we left, I think our last port was Belgium, and they were coming back across the Atlantic and so we had a week of just on the water. They zig zag a little bit so that you can finish your classes, take care of finals and all that. Just like going, they zig zag for a week so you can register for classes, get, you know go in- because once you start the process, once you get to the countries there's certain things you have to do. And we knew that the next morning we would arrive in New York. And you know our parents were flying in from all over the country and would just see us. And that morning about 5:00 o'clock, everybody, you know, just like something hit us and said, "you need to go up" because we're getting ready to sail into the port of New York. And we walked up and we looked up in the mist and saw the Statue



of Liberty, and I tell people that was one of the most impactful things on my life that I still get teary eyed about. And we all just started crying, and we thought that, you know, we have had this fabulous experience and we have done- we've seen things that people have not seen. We've been to countries other people will never get to. We've done all of these things and here welcome you know, giving us a welcome home is the Statue of Liberty. You know, given to us from France, and she's holding that Lantern in her hand, and if that was not going to cause you to get teary eyed, or impact you.

And so, once we got back, that note kind of changed my thinking in terms of whatever I decide to do in life, hopefully I can always make a difference. I'm certainly no better than anyone else, and even whatever blessings I have, if I'm not finding some way to help others, then you know my blessings mean nothing. You know, I don't have to have a purse with someone's name on it or I don't, you know, I've love to travel. My husband and I traveled a lot. You know, certainly love going to, you know Europe and other places and things like that, and we feel blessed in that regard. But we always think in terms of you know, with that, what can we do to help someone else, and how can we make a difference? And for me that started, you know, within in my growing up, but that trip was so impactful for me. And so, then and later as a graduate student, I went to the University of London, and so that was completely different because as my professor would say, "we speak English, and in London and in England, you don't speak that in America" (laughs) because I'd say, "I don't understand what you're saying." You know, so that was just another, you know, just opportunity in terms of being able to learn and grow by getting out of my comfort zone in my home, and you know those kinds of things.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Were there any other students of color in this group?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

At the University of London? Oh, in the- yes, there were. You know I can pretty much count one, but I think it's about six of us.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Out of how many?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Probably that year is probably, I don't know, about 300 maybe.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Oh wow.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know, I mean wasn't a small- it was a ship, yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Wow, so about 2%.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Wow.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

So, we all knew each other and everything.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

How do you think they lived this experience, like especially for Goree Island or visiting like Mombasa, or you know, another area where being Black is not the minority?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, it was always really interesting. I remember we were, the ship- the morning when you would get ready to dock, everybody would go up to, you know, see where we were going. And I remember one of the students, you know, proud of that, we were a lot closer after that, and she kept saying, you know, "look at all of these" and she used a derogatory term, and she didn't know I was behind her. And then she apologized, "I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry." I said, "well, listen you're on a trip or you going to countries of color." And I said in 3/4 of the world is, I mean, you know, just when you look in terms of the world and you look in terms of country, there's more melanin in the skin of people of these countries than not. And I think that was for her, one of the first times that she thought about it because she was so used to, you know always being in the majority. And she said, you know she said, she's like, "I've never really thought about that" because, you know, by that time we had all the countries, you know, from Asia where, you know with the Japanese and Chinese and stuff. And then you know India, certainly Malaysia's, Sri Lanka, and I mean then Africa. And so, until we got to Europe for the most part, you know, yeah. But yeah, some of them I think it was probably a positive thing from the standpoint that, for the first time, they had an opportunity to see that the world is not like America-

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Wow.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Or where I live, or where I, you know, growing up. And I mean there were some extremely wealthy students on the ship who were white. I mean, one of the students, his family owned 1/4 of the ship line. I mean, you know we're talking about really big wealth. And couple of you know, TV stars sent their children that year, and things like that. So, you know, you can see it from the standpoint of I know they're looking at it like, "oh, this is great to do and it's wonderful and I'm this, that, and the other." But ultimately, they all, I think, could understand that my life,

you know, is a blessing. And I have a lot that when I get back that I need to do you know. Certainly, you know, I don't know that to be the case, but I do know that those last few days on ship, and then we before we got to the port of New York; You can kind of see a difference in terms of some people, just in terms of that experience that they had. And hopefully you know everybody is older now with their families, and children, and probably you know with their grandchildren or whatever, and hopefully they've been able to kind of pass that along, you know? That would be my hope.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

It would be such a waste if they didn't.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I know, absolutely.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, after this amazing experience, you transferred to TCU.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I transferred to TCU.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Why?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yes, well my boyfriend was a student here at TCU. And so, we had talked about after my ship experiences that I should come here. Felt like that would probably be easier for me to transfer here, than from him to go there. And then, you know, I was here for a short period of time, then we broke up and so it's just. (Laughs) You know that's kind of what happened. You know, 'cause one of the things I tell my young mentees now is never make decisions based on somebody else's hopes and dreams, or based on something you know, make that decision if that's really what you wanna do, if you think you know, that's what's gonna last, or if it's gonna be something. But the experience, you know, I met a lot of really wonderful people and I just wanted to be engaged in everything. You know, just be part of what was happening on campus and things like that.

So, I had an opportunity to meet a lot of people. And then I was tapped for Mortar Board National Honors society, at that time, of being the first African American. And so, that gave me a chance to meet some students that you know, maybe they had not, you know their experience I guess in terms of diversity had maybe been kind of limited, in terms of just that organization, not in terms of their lives or anything. So that was great to get a chance to spend time with them. And as a part of being a part of Mortar Board, we would have luncheons and meetings at the Chancellor's House and because it was such a small group. And that was an opportunity to get to meet other students on campus and getting a chance to actually have conversations with the

Chancellor and kind of get to know him, and you know, and other people in higher level positions on campus. So that was great. And then getting a chance to, you know at the time there were a lot of things going on in the dorms. You know, I don't know all the activities that might be going on now, but there were often things going on that we'd get together and get a chance to really get to know each other. They had a really strong Black Student association. Students for, they called themselves SAAC when I got here, it was Students for Afro American Culture I think is what that was for. And on Saturday nights, we had been given budgets that we could get together, and you know, just have play music or, you know, have some snacks and to do things and so that group became a really strong group of friends.

And then there were, you know, certainly as I'm sure there are now off campus parties that some of the students that lived off campus, or they lived in Fort Worth, or their aunt, or uncle or somebody. And so, those were opportunities to go to parties for the African American students but also you know, parties that were open that were integrated parties and things like that. So, you know that was great. And then there were often time opportunities to serve in some other way. Whether it's tutoring at you know, an elementary school or doing something else. There were opportunities to do things in sometimes a small group of others where you got a chance to really get to know them. And I and that was one of the things that I really enjoyed, was kind of getting to know people in smaller groups. You know, and it's not about, if you're not a, you know probably an athlete or something like that, can't just walk across campus and somebody said, "Oh well, that's that person." But if you if you meet them through these smaller groups, you get a chance to know them. And then, I guess senior- no junior year I guess, I was vice president of my dorm and again that was an opportunity, 'cause you're elected for that to be in leadership position and to help people, in many cases, in terms of decision making, and you know talking to them one on one. Again, an opportunity to meet people and get to know them better. Which for me is just really, really important, I think.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

What were your knowledge of TCU beforehand? Like did you know TCU's reputation? Did you have any particular anticipations, with regard to academics or you know other aspects of student life?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I certainly knew its reputation in terms of you know what I had been told from my counselor and other people because again, you know my school, we didn't have people really considering TCU, or SMU, or you know, really; was that it was a conservative, you know institution, and that you know, but it was- Again, I think it goes back to what my aunts often would tell me, is the fact that you can do anything and you're as smart as anybody and you know that kind of thing. And so, I never really thought too much in terms of you know whether or not I could come in, do well, or whether or not I could come in, do things.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

You had no actualization, like “oh my goodness there are no Black people here,” or anything like that?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

‘Cause the thing about, and it’s still kind of, it’s really kind of unfortunate now. Is that pretty much anything that you were gonna do here as an African American, you know, during that period of time you’re pretty much gonna be the first. You know, with the exception of you know, probably the athletic department or some of those but you’re pretty much the first, but I think it’s just like you know, our Vice President, Kamala Harris, said, “you know I might be the first person, but I will not be the last.” So, the thing is, you know, what can you do in terms of hopefully you know, certainly, when people have to vote that might or might not work, but if you’re doing something else, if you belong to a group or, you know, I know when I, again, being tapped for Mortarboard, that was, you know, really wonderful and a big deal. And I made sure that the next year I gave them a name to make sure that there would be someone else, another African American female for them to look at and consider. You know, ‘cause they look at your grades and you did this, that, and the other, and they do an interview. At the time I don’t know what’s, you know, even if what they’re doing now, but you know, but I wanted to make sure that they had the name of someone else. So, I think it helps that if you become the first that you make sure that they have other people to consider for the next. It doesn’t help if you’re the first and you can go around forever and ever and say, you know, that you’re, you know the first. Okay? (Laughs) You know, that’s wonderful, but at some point, you want, you know, and I think that happens in any situation. Oftentimes people get positions or whatever happens within their lives, and they sometimes stay, you know, for years and years and years, and it’s kind of like why are, you know, you not mentoring someone in that next generation to be able to take your place? Or why are you not talking to people? Why don’t you have them names of people who could ultimately- Because at some point all of us will need to be able to do that? You know, we not gonna live forever, as much as we might want to, are we not gonna be able to do something forever, so it’s important to make sure that you provide them with some insight in terms of other people that might be able to do that.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, what was through your first day at TCU? You had any impressions, or first impressions, or was it just you know, business as usual?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, you know because I had already had the college experience, it was, you know, I didn’t come in like you know wide eyed. But it is interesting because Chapman, you know, California has always been, you know, certainly more liberal and things like that. And I remember we didn’t have a curfew, and here at TCU there was a curfew, and later they that changed with the I guess the first semester or first year, was this curfew and I was just, you mean I have to be here? You know you have to look at your watch and know what time you need to come in. So that was really interesting. But you know, luckily, I had been on campus the year before had met some students because I came to visit my boyfriend at that time, and just was on campus and had met

some students. So, I knew a few of them when I came. And so, it was, you know easy, just you know kind of getting into the dorm and just kind of getting started.

One of the reasons though, that I, is I looked if I was gonna be in the area at TCU over some other institution, was in fact that I was really interested in communication pathology. Our speech pathology as a major and the department here is absolutely wonderful. I mean, it's always been very highly rated. And so, when I decided, well, you know, I will come back. That was always something that, you know gave it a kind of a Gold Star in terms of having such a great communication pathology department, and audiology, and things like that. Which also put me in a in a major where I was the only Black student. (Laughs) Until, you know until later on, but it was great. I mean, because that was something that I was, you know, really interested in and to like, you know started looking at other kinds of things, just kept taking classes in classes and classes. And you know, it was kind of interesting in terms of when I was working on my Doctorate, I just would take on these classes and I, you know, I knew that the focus needs to be on administration, but I wanted to take all these classes and finally my major professor said, “you know, Jennifer, you're about to graduate now. Is this what- it's gonna be this one?” because I just had courses and all these things 'cause I was just seeing course and I would just wanna take it.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Just take them all (laughs).

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

And she said, “now you gotta graduate your next semester-” You know next year or something, “and so you need to decide, you can't keep taking, you need to focus here.” You know so you start writing your dissertation, so then I thought, “Oh okay!” you know 'cause I mean, I loved college, and I loved going to classes and things, you know. And so, I could've just done that (laughs).

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, we have addressed your closeness with other African American students on campus. And that's one thing that a lot of our participants say is that “we all knew each other.” Was that the case, is that how you felt it as well?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Right, and that happens, I mean, when you're such a small group. You know, you get to know each other and you, and it helped that we had the opportunity on Saturday evenings to get together. And I don't know if that was special budget just because they felt like maybe we might wanna get together, whatever, but it was really nice. We'd have a room in the student center and they'd have, you know, snacks, and punch, and cookies, and cakes, or whatever. And music and it was just, it was really great. So, if you were on campus and maybe you didn't have the money to you know go out to dinner or whatever, you could do that. Or even if you're going out someplace you stop through there and see everybody, and those kinds of things. And I think that helped us in terms of developing other relationships because we would celebrate each other's

birthdays and you know other kinds of things, so that all you know built within that. And I think one of the things that's always sad in situations like that is that once you graduate and leave, then the connections stop. You know, kind of you because you don't see each other, except for a few. Like my mom always said to me, she said, "those people that you were really close to. You will maintain those relationships." So, she was true. You know that was true in terms of we still talk and see each other if I'm in, you know, California, someplace, I go spend, go a couple of days with them or whatever, but you know at first it was kind of a shock in terms of okay now I'm just kind of out here and it's kind of like starting all over again, but it's great to be able to pick up the phone and call and talk and have those relationships. But yeah, it was, that was so wonderful to just have that closeness, and you feel like you can call someone. You know, I mean if I had a car that broke down someplace in the city, and it was nice to know that if I could reach any student, any particularly African American student on campus, they would come pick me up or they make sure that I got back, you know, and that that was a good feeling to have that.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah, I can imagine. So, I know you have quite a lot of institutional knowledge being here as an alumni, and as the former faculty member. Now integration, we kind of looked at it when we were looking at the exhibit in the library. But in terms of the main campus, integration didn't really start until 1964, so we had that, you know, decision by the Board of trustees and then come fall of 1964, we have a wave of African Americans students who come to TCU. And we know that every single one of them departed at the end of their first year, and then we had the class that came in 1965 with Lillian Warner Green, and Mildred Sims, and James Cash; and these are the ones that you know was the first graduating class, a significant amount of African American students. do you know about those students who enrolled in 1964?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I know that one of my sister-in-law's was in that first class, and you know, I basically I think she just decided to go here until she could, my father-in-law graduated from Howard Medical school, along with his brother and then there were some other family members that attended Howard, and she wanted to go to Howard. And so, another sister, the one who you know that I mentioned who was in the class with James Cash was gonna graduate that next year, a year early, and then they were going to go to Howard together. So, I think that that was kind of her thing. I will go here until we can then go to Howard University together. But I mean, you know it would be interesting. I could certainly give you contact information to hear her thoughts about her time here. She did not live on campus. I'm pretty sure she lived at home, as a student here. But you know, even with that possibly would have some insight, but I certainly don't know. But yeah, she was in that within that group. And then the next year, you're write some of the students who came after that, the numbers began to grow and they, you know, stayed, and graduated, you know which was unique in itself.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

This is definitely interview we need to have. Yeah 'cause we have not been able to because their names are no longer in the system. You know we looked at different offices and their names have just, they've been removed.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Right.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Because they stayed there for such a short amount of time and did not graduate. So, to have at least one, I'm extremely excited. (Laughs)

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

(Laughs) Yeah, I know. Yeah, and if there were others, I'm sure she would, she might would know who they are.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah, absolutely. So, Homecoming election. Walk us through that process that went on until coronation. From what I've heard there was some kind of conspiracy about students saying how can we get involved, and that's how you ended up running. Is that true? Can you give us details? Tell us exactly how you even come to even run.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, you know, I don't know in terms of that so much but when they- first of all I just give a little background information in terms of the whole 1970s.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Was a time period, of course, when you know, America was changing to a certain extent. You know it kind of started in the in the 60s, but you know there was pop culture, there was activism, that was a holdover from the 60s. You know, there was political values that were different and people were still kind of in this, you know, Make Love not war kind of thing, and civil rights, and political awareness, and just all of these things, you know, make the 70s somewhat different because of that holdover from the 60s. And I was thinking of recently, I mean, you know, in terms of, I mean, we were watching shows like "All in the Family," where Archie Bunker would just say whatever he wanted to say, and "The Jeffersons" and you know, and there were programs where there were all African American cast members. You know that would have been unheard of, you know, just a decade before that.

And so, I felt like, you know, kind of during that period, the students you know, looked at people in terms of, you know their uniqueness, and hopefully you know my whole thought was not just in terms of we wanna have this African American candidate, but yes, okay, we want to have it.



And we need to step up and we need to do that and make that happen. If that's going to happen, then we need to do whatever we can to help her return through the election. And so, I represented both Jarvis dorm and then I represented Tom Brown dorm, they got together and so that gave you know, a little bit more oomph to just the voting power, and then of course the African American students. You know, so I was going to be their representative, you know at that time. And so, the way that it did happen is that they all talked to me and said, "well, we feel like, you know it's time and we need to have an African American candidate." And you know, "would you do it" and you know, and it was more of a sense of "we really feel like because you know, you're involved on campus, people know you." And so, you know, I was thinking, you know? Sure. It was not so much, you know, I think that I'm the perfect candidate, or I think that I will win. It much was like, well, you know you're right and in terms of what we're going through, we need that. And 'cause, of course, during this period of women's rights were kind of coming to the forefront. You know, we had so much, I mean, in terms of, as I said in terms of the civil rights and past discriminatory practices and so forth. So, you know, sure. And so, they took all of our, you know, took a picture, and put it up in the in the student center. And you know, as I mentioned before, they would have, I don't know, maybe it was 20 pictures or whatever. And then at the end of the election the top three were left, but it was interesting, somebody said to me that some of the Black students, particularly men, the day of voting they were doing kind of poll watching, and they were kind of stand there, you know, and look at people. And I never did see that, and I thought probably that's not necessarily the case, but they would stand and watch; my guess I think probably as a reminder that we have a, you know a Black queen, maybe please consider kind of thing.

But I think the students were saying that, yeah, it is time and we have someone who can represent the university, and it doesn't matter in terms of whether the person is Black, white, green, or purple, she can do that. Because I think in terms of, I was reading this quote recently in terms of now, which in some cases kind of parallel just before this period, where the author said that our descendants, and I'm paraphrasing to certain extent, "our descendants will be surprised at how much we paid attention to the melanin in someone skin, the shape of someone's eye, gender identity, as opposed to their individual uniqueness." And that quote just spoke to me because I think during that period of time, the country to a certain extent, certainly here at TCU, which was embrace about everything that was going on, began to look at individual uniqueness and what could that person bring with that uniqueness. What is it that they have? Okay, you know they could be African American, they could be some other race; but what do they bring, and what can we you know even learn from them? And how could they be a part of what we were doing?

And so, the election was, you know, certainly the surprise was that you know, we had my picture still up after the election down three, but you know, it was the night of the bonfire. You know, when they say it second runner up, I thought it was me, when is it said first runner up, I thought it was me, and they said, you know, "no, you're the winner!" And they gave me the trophy and things like that. And it was certainly, I think a wonderful opportunity in terms of being elected because what people were said would say to me, "So, what was your talent?" You know because the whole thing is that people thought, well, it must have been, the election, it wasn't, you know,

an election from students. It must have been because there was some kind of talent show. Like you know, Miss America, something like that. And I said, “no, this is just all people voted.” You know and that was, I think, the key thing for me is that everybody who was a student here at the right to come and vote, and to win from that was really, really important. And so again, trying to make sure that, you know during that time, and even past that time, to always represent you know in the back of your mind. If people know that, you still in a way are kind of always representing the university, not only in terms of yourself and your family, but always, you know, representing the university.

Because again during that period we’re going through, we got the Vietnam War. You know, we got people who you know are trying to get together and making, you know we were marching, and talking about it and making remarks about that, and what was wrong with that. And then there was the, you know, the sexual revolution. Many of us, you know, I never had friends whose parents divorced, but during that period of time they did. People were certainly living together and not married, that was something, certainly unique and different. And we went through, you know, just that whole period I mean the clothes were horrible from the you know, the platform shoes, to the bell bottom pants, to the leisure suits. I looked through some pictures the other week, and I thought, “god we actually wore those clothes.” But I think one significant thing that happened during that period was the passing of the 26th Amendment, when they dropped the voting age from 21 to 18. With the rationale being, if we're going to send men to war, then they should be able to vote, and I think that during that period, you know a lot of things happened. And I think that that was so important, so impactful, you know that that happened during that period. And I think my election as homecoming queen was all just a part of that, which was happening in society, and which was happening in the world outside of TCU and then, ultimately, if it came apart of TCU, you know what's happening. And that was just, you know, kind of the beginning. And although, you know, I know in terms of other things that had happened, it seemingly gone at slower pace, maybe than other institutions, but at least they started back you know with that period (laughs).

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, were you aware of your popularity, with other students? You had an idea?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Not really. You know I think when I kind of caught on was when Tom Brown said they wanted to also, you know they wanted to be one of my sponsors. And I'm thinking you know, and certainly, you know, that was all male dorm and certainly there were some, you know African American male students over there but not that many you know. And certainly Jarvis, there weren't that many in terms of that. So I- and then when people would ask me about that, I think a lot of it has to do with what I was saying just in terms of these small pockets of getting to know people, whether it was through, you know Mortar Board, or whether it's through going with the group to go tutor in school, or whether it was, you know, I think it was, you know, kind of a combination of that. Whereas with all that was happening in our country, when it was time to vote is also you could have those conversations like, “yeah, I know Jennifer, she's really great”

or “she’s” you know, “we tutor together” or “we you know we’re in this group together.” And so, that was where I think it kind of started. You know, it was because I, you know, I certainly didn’t know. I just kind of would go about my day as we all do. You know you get up in the morning every semester, try not to have an 8:00 o’clock class if you can help it, (laughs) and on. But it was wonderful in my experience, you know, as during that period after the election, you know, we’re positive. And certainly, you know there were a couple of phone calls, and there was some you know, like occasionally a remark that was not flattering, but for the most part it was just, you know, wonderful.

Everybody was great, and wonderful, and it’s so funny from time-to-time kind of after that, a few years after, that I’d see people places and they asked me to sign something. You know, “like I remember you, you were homecoming queen, you know my freshman year” or something like that, and then asked me to sign something so. And so, that period has been, you know, it was positive. Also, during that period, which I don’t tell a lot of people ‘cause I don’t want to look it up, you know I was in *Jet* centerfold. (Laughs) You know and I also, you know I was interviewed by just about every African American newspaper around. A lot of them called, and if I had family members in other states, they’d have people you know to call. And I think again it was more of the TCU reputation of being a more conservative kind of institution, and people feeling like, okay, if you know if that’s going to happen at TCU, then certainly you know other universities need to look at that, and let’s, let’s tell the story, you know.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Because that was the first in the whole conference.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, the whole conference, that’s true. And as I was saying, one of the reporters I talked to out of Houston or someplace he said, “I’m gonna look that up. I think it’s the first in the state.” So, I said, well, I don’t know, you know, I was still just going over the first at TCU but yeah it was the first in the Southwest Conference, certainly.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So now we’re going to talk about your experience as a Black student at TCU in particular, I know we kind of touched on that, and all of these topics, they intermingle, but I’d like to talk about the academic side of your experience as a Black student. Starting with something as simple as your favorite class. What class did you remember the most, did you like the most and why?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I have to kind of think back as I, you know, I mentioned I was really interested in communication pathology and audiology as a major. And so, all of those classes were small and I was the only African American student in the classes. And so, I was able to meet other students and professors, kind of in terms of what I wanted, what my goals were, you know, my hopes and dreams kind of thing. But I took a course in voice therapy, which is a class that you have to take as you prepare to get a degree in communication pathology. And I really enjoyed that course. It

was a lot of hard work, but I really enjoyed that course. You know, as I think about, I pretty much really enjoy all the courses in my major, I guess.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know it wasn't it really wasn't any anything, anyone that I've just kind of didn't like. my whole thing was never so much the course, it was just always the time. You know, I admire people that could take those eight o'clock courses and still function during the day. I wasn't a morning person then, I'm not a morning person now. And so, I was just kind of the time. But I really did and I can't say that there wasn't a course that I really didn't enjoy. And I think a lot of times people who have either taken some courses and communication pathology and audiology understand, I mean it's so interactive because you are working with students within in the Miller Speech and Hearing Department, and you're getting to talk to parents, and you're out observing, and you know, doing those kinds of things. And so, and the classes were so small until you knew everybody and that was in your class. So, it wasn't like a major where there are a lot of people, and so all of them I enjoyed and built relationships with people within the major. I mean we'd go out and, you know, have dinner or, you know, do those kinds of things.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

And as a Black student, do you remember experiencing any of those microaggressions on campus? Or anything like that, did you experience racism in any way?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I didn't really per say although, you know, certainly there were some, yes, this is, you know, we would talk about sometime within our, you know, we have all the Black students get together in terms of some things that had happened or some things that someone had said or so forth. When I came, my roommates were Black, you know, I know in some instances people had. When I was at Chapman, my roommate was not Black, and she was wonderful. But the thing that was interesting about that is that they asked her if she would accept a Black roommate. No one called me to see if I would accept the white roommate. So, you know, so those kinds of things have happened. I mean, they're, you know, probably still happening to a certain extent. But you know, I don't know if Black students here who maybe have white roommates, if that situation happened and it possibly did, you know, I don't know if that happened. But because my roommates were, you know, African American and then a lot of the social activities were with, you know, the African Americans and Black students, and although there were some social activities that were more integrated for the most part, they were with them. So, I didn't have that. Again, the classes were small, they were, you know, great. I worked hard, as I'm sure many of the other students, and I think part of that was to prove, although you feel like academically, you're ready, you can do everything. But I know my whole goal was to make sure that if there was an A to be had, I really wanted to make sure that I could get that A. Not necessarily that I was going to get it every

time, but you know, it was always what I put on myself in terms of what can I do to make sure that my academics were at the top notch, and things like that.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah, so you set your own standards.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, I set my own standards in terms of that. So, you know, occasionally you you'd hear remarks or that somebody might say something, but I did not see that as, you know that overt kind of thing. Again, we were coming out of that the whole, you know, period of the activism of the Civil Rights being, of looking at past discriminatory practices. And I think it was just kind of a different mindset. Again, it didn't mean that it was not happening, but when people ask me, "well kind of describe that period," was that the that whole thing about people saying Make Love, not war, let's get along.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Why can't we get, you know, we still that kind of period, and it which was so interesting 'cause by the time it got to the 80s when the Reagans were in office, and it kind of went this whole thing about big and how much money can you have and who has, you know, so much money and, you know, if you don't have the biggest dress or the nicest car or whatever. But really during that period of the, you know, particularly, you know, length, 60s through the 70s, it was still more of this, you know, lets sing Kumbaya sometime. Not all in the way that that was happening 'cause certainly there were civil rights unrest, there were marches, there were all that kind of stuff. But even with all that happening, it was not these things that were so overt all the time, there's certainly were things happening.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

But certainly, for me and then you know, you could speak to someone else who had certainly completely different, you know, experience that I think a lot of the time is all about, you know, what happens within your circle and in and in your life, which you live. And possibly if I had been in another major for instance it would have been completely different, or if I didn't spend, you know, cause I spent a lot of time in the library. I knew everything because I was always determined even if I was gonna do something on the weekend, I needed to make sure that Thursday night or Friday that I had every assignment done. And I had that 'cause I was just, I had put that on myself in terms of trying to do that, make a difference.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, your African American classmates or, you know, your group of friends of color, did they experience the same kind of, not really stillness, but the same positivity in their experience, in terms of being a student of color at a predominantly white institution?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know, again, just in terms of the talking, when we would get together, some of them did not have positive experiences all the time. You know, we kind of talked a little bit in terms of what happened with the athletes, that certainly was not positive causing a lot of them to leave. I think, you know, you've interviewed at the first Act American cheerleader. That was a lot of things happened during that, but that was not positive. So, I think, you know, there was these kinds of bits and pieces in terms of things that were not all positive.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

How did he live that, according to you? I mean you've observed the situations from the outside. What was his demeanor? I don't know if you got a chance to interact with him during that period of time. But being the Black first black cheerleader at TCU, you know he experienced threat and-

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, you know, I wasn't here his very first year.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Which I think is when all of that that happened. When I came, you know, it did kind of die down a little bit and it was, you know the thing of, you know I think his partner, you know, that was you didn't. And I don't want to say something I'm not really sure about, but I think by that time he had a partner who said "yes," you know, "I want him to be my partner," was kind of like you know, I will select, you know, him, and we'll go on. But like the first year. Yeah, I'm told when I got here and all the things that he went through with the threats, and don't do this, and you know those kinds of things. And you know part of that, again going through, you know, all these growing pains, all of us, as African Americans and Blacks have had to deal with that first time that it happens. It's, you know, you get all kind of things, you know, thrown at you and terrible things said and so forth. I mean, you know, we just, you know, had certainly our first, you know, a Black president, who now that they've been out of the White House for several years, talk about, you know, the threats that he got every day, and all the things that happened. I mean, you know, these are things that happen, you don't- we, you know, as people who are not a part of that inner circle certainly wouldn't know about. But you work through that and try to keep everybody safe and try to kind of get to the other side. And I think that it would have been very easy for the first, you know whether it's first cheerleader or first, whatever, to say okay, "now I'm getting death threats. I'm not gonna do it. I'm gonna give up." But I think what we found during that period is that people continued because they felt like it's going to be better if I can get to the other side, or let me prove to them, you know, that I can do these things, or let me prove that I'm

the I'm the best whatever. If your major is math, so let me prove that I'm just as good at math as everyone else or I'm gonna make the highest score. You know, it's kind of- and I think kind of during that time people put those kinds of you know, I don't wanna say- I guess goals maybe on themselves in terms of, "my goal is to reach this." And if it is felt that I can't do it, then I'm gonna prove them wrong. It was always that kind of I'm going to prove them wrong that I can do it.

And that's the reason why the whole issue with affirmative action has always been so strange to me. And the fact that people think well, with the affirmative action that means that you're going to get it because you're, you know, you're Black. Which never really, you know, is always kind of crazy because first of all say for instance, if you're trying to get into an institution, first of all, you have to qualify and get in, you know, and because of past discrimination practices, if they never had a Black major in math then certainly, they need to look at the one from the racial group where they never have that person who actually, you know, who actually was in the math department, or was actually was a math major, or whatever it is. It doesn't have anything to do with, "okay, we're going to have, you know, these two whites and one Black and we're just gonna go select you 'cause you're Black. No, first of all, you have to actually get into the program that you're trying to get, you have to qualify and pass all the tests, and all of that. But because of past discrimination practices, certainly, but then there's never this discussion in the same way about legacy. Because what you think in terms of legacy, there are certain names certainly within this community, within all over the country, if your last name is whatever and you wanna go to this institution, you maybe might or might not qualify, but because your name is whatever it is, or because your parents are very, very, very wealthy or whatever, you get in and now you become a legacy. But they don't see that as the same in terms of affirmative action, which is based on past discrimination practices. Which means I'm gonna have to take the test, I'm gonna have to qualify, I'm gonna have to be, you know, an almost super person, and then when looking at everything that's equal to, you know, the right students are to that racial group, then hopefully I will be the one selected based on the fact that they've never had any person of some color there. And I and I think that that's something that needs be said over and over again. Even now when people will say things like that, and they will feel like, well, that person is there, you know, they're only there, you know, because they're Black, or they're only there because they're a woman, or they're on it, you know? No, based on discrimination practices of the past, yes, they're here but they qualified, they got A average, you know, all these other kinds of things.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

And it's one thing to get there, so not just stay there. You have to produce; you have to perform.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, absolutely.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

When your grades and your, you know, so no, it's not just me being you know?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Anyway, you know there's a saying in Africa, "there's nobody more blind than the one who refuses to see."

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Absolutely.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

No point arguing. The Jarvis exchange program of 1968, did you know about that? Or maybe you found out about it afterwards?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I really didn't, you know, no 'cause again I came right after that.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, nobody was really talking about it when you joined it in 1969?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know my just affiliation with Jarvis, of course, I knew that both of them were, you know, the same religious affiliation.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

And TCU, you know, kind of adopted them. But when I came to TCU as a staff member, Dr. Cornell Thomas ultimately left here and became president of Jarvis, you know, and so we were really kind of actively engaged in some of the things that he was trying to do there, and so forth. And so, I began to learn more in terms of that relationship with TCU, but it was certainly after that happened.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, you were there when Dr. Thomas left TCU?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Mhm.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay. Do you remember what the climate was around his departure?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**



Well, I think it was basically, the fact that the administration, you know, didn't feel like his position was needed, you know? Although I think now, they realize that that position certainly needed. And so, then they later had to kind of backpedal on that and make some changes in terms of you know what they ultimately did with Dr. Turner's position. Which actually was Dr. Thomas's kind of in another, you know, with some other goals I think in objectives and things like that, but that was really too bad because you know, Dr. Thomas had put together, I mean, you know, the Community Scholars program was through him and his department. But have put together some really good programs, but one of the things too, with him going to Jarvis, I'm sorry that that didn't work because our historical Black colleges and universities are still very much needed in our country. And he was in the process of doing some wonderful things there. And he had said to me that he wanted to make their College of Education a college of excellence. And so, he was really putting some things in place there. And, you know, during that time I won an award from Bank of America that they give, and there was a cash award with that. And they asked me, "well, who do you want us to give this this money to?" And I said to Jarvis Christian College. And, you know, you never think in terms of, I think it's like it was \$5000 or something like that, which- and he called me and he said you will never know what that means to a small institution like Jarvis. You know, to have some kind of seed money that we can build upon. And so, you know, again, I'm sorry that he was not able to stay to fulfill his dreams. But I know the kinds of things he was trying to do there, which ultimately, he could have stayed here in that position at that level. Gosh, just things would have, I'm sure, have been different if given the opportunity to grow and to grow 'cause he had a lot of good ideas and you know a lot of things to be given the opportunity to let that grow and to help the institution. I think it would've been to kind of another level in terms of what ultimately, they had to come back and do in terms of what they're doing, not only in the community but in terms of what they're doing with students of color, you know all of those kinds of things.

Because it is often said that, you know, TCU is kind of this school on the top of the hill. And a lot of people still see it in terms of being in school, where you have a lot of wealthy white students. And they don't realize that there are, you know, some outstanding programs going on I think in terms of what your department is doing and others in terms of trying to get the story out, and working with minority students or, you know, trying to reach some other goals because that's not, you know, widely discussed and it's not out there. And I think for the most part, you know, I think that they were kind of alright with that, but if nothing else, what has happened the past couple of years, it really kind of started with, you know, as we were talking earlier about Rodney King and what happened, you know in California.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You're thinking we watched this man get beat on national news and the people are found not guilty. You know, I think that the past couple of years, with so much of this happening and it's one after the other, and you know just people are thinking enough is enough and what can we

do? Hopefully you know, certainly they're not everybody, but hopefully there are enough people are saying enough is enough. And I think what happened with Mr. George Floyd was the fact that because of the pandemic, people were at home watching TV. Now if we had not been in the pandemic. You know, people have been going on with their lives. they would have seen it whatever, but people were at home. And when you see people at home watching that and not believing that this kind of thing happens, and they get on a plane and fly to, you know, march, I think it says that now, I now know that these things are not made up. And there are things that are happening, you know? And so, and the thing that's really kind of frightening, I think about that is the fact that maybe it's not happening in your community now, 'cause a lot of people say, well, you know, it's never really happened here or life is great and you know, life is beautiful and all that. But it might happen tomorrow because these are things that happen on a continuous conversations. And so, I certainly feel, you know, as I've mentioned before, we must have courageous conversations. People gonna have to start talking and trying to get to know each other and saying what's on their heart and letting people know, or saying "I don't know, and I really would like to know," or you know, how can I help or whatever 'cause in a country like America with all of this wealth and we have homeless people just all over. Even with the pandemic and things, there's still some people that make so much in the stock market even during this pandemic that they could buy a hotel and put up all the homeless people in Fort Worth or, you know, New Orleans or wherever you happen to live. And it's kind of like you put the blinders on, but say you can't afford to do that, but you know, everyone can find something that they can do. And you have to do that. And so, coming through, you know, TCU with the various experience which certainly helped me in terms of my growth, certainly into becoming an adult in terms of my goals and objectives, it helped all of us. And hopefully, whether the experiences were extremely negative, negative, kind of negative, little negative or whatever we, you know, work through those and can come out on the other side. Because you know, life continues to happen and my whole thing would be to help this next generation in terms of whatever they're experiencing, you know?

'Cause I received a call when, you know I didn't know who the students were, who were gonna call, it was with Channel 8 News or something about some things that were happening on campus. And somebody goes, "have you heard about what's happening at, you know, at TCU?" and I said, "no, I hadn't heard it." And then they were, you know, calling, I'm pretty sure they probably called some other people because they wanted to make sure that if you're a graduate, you know what's going on, and maybe there's some way you could maybe help you know?

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Mhm. So, Dr. Cornell Thomas has agreed to interview with us, but in your perspective, what did TCU lose when Dr. Thomas left?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, I think they really lost someone, I mean he is a critical thinker and a problem solver, you know, and those are, unfortunately, skills not really taught so much now. You know, they just, you know, in school they don't really stop and just- because you can teach people how to

problems, or you provide opportunities for them to problem solve. But he is truly a critical thinker and a problem solver, and he thinks outside the box. So therefore, when he left we lost that, and plus he was in the Chancellor's cabinet.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know, and so you certainly lost that, but you lost somebody who was there who also had great ideas. And that, you know, I just I hated to see that. I was so pleased that we were able to maintain our friendship and, you know so we, you know, could talk from time to time and could keep it with what was going on. But again, I saw that as being a great loss at TCU, but because he was going to, you know, at the time to an HBCU, you know, I thought that was a great game for them. And then, you know, sorry that that didn't work out. So, he, you know came back here before retiring. And then- but he was not in the same position as kind of, you know, come back and, you know, certainly he was needed in terms of teaching courses and that, and that was good. But we needed him where he was. (Laughs) You know, and that was the kind of thing I never, you know, certainly I don't know, you know why they made the decision that they made, but he was really needed there. And I think that's something that when somebody looks back over the history of what could have been, or with that position still there with him, I think they're going to see that things would have been different. Mhm.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

And then back in your days as a student do you remember- so you said that you know those microaggressions, they weren't, you didn't really receive any, like, personal attacks, you know, like Ron Hurdle got, you know, a phone call; or Lindsey Cole, or anything like that. But were you aware of, for example, the slave auctions that they had in Greek life?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I was not. (Laughs) I really- did that happen during the time that?

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Really?

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah, so the Skiff actually advertised annual slave auctions as a fundraiser every single year between 1957 and I believe 1984. I was surprised it lasted that long but yeah that was actually a fundraiser.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know, you mentioned that, and I guess part of that I was with blinders on. And I guess I kind of, pretty much on weekends I left. I don't, you know, I don't really, even somebody was asking me about some Skiff articles, and about four or five years ago, and I'm thinking I didn't even really read that and my whole thing was I don't know that they had anybody Black on the Skiff staff. I don't really recall that that might be a really good, you know, person if they dared to seek out. But you know, they just had a slave auction in Aledo schools, which you know. And so, because I have, I know African Americans who live up there. I've been actively, you know, involved with that, thinking, you know this is 2021.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know and you know some things that I think 'cause I'm thinking you know; these are the kinds of things that happen a long time ago. Now you're seeing up through '84. That is something and you know, as you mentioned it, someone might have said that, but again, I just I kept my blinders on in terms of going to class, not gonna be here on weekends if I don't necessarily have to. If I was here, we'd go to a party or we'd do something. And my engagement in terms of the community was pretty much off campus, in terms of if there was a march or tutoring or something. It was within the community as opposed to necessarily on the campus. And I think that that's one of the things, you know we talked a little earlier in terms of why is it that some of the African American students don't return for various things, like reunions.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

And I don't know work programs or whatever. And a lot of times I will have some friends who were at TCU, who were white during that time, asking me about that, and my answer is always well you need to ask them. And I think part of that has to do with those kinds of experiences that people really were actively involved with, or they read it and nobody was trying to do anything about it. So therefore, you take that out of my head, I'm gone get my degree and not come back. You know?

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah, that is the testimony that we get a lot of time in the interviews.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

You know, "I wasn't there to socialize." Which reminds me, I did read that Mildred Sims, I know that's, you know, a few years before your time. But I remember that she and her classmates say

that, you know, we didn't really experience personal effects, but she did recall that one instance where she was trying to be a residence hall manager and she was denied that position because, you know, parents wouldn't want her to have to discipline their white children. I found it very interesting that you actually were vice president.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, vice president of the dorm and was a resident hall thing, 'cause I continued and got my masters immediately after my bachelors, and was for a year, and you know. So yeah, I can imagine that would take a while in terms of you know getting that to occur. And then again as a graduate student that was also different in terms of an undergrad.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Kind of thing. But yeah, I could see that happening because one of the things you know, I think some of the racism and other kinds of things that occur here, It wasn't, you know, like in your face kind of thing. You know, it was always very subtle. And, you know, I was talking to some older African Americans at my church, we were doing some special programming and we were talking about the difference in terms of living in the South or the Deep South, as opposed to, you know, the migration when Blacks started leaving the South going up north because they could get jobs and they thought it's gonna be all wonderful, and, you know, it's gonna be great. They're gonna have better housing this than the other. And for some people, you know, if they move to Detroit and they worked in the auto industry, they were able to, you know, get jobs, and make more money, certainly than the South. But the thing that many of them said is the thing about during that period of time living in the South, that if a white person, did not want you to live next to them, they told you, and they made it, you know, so you didn't do it. You know, it was in your face. "I don't want you to live next to me." It was in your face, "I don't want you to go to this restaurant." It was in your face, "I don't want you to, you know, buy this car or shop here." But when they went up north, it wasn't in your face, they just made sure it didn't happen.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know they had the red lining, and then you can only buy houses if you were Black in a certain neighborhood. And if you tried to buy over here, they might bomb your house or they- so they wasn't in your face with it. And many of them who ended up staying in the South and who lived in the South all their lives, said they preferred- 'cause, they prefer someone saying to them, "I don't want you to get next to me, and I'm gonna do everything I can to keep you from there." Rather than letting moving to a place where no one is really saying it, but they're doing everything to hurt you and making sure that you don't have those opportunities and advantages. And so, when the, you know, places like, you know, Detroit, Milwaukee and you know, Chicago

and so forth; when those kinds of issues, you know, began to explode, and then you ended up with all the poverty, and the drug problems, and this, that, and the other. And they did not have that explosion in the South, of course, you know, the South people did have houses, the houses maybe weren't the best, but they were their houses, and they were on a little piece of land and they had this, that, and the other. That was their kind of affirmation that, you know, I stayed here in the South, in Georgia or Mississippi or whatever, you know, it's terrible and it's crazy, and I don't have this, that, and the other, except my little piece of land. But I also know what I can do and can't do, and I know that this person does not want me in this store, or they don't want me here. And I think even now, there's still some of that that occurs in terms of not really wanting you but can't say that out loud kind of thing. So, there's some things that are sometimes put in place in terms of what we will let you do or you can do that. And it goes back to, you know, what, you know, I talked a little bit about earlier in terms of just whether serving on boards or serving in commissions or whatever, where they'll let you serve on the board, but you don't get to chair.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

You don't get the chair, yeah.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know you don't get to be in a leadership position.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yes.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, or you're not representing them, you know, maybe a group in anything. But yeah, but you can go and say, "well, yeah, I serve on this board." (Laughs) But if you have a, you know, wanna chair, that's going to be, you know, no, that's not gonna happen. It's not gonna happen.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Did you get to interact with Lindsey Cole? I'm asking that because, you know, as Oral History is collecting those testimonies, his story is one that we can no longer get, at least not directly. So, you know, I know that he enrolled at TCU, I believe it was '67. Did your paths ever cross?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

No. Certainly, everybody knew about him and, you know, kind of a little bit in terms of his story. But no, we didn't, you know, weren't here at this at the same time.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay, and what was life at TCU like for other Black athletes as far as you can tell?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know, unfortunately it's kind of like I think it's what we see a lot of times in terms of Black athletes. Kind of, "can you play football? "Can you play basketball ?" when you know and that's kind of, you know, what we want. You know just go do that. We don't want you, you know, doing anything in terms of being political, or making statements, or whatever. It's like just play ball. And I guess it was maybe my senior year or junior year. I was- the athletes needed a tutor, you know to pass their courses, and so occasionally they would, you know, ask people to help them. And I became one of the tutors for some of the athletes, and, you know, for the most part it was, that was really difficult because we know that all of them are not going to play professional.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know, football or basketball or whatever, you know, certainly there are the outstanding ones like James Cash, who's is smart, can play ball, can do all these kinds of things. But some of them are really having some difficulty in their classes. And that was something that by serving as a tutor, I really picked up on, you know? And maybe they, you know, maybe they went to a segregated school where they just really didn't have things, or maybe it was because they were good athletes. You know, sometimes people kind of just kind of pass them on, and that kind of thing. But before I came on his full-time staff, I taught some courses, undergraduate and graduate courses in the evenings here. And I remember a couple of times having athletes that would come in and they would not do their work. And I would just tell them, "You're not gonna pass if you don't do your work." And then you finally kind of get them to believe that that's gonna happen. Few of them had probably not had that many instructors of color, and so they would think, well, they could, if they were African American and I was African American, then we would, you know, talk and it's going to be okay. No, you know. But I must say that the athletic department here is really good in terms of asking about how they're doing. Are they turning in their homework, are they, you know, doing those kinds of things to try to help them, because I think it's really important for them to realize. It's always been important that, you know, very few people get to play, get to pro, you know, few will, you know, but most people will not.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

And so, it's important for you to learn what you can. And so, I think that for many of them it was you know, whether it started in high school or whatever, it was kind of just used to being given the benefit of the doubt. And not being, well, someone insisting and making sure that you reach your full potential by turning your work, nobody else doing it. By actually knowing this information and no one else doing that.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, since we're talking about student athletes, let's discuss the walkout of 1971. So, we have Coach Pittman coming in and wanted to, you know set some inaugural rules and some football players decided that this is not fair. What is your assessment of the situation, and why was your picture with them in newspaper and in the yearbook?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, I think that was kind of the beginning of a lot of problems that, trying to think, that should have been addressed through just conversations with calling people in. I think Coach Pittman, you know, he was more of a, you know, just a- I don't wanna say, just a coach who said it and you just have to do it. You know, I think there were seemingly, and certainly I didn't play sports, but seemingly there was not this opportunity for sitting down and talking and hearing your thoughts and all that. And you know, which we're running into during this day and time with hair, you know like the athletes that are trying to play basketball. I've just heard recently and the at the young lady had her hair braided, and they wanted to cut them off before she could go out on the floor. You know, just things like that. And I think that was kind of the thing with, you know, where there was facially or is whether it was, you know, other rules that he just said, you know, this is it. And the rules that were being made, basically, would impact the African American players. You know, just in terms of those rules. And so, within our African American student group decided it was time to, you know, bring that to the forefront. And that was something that athletes wanted to do. But I became involved because of, you know, some rules that supposedly had been in place for a long time. You know, again, I don't know. But there was a game at the Cotton Bowl, and so I had received a call, "Have you been called there? The Queen's will be riding in this parade at the Cotton Bowl." And I had been asked if I have received a call. No, "I hadn't received the call" and so forth. And they said, "oh well, you know, well, you should be in that." And so, I would know if I received a call. And so they, TCU had a lot of this, you know, you look at multiple yearbooks, you know a lot of different kinds of opportunities to be a queen of some sort, you know, here processes this, and so forth and so on. So, they used someone else to ride in that parade, you know, in the convertible that day. And so, the African American students, particularly athletes, just thought that that was terrible. And again, you know, even if that would had been something they've done in the past, and even if that was something that you do, that should have been communicated.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know, and you go on. But they still think that I was not asked because I was the African American queen, as opposed to not being the queen.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, in general, the homecoming queen was the same person as the sweetheart? Or is it that usually they would have the homecoming queen on the parade?



**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, and again, to this day, I don't know. You know, they said that they didn't, but, you know, I'm not sure even how often this was something that the Cotton Bowl and they had the South, you know, each Southwest Conference team, you know I had a little convertible and they rode around the field. And they had a Queen representative, you know, in the car.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

I mean, if somebody is gonna represent the queen, the queen should have a say.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Right. Again, if it's always been that we select, you know, Princess A to do that, then say you know, a telephone call, you know, we're at the Cotton Bowl for the Southwest Conference, and I don't know who's got convertible or whatever. However, we usually invite, you know this person is the usually the representative from school. You know, I think again, it's just going back and having discussions. And whether it's TCU or whatever, I just think people are almost afraid to, and I don't want to say afraid, but I think people just don't sit and just talk, and answer questions, and make sure that what is going on is being explained to the extent that people, most people, I said, "okay fine, great" or "okay, I don't agree with you, but you know, this is the way it should be." (Laughs)

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

But at the same time, I mean if it was just, you know, the football situation and then the whole Cotton Bowl parade situation, it would be something else. But I see that there was, it was a whole list of demands, that were taking place here.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, and since you have those (laughs) have the paper, that's great. You know, 'cause I can't really remember.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

I'm looking here. They wanted a formal apology, of course, but it's more than that. They wanted, I see the students demanded a Black campus minister and psychologist to be hired by the school to help Black students with their unique problems. They also felt more Black professors should be hired too.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Right.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

And I see a full investigation of an incident involving a Black student, Jeannie Lynch was demanded. The Black student felt that had been denied admission under questionable

circumstances. So, it was more than just, you know, asking me to trim my beard and me not riding in a convertible.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Right.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

That's clearly deeper than that. It was underlying issues where I see, you know, there was a clear claim of discrimination here.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

And I and a lot of those kinds of things that came out, as I recall from the Black students, were issues that have been kind of, you know, how something begins to boil.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know, 'cause they had been here, you know, two or three years before I came. And so, they begin, and nothing had ever happened. So, when this thing happened, Coach Pittman, I think, and the athletes were willing to step up. I think that there's, "okay then we need- let's put it all on the table in terms of what we need and what they should have." Now, I don't, you know, know that since do we have those demands, do you know if they've been addressed? 'Cause I don't recall them being addressed before I left. (Laughs) Is there something in there?

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

I'm glad you say this because I here have a list of demands, and I'm not gonna read all of these demands, I'm just gonna read a few.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Is that from the recent ones?

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

This is 2016.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, that's what I thought (laughs).

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

This is 2016. "We demand that TCU increase faculty of color by at least 10%. In addition, the retention rate of these faculty members will remain about 75% to reflect the location of Texas."

They asked for a student-led Diversity and Inclusion Accountability Board to be created. A sensitivity training, annual reports to see how we are increasing in terms of diversity. I mean, these are things I'm like?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I know (laughs).

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

And then I have 2020 list of demands. I mean-

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, you know 'cause when you said that, like I said I don't recall, you know, when I left, that any of that had been done.

I think it would be great to have a poster with demands, you know, 1971 demands, maybe there was some in the 80s, I don't know, but demands at 2016, demands 2020 because you can see that, that is kind of like the demands are made and then- and I guess something, you know, like a university something feel like ultimately the people are gonna graduate, they move on. And so, you know, we do it if we can if we can't we don't, and then ultimately it comes back. But I have been in conversations you know, as I mentioned before you know, having lunch with some students or just trying to get the know them and in other capacities, where they would say something and I would think that sounds like, you know, that happened in the 70s or 80s, you know, as opposed to now. And so, I realize again as to what has happened the past year or two that,

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Lo and behold.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

That you know, people are slowly making some progress, but for the most part it's like pulling, and it's like, and sometimes groups and organizations, they're kicking, and they're screaming, and they'll slowly do it. But it's kind of, you know, you just have to stand up and you have to kick your feet (laughs), and say, "it is time!" Because I'm almost just appalled sometime when I read an article and they'll say so-and-so is the first African American whatever. And then you read again, you know, and another something- the first African American, you know, District Attorney, or first African American this. I mean, you know, we just had, like, in Fort Worth ISD, we just had our first African American Superintendent, you know, four years ago or something. I mean, and I keep thinking this is, you know, during, as long as it had the "19" in front, I thought well, maybe you know by the time it says 2020, we'll be there, and we're still hitting firsts. A friend of mine just became the first school board, African American School board representative in Birdville. I'm thinking, you know, this was 2021 and I mean you know. So, a lot of those things are still happening, and I think part of what happened during that period was as the fact

that after a while, you fight and, you know, verbally in terms of talking to people, or you go and meet with people and they smile and so you're thinking you're, you know, gonna get your way,

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

And it's not happening. 'Cause I know of a young lady last year that felt she was ready for promotion here in the city, she went to talk to her supervisor, thinking that he felt that way too, and so what he did was he kept giving her additional assignments, you know, which made it harder and harder for her to complete everything, but she kept up and thought she was ready. And then, and maybe six or seven months after, you know, she felt like she proved herself, she goes back to say I'm ready and then she gets fired. And then, you know, a young lady of color. And then another young lady of color within her department was fired, so it's kind of like, should I go in and speak up? And her thing was not, it wasn't necessarily negative, it was I think I am ready for this next promotion, and what do I need to show you what can I do to prove myself. And I think within a situation like institutions, you know if you speak up, you know in the meetings or whatever, I think you become labeled a troublemaker as opposed to someone who's just trying to either get information or trying to do whatever they can to make things better, you know. And certainly, and probably everything that happens, there could be some people who want to do the troublemaker, to be a troublemaker in some way, but I don't think that in institutions where people are just bringing up a topic. "I wanted to talk about it." That's not being a troublemaker, that is trying to get answers to questions and stuff. But you know, I think your next display should have demands from the 70s, 80s, 90s...

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

We have a condensed version in the library, that's actually how the exhibit ends.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Okay.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah, we have those listed, and then we have the 2020 and then 2021 is well, the year of the RRI, investigate. You know, that's our answer to that. Now I'm sure some will not be happy with the results of the investigation, but we're doing what we were charged to do.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I think that's wonderful, you know, because- and I'm glad 'cause I, you know, I didn't remember that because I just remembered when the media came, and we had the discussion, and the focus from the media was basically on Coach Pittman. And then I remember graduating, and I knew, yeah, (laughs) and I knew that those had not, that had not happened. But I thought, you know, sometimes it might take three years or four years or whatever to get things done. So, I just felt like, you know, once you leave is kind of like, "oh I'm sure that those demands have been taken

care of.” And so, then you bring on people to take care of the next list of demands. But one of the things that I think is so important when you get a list of demands, you know, like that or whatever. I think it is helpful to say, well, I'm gonna at least try to do one, you know, at least. Now as a supervisor, and a mentor of, you know of principles and working with groups, I always say, “I don't want you to feel uncomfortable in terms of coming and talking to me about anything. And if I can't do it, I will just tell you I can't do that.” But if there's any way that I can do something, then I will do it because I think it's difficult sometimes for people to go and talk to a supervisor or to go and talk to someone who maybe is going to evaluate them or whatever. And so, I think you listen, and then you to be honest. But like this young lady that I mentioned, like you know, her boss, maybe in the back of his head, just had, “as soon as I can, I'm gonna find a way to get rid of her.” So, in situations like that, then they will eliminate the position, you know, and say, “oh well, this is budget cut, not my fault.” You know, kind of thing as opposed to, you know, trying to help her grow. I mean, she felt like she's ready to grow. And if you did not feel like she's ready to grow, then say, “we want to help you so that you can be ready for that promotion in two years or three.” You know, it's all honesty and, you know, people just not being honest and telling the truth is really, I think something that concerns me 'cause I see that from time, people just won't be honest about it.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, we're getting close to the end of this interview. I want to touch on your accomplishments after 1971. So, I know that, you know, you stayed for grad school. What are some of your proudest accomplishments after your student life at TCU?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Well, you know, I have mentioned that my paternal grandfather was an educator, you know, with a college degree. And I, of all his grandchildren, I'm the only one that went into education. He had one daughter that went into education, but everybody else, all my cousins said no, you know that they don't want to do anything else, you know, but I went into education. And working, you know, as a speech pathologist, at first, I thought, you know, it's just something that I really want, you know, really wanna do. I loved it. And I felt like I was truly kind of making a difference. But I had a period of time where I worked for Crippled Children's Society in Los Angeles County, and that was so rewarding for me. You know LA County is so huge and there were segments of the county where children needed services, and their parents didn't have the cars to get them into the center. And so, they decided, somebody gave them some money, they decide they'd buy a huge Winnebago and put a hearing equipment on there, put all of the things you need for therapy on this big thing. And so, I was the low man on the totem pole, and so they said, “would that be something you'd feel comfortable doing?” and I thought, “oh yeah, you know, that's great!” And everybody is looking at me like, “really? You wanna do that?” (laughs). But I ended up driving to lower income areas of LA County, where children couldn't get it and providing therapy for them on this Winnebago, including doing tests, and testing, and all of that. And it was really rewarding to have a chance to work with them in that environment, and to, you know, the parents, of course were there because many of them lived in communities during the time, I mean, where drug use was very prevalent. I mean they walk out of their apartments or whatever

and you see drug paraphernalia on the sidewalks, and so forth, and so on. I mean it was really a terrible, and I'm glad that I did that. I did that for an extended period of time, but I was so pleased that I had that, again, experience in my life. It's kind of the whole thing, is I compare to, you know what I saw as a participant on the Semester at Sea program, you know looking at how other people live and maybe in a small way, being kind of able to help them. So that was really, that was really great.

Then coming back here I, you know, I worked at university level at University of North Texas and, you know, Texas Women's, where I got my doctorate for a while doing that. And, you know, all those kinds of experiences are really great. And then, when I went into administration, I had been assigned to some campuses that were more, you know, middle class, upper-middle class campuses. And so, you have your ups and downs, and so forth, and so on. But then I was assigned to a campus that was in a very challenging community, that had been low performing for multiple, multiple years, and they had all those characteristics, gang violence, you know, parents absent from the home, you know, that would say that they, the students there should not be successful. And I think about that often because the Superintendent said, you know, that "I want to give you the staff that you want." And so, you know, I worked in central administration, now that's all wonderful and, you know, Kumbaya and so forth. And you know, you're working hard, but, you know, you kind of working in this one kind of space all the time. So, it was great to get on this campus where it was about, we're going to make a difference in the lives of the students. So, I end up with this young staff of energetic teachers from all over the country, and then we just put together a plan, in terms of how can we kind of change the lives of these students? And it started off with that everything we do will be based on their needs, is not based on my needs. I know how to read and so I have to do that and working with parents who did not want to come to the campus. So, I had my parent meetings in the apartment complexes and you know those kinds of things.

We started off every year with a bus tour of the community, so that the teachers could see where the children live. Didn't mean as excuse for them not working hard with them and making sure they're gonna be successful, but with them to see that although they might come from this environment, they can still be successful. And I would always ask a policeman to join us for that tour, so that he could talk a little bit about, "yeah, this is environment where, you know, maybe drugs" or, you know, whatever, so that they could hear the stories. And then the key thing is that we developed this high expectation for all of them. There are no excuses for you not doing things, but in situations like that we had to rethink things. So therefore if I know that your mom is not home in the evenings. Why should I give you a homework, or you might not have your lights turned on. So, we did everything within that school building 'cause we knew we could do it. We kept them after school, we provided dinner, Saturday we had breakfast, and just, you know, those kinds of things. And every new teacher had to watch *Mr. Holland's Opus* because in that movie, Mr. Holland becomes a teacher, not because he got the degree or got the job, but when he was willing to give of himself and come in the morning and stayed late at night to teach the student. And so, they had to write me a, you know, a paragraph, when did Mr. Hollands become a teacher? You know because that had to go within themselves in terms of am I a teacher. And then, at the beginning of every year, they had to complete the sentence, you know,

“I became a teacher because...” Everybody you know had to read, you know, think it, and your reason might remain the same, but it was all about the same thing. I tell people all the time in terms of the way I see administration is that you also use your psychology courses, your sociological courses, it can't just be about, you know what I learned, you know, in education. And so, we use all of those things to put together. So, when we started this journey about 20% were passing in reading and about 19 in math, you know, probably even lower than that in science. And then when I left, 90% in math, 100% in science, 100% in writing.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Wow.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

You know like 95% or some more in reading. And so, we were able to show, so therefore we were honored and recognized by the 106th Congress because Kate Granger just pretty much adopted 'cause she used to be a teacher before she became mayor and went to Congress. She was on campus a lot, and so she had us recognized by the 106th Congress, and by the state of Texas, TEA, and all of that. And I think, you know, I look at that and I think, that will become always become my legacy, in terms of what we were able to do that. But at the time when I was on this campus, I was teaching the evening classes here at TCU. And so, when the position for director for the Urban Education Department opened, you know, I received a call saying, “is that something might be interested in because you're doing that, and you've already done it.” And I have, when I got my, you know, doctorate and I completed it, I always said OK I want to go to a university. It took a little bit longer in terms of getting the campus where I wanted it, but I always felt like people who have actually done it and been able to be successful is great. Whether they do it part time, whether they lecture, or whether they come as a guest; to come and talk to students that are being trained to go to campuses to be teachers, and principals, and superintendents, and districts because oftentimes they go with this false sense of- and they don't have any idea. And I would often have students who come by my office in the college of education building, you know, after class or if they were working, you know they come early 'cause they'd say, “well, you've done it, you know, So what can I expect about this,” or if they were first or second year teacher, “I had this experience, you know, what can I do next time,” because you know everybody really wants to be successful. And I think oftentimes young teachers fail because of what happened from their university experience. Whether it's the amount of support that they get, whether it's the mentoring, whether it's teaching something because I think within them, you know, everybody wants to go out and be as successful as they can be, and if they don't, then they end up not staying in the profession anyway. Which is fine 'cause, you know, in my first year or so on campus where I was a speech pathologist, one of my friends said, she said, “I don't wanna teach.” And I said, “really, what are you gonna do?” She said, “I don't know, I was thinking about going to bartending school and becoming a bartender,” and she did. But I thought that was great!

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

That's her calling.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

That she knew right at the beginning, that she didn't wanna teach, you know, whether or not she, you know, she ended up moving to another state, but whether or not she continued to do that, I don't know. But I think that that's important because I really, truly think that if we can make their college experience wonderful, you know, and provide them with opportunities, and provide them with chances to grow, then hopefully we'll get really good teachers instead. So I really, truly see that as you know as kind of my legacy in terms of things that I, you know, feel really, really good about, you know. But certainly, I know a lot of people have taught, I'm certainly proud of my children and what they've accomplished, and you know, and I'm lucky to have such a supportive husband who is always there to support me. And since I don't cook that's really nice, he doesn't care that I don't ever cook (laughs). You know, he's just, you know, "what should I pick up for dinner?" Which makes life a little,

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

As long as he's fed (laughs).

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Yeah, a little easier. And so, you know, so I've been really lucky, you know, with that, and my life. So, that's the reason why, you know, I tell my children, you know my nieces, nephews or whatever, we often talk about again, the "okay, this is what your life has been like, here are your blessings. What can we do to make it better for other people?" You know, that constantly becomes a topic that we talk about and discuss a lot. And it's one of the things, you know, that my husband and I talk about a lot. He always says, you know, as a person who's an elected official, he sees it as a ministry.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Because if you are in a position to help someone, then you do it. And oftentimes people don't. they see it as "what can I get? What can I do? Give it to me," and so forth, and so on. And certainly, everybody wants something probably and would love to have it, but at some point, it has to be about how can I make it better for other people, you know? And I've always felt like, if I can mentor you a tutor or help in some way, it makes life better for my own children. So, as they were growing up, if my teenage son is driving down the street, and somebody has not had somebody to love them, and to mentor them, and help them; he's not gonna be safe if somebody is in a game, or they're shooting across streets or whatever. So therefore, what can I do in that community to maybe make it better and that stuff. So, I'm very actively engaged in issues within the community, and try to keep my fingers involved in things that are going on. You know, I'm lucky certainly that my husband's office will maybe know about, you know, something and maybe we can get involved, or an organization that we belong to, you know, can get involved,



and that way we can truly make a difference. 'Cause when I, you know, been honored, and recognized for various groups, but I always want the honor to be based on, the recognition, to be based on something that I've done. You know, there's this joke kind of going around in Fort Worth and Dallas and a lot of times people receive all these awards, but it's because they're doing their jobs, you know? So, if your job as a social worker is that you do whatever,

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Should you get an award for that? No, 'cause, you know, you get a check. So, it's kind of like finding that niche in terms of what can I do, that's not my job. You know, that I'm doing it because it's the right thing to do, or maybe I can help somebody. And so, you know, I don't know if that's the direction you guys wanted me to go, but that's, you know, I think for me, that experience on that campus really, that will be, you know, my legacy. And I think we made a difference in terms of all the lives we touched, and I was able to touch, and I'd see that as wonderful. And in fact, there should be a book coming out about that, next year.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Oh, stay tuned!

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Stay tuned, yes (laughs).

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Oh, alright! Well, that's a great way to actually conclude this interview. Dr. Brooks, I wanna thank you so much for sharing your experience with us, and, you know, just carrying on as a student, as a teacher, as a faculty member, as you know, board member, as the wife of an elected official. Thank you. Thank you for carrying the charge. Last question, do you consider yourself an activist?

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

I do, but probably not from, you know, the definition that maybe a lot of people would, when they think about activism. Because you know, a lot of people see the, you know, the raising the fist.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

And the, you know, doing this, you know, shaking their hands, or taking their shoes off and getting on the table, or whatever. I, you know, as I mentioned before, I've always felt like I

cannot continue to sit on the boards that you mentioned, or the commissions, or being asked to do things and not bring up issues, that other people sitting on the board or commissions, are not aware. And so, I always try to bring up those issues and make sure that they hear them. And you know, if need be, you know, I certainly write a lot of letters and those kinds of things. But I think, I feel like I can be really more effective when I am asked to serve on a board, or to do something in the community, and I go to that meeting and they're talking about issues, and I sometimes it's just in my head, do they not know what's happening in Southeast Fort Worth other than? Do they not know that in 76104, you know, the life expectancy is a lot more for people in that community than other parts of the state, really, of the state of Texas? Do they not know that that this area is a food desert? Do they not- You know when those kinds of things seemingly are not known then, maybe they're not. Then if I'm sitting in that chair and I know it, then I have to bring it up. And so, at least they can't say they didn't know.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

And so that's why I kind of feel like, that I'm an activist to that certain extent. I also from time to time, write a column for the Lavetta newspaper, *The Black Voice*, which before the pandemic, they would publish every week, and they placed them in churches, and particularly the Black churches, but also in, you know, buildings, county building, city buildings and so forth, and so on. And so, that also gives me another opportunity to get things, information out, and words out. But you know, there's been some things that have happened recently when I keep thinking, you know, I might have to go put on my tennis shoes and actually march, and you know, and it's not in terms of so much raising the first, but that that marching as a group and saying this needs to change. And when I think about it, it is going back to some of the things. I mean we all pretty much protested you like the Vietnam War and those kinds of things, many people did. And it was kind of like, "please hear us. Please listen to us," you know? And now it's kind of this generation is kind of having to look back and say, you know, this is not right. Hopefully somebody is listening, and hopefully 20 years or 30 years from now, we're not having to rehash it to the extent that is happening now. But yeah, that is my key thing, is that if I'm sitting in a chair and I might be on a Commission or something that's at a higher level, than maybe other people will be asked to serve, I just feel like I'm sitting in that chair, I must bring up issues and concerns, and let's try to create a discussion around things that other people sitting on that same board of Commission, either they don't know about, have ignored, or they don't want to know about. And so, that's the only way we can come up with solutions, is that we bring it to the forefront.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay. Thank you so much for this testimony and for answering all of our questions.

**DR. JENNIFER GIDDINGS BROOKS:**

Absolutely.

**END**