Interview with **Adrienne Manns-Israel**
Date: October 16, 1988
Interviewer: Judy Richardson
Camera Rolls: 2009-2012
Sound Rolls: 204-206
Team: B

Interview gathered as part of ***Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s***. Produced by Blackside, Inc. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

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Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in ***bold italics*** was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize II*.

[camera roll #2009]
[sound roll #204]

[wild sound]

00:00:13:00

Interviewer:

You look gorgeous.

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Thank you.

[picture starts]

Interviewer:

Yes [unintelligible].

Camera crew member #1:

[unintelligible] marker.

[slate]

Camera crew member #2:

OK.

00:00:20:00

Interviewer:

OK. First of all, think back when you first got onto Howard's campus, and give me your first impressions. You know, what were you expecting, and what did you find when you got there?

00:00:28:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

I came to, I came to Howard, because I wanted to go to a Black school. And I had read about Howard, and I think one of the, the only Black doctor in our town, both of them rather, had gone to Howard. And then, I had read, was it? A book that Ulysses Lee, and Sterling Brown, and Arthur Davis had edited, *The Negro Caravan*. So I went there expecting a Black environment. You know, I thought that, here, I would have a chance to, to see Black people in a positive role, as opposed to the one I had seen in high school.

00:01:05:00

Interviewer:

Excuse me, cut that just a second.

[cut]

00:01:08:00

Camera crew member #2:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:01:14:00

Interviewer:

OK, give me when you first got on campus, your first impressions and what you came expecting.

00:01:19:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

When I first came to Howard, I had come there expecting a Black environment. Came out of White high school and White town. We were in a minority, so I was coming to Howard, because I wanted Black people. Black teachers, and, and positive role models, and all of this. All right, so when I got there—well, first of all, I knew I was out of place, because my roommates had to have a, a extra closet brought into the dormitory room. Right? People were going to class in high heels. It was just a totally bourgeois environment, unlike the one that I had come from. And I, I really had never known any middle-class Black people, except for the doctor and teacher, OK? So I was, I felt out of place. I felt alone. I didn't have any good friends for about a year, and I thought I'd made a mistake. So, I came there in Judy, really thinking that I, I should leave. All right?

00:02:19:00

Interviewer:

Cut, just a second.

[cut]

[wild sound]

00:02:22:00

Interviewer:

Yeah. They're never going to know that I'm here.

[cut]

00:02:24:00

Camera crew member #2:

Mark.

[slate]

00:02:27:00

Interviewer:

And what kind of courses did you come expecting [inaudible] and what did you find?

00:02:32:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

I came looking for Black history courses, Black literature, music. It was a kind of a void in my life that I wanted filled. And Black studies is what it's called, but it was at that time for me just Black history and literature, and Sterling Brown was there, which was very exciting, because he was a poet that I had admired for a long time. And Arthur Davis, so I was expecting to study Black literature with Sterling Brown, was my first expectation. And what I found was that he, he first of all told us that he could not teach Black literature. That, it didn't fit in the curriculum, and that was not offered. There was only one course, and that was Negro History. And you had to be a history major or an upperclassmen to take that, and you couldn't fit it in your schedule. You know, after you got finished with all the humanities, and the, the western civ type of courses, you couldn't fit that one course in. It was very hard to get in. There was no music. You know, you couldn't play jazz in the fine arts building. All you heard when you passed the fine arts building was opera. All day long, opera, opera, opera. And with so-called classical music. National symphony, and this kind of thing, so I was, I was very disappointed. And, well, I think they said they were making it the Black Harvard or something like that. And, it was just not what I wanted.

00:04:02:00

Interviewer:

Now, what they would say was, well, but—there was no color to knowledge. What would you say to that?

00:04:09:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Certainly. That, that's ridiculous—

Interviewer:

Say, repeat, repeat—

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

—to say that there's no—all right. To say that there's no color to knowledge, it, it's not true. It's, it's so ridiculous. I really don't know.

[rollout on sound roll]

[cut]

[sound roll #205]

00:04:22:00

Camera crew member #2:

Marker.

[slate]

00:04:26:00

Interviewer:

OK. Give me a sense of what helped to politicize you, what helped to kind of move you forward?

00:04:32:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Well, there were two things that got me involved politically, and, and helped me move out of where I was to somewhat more consciousness. One of them was when one of the students was expelled from school, because she had stayed out overnight, violated the curfew regulations. And for this, she was not only put out of the dorm, but they put her out of the college altogether, and Jay Greene who was a law student, he started supporting her and taking up her case. And he would come out at lunch time, in front of the law school, and there'd be rallies. So, I started coming to the rallies. And I was working on the newspaper as a reporter my freshman year, and we were covering the story. And the editor of the newspaper was interested, and I think he was friends with Jay. So, I started following this case, and Jay was saying that we had no rights as students. That she should at least have a hearing, that it wasn't right for her to be put out of school with no hearing. And that was the first time that really, I began to think that. Well, maybe there were others who didn't like the situation, and there were other people concerned, and they were willing to do something. And the next thing that happened was second semester. Believe it was when the Selma campaign took place. And we were in freshman assembly, which was a mandatory gathering all freshman had to go to on Tuesdays. I think it was, like, one o'clock. You had to sit there for an hour and listen to, quote, culture. And this particular day, they announced that if we wanted to go to the march, there was a march down at the White House to protest Reverend Reeb's murder in Selma. And we wanted to go. They had a bus. The student government had rented a bus. And we could get out of freshman assembly. Honestly, I just wanted to get out of freshman assembly. I, I was tired of sitting there, and they said, Well, you could be excused" An excuse absence. And some of the other students were going that I knew, so I went along, and when we got down to the White House, first started out picketing. And it

was boring, kind of talking. I didn't know much about what was happening, but then across the street the Nazi counter-demonstrators, and Klansmen, and other people started counter-demonstrations, and the soldiers moved in. It got very tense. And a couple of my friends said they were going to sneak in the White House and stay there. They were later arrested, I think, and sent to prison. And they kept saying, Well, let's stay. I said, I said, My feet hurt. I'm gonna go. And they kept saying, Oh, no, we gotta stay. And before I knew it, I was caught up. I was listening. I think I stayed there till about two in the morning. And, it made sense to me, and for, for once. The civil rights movement never made any sense to me until then, and then it really did. And I said, Well—

00:07:23:00

Interviewer:

You had also mentioned hearing a speech by Stokely, where he started saying things that you had thought, and you didn't know anybody else thought of them.

00:07:33:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

I heard Stokely Carmichael speak in 1966. I was at Harvard for summer school, and while I was there, I had met some students from the South. One particular student from Mississippi, Tougaloo, Mississippi. She and I became friends, and she said, Oh, I hear Stokely Carmichael is speaking tonight, and I didn't. I knew who Stokely was, but I didn't really think it was significant. But she said, Let's go, so I went. When I got there, he gave one of his early Black Power speeches. And I'll never forget it, how electrifying it was, because all the things I had been—stored up inside, I'd been thinking about at Howard, how disillusioned I was with Howard, how tired I was of, of our position as people, feeling like we were all on welfare, is the best way I can think of. When I was at Harvard, for instance, there was a scholarship program for deprived minority students who otherwise could not meet the standards of Harvard, and they were allowed to come for a summer. It's supposed to be a pre-law type program. Well, I'd come on my own merits, or at least I thought I had. And not in this program, but they were always—the newspaper would come. Anybody Black, all the White students assumed that, that's how we got there. And I was angry about that, and when I heard Stokely talk about Black power—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

—and we need to stop apologizing for who we are, and we need to stop pushing.

00:08:59:00

Interviewer:

I'm sorry, we're going to have to—

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Mm-hmm.

00:09:00:00

Interviewer:

—the camera went out—OK.

[cut]

[camera roll #2010]

00:09:04:00

Camera crew member #1:

OK, rolling.

Camera crew member #2:

Marker.

[slate]

00:09:10:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you can talk about hearing Stokely, and what that, what effect that had on you.

00:09:15:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

I heard Stokely Carmichael in summer of 1966, when I was at Harvard University for the summer school. And, went into, with a friend whom I'd met from Mississippi, went into the auditorium, and he started talking, and it was as if I were talking, or he was speaking for me. Things that I had been feeling, and thinking about, he was articulating them so well. Especially about the attitude that, that we should have as Black people toward ourselves and

this country, and how we shouldn't be begging and pleading for our rights, but we oughta get together, organize, and take what we—what rightfully belonged to us, and I liked that. I, I, I didn't like the passive kind of beggar mentality that I thought we were, we were into in the civil rights movement.

00:10:05:00

Interviewer:

Did that change you in any way?

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Yes, because I got zeal.

Interviewer:

I'm sorry, if you could say the speech.

00:10:11:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

The speech changed me, because when I, when I realized that what I had been feeling and thinking was not just personal, wasn't just me, somebody else in fact, someone of, of prominence in stature, felt the same way, and could articulate it, and I really felt encouraged. So, I went back to Howard, and I had a column that I started in the newspaper, 'cause I stayed on the newspaper staff. This point, coming back, I was able to do a column. And I used my experience at Harvard, and the ideas that Stokely had articulated, in this column which I started called The Coons Corner. You know, supposed it was satire, and I started comparing how we were treated at Howard with the way students were treated at Harvard. That's how I started it off. And I think that I got some focus from then on.

00:11:06:00

Interviewer:

When, when they talk—

Camera crew member #3:

Excuse me, Judy. We should just be careful of overlapping. That—Adrienne, you should just pause a moment—

Interviewer:

Gotcha. Sorry.

Camera crew member #3:

—before answering a question.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

00:11:14:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Right.

[cut]

00:11:15:00

Camera crew member #2:

Marker.

[slate]

00:11:18:00

Interviewer:

When you're talking about Stokely and Black consciousness, can you give me a sense of when that whole kind of environment of Black consciousness began to effect the campus and the students?

00:11:28:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

The Black consciousness had a real impact on us at Howard in I think it was '66-'67, because that's the real when Carolyn Carter took over as editor of the newspaper, and we ran a, an editorial on Black power. And Stokely had either spoken at Howard or he was about to come to speak at Howard. And, we were, we were for once able to say that we weren't just isolated in our frustrations. And we began to identify a lot of people with, not with Stokely, but with the ideas, and another impact I think that year were the veterans, Vietnam veterans who had come in from, just from the war, coming on the GI Bill. They were talking, and there were the riots, and [train passes] there were people coming in from Philadelphia and Detroit who'd

been involved in the riots, or at least they'd been in the neighborhoods, said they were involved. There was so much that year. I, I can't begin. I, there was Ron Karenga, and there were, there was so many speakers. There's so many things happening.

00:12:38:00

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. When you talk about the Vietnam experience, how did you all link the Black consciousness with the Vietnam? Was there some kind of connection for you?

00:12:47:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

The link between Black consciousness and Vietnam started with the notion that Black soldiers were being sent to Vietnam to fight for freedom that we didn't have in America. And that was the, the, the first objection that I heard to the war. That and the fact that more Blacks were being sent to the front lines, and they were being killed, and, and people felt that this was genocide. Then, the second thing, which I felt, was that the war was an unjust war that was being fought against people of color who were, who were considered gooks or, or outside the humanity, as we were considered outside humanity. And the war itself, to me, was ob-bjectionable. Now, others had other, they said, Well, Blacks shouldn't be fighting until we get our freedom here. And I said we weren't fighting for freedom in Vietnam at all. So, for me, that was the—see, that's why I, I, I think it's hard to say that there was one point of view. There were many points of view. And that was mine.

00:13:57:00

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. Talk about the—related to that, talk about the Hershey demonstration. Do you remember that, and can you describe that?

00:14:03:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

When General Hershey came to, to Howard, he came, I, I think to support the war and the draft. I'm not quite certain, because he never got to speak. There were a, a core of, of young men from Philadelphia who had planned a demonstration, and they told me that they were gonna do something. They didn't say what and that I should come. So, I came, and I, I wouldn't have come otherwise. And, they stopped him from speaking. They got up chanting, America is the Black man's battleground. They had placards, and Hershey stopped. I remember him looking at them like a grandfather, and like he understood, and he, he just, he didn't speak, and Carl Anderson was dean of students, I think, at that time. And he came over

to escort him off stage, like he's protecting him, but there was nothing to protect him from. They were, they were chanting, but they weren't trying to, to harm him. They just were trying to stop the program. Which they did, and we, and we left. That was all there was to it, but a big thing was made out of it. I remember that Robin Gregory was there, because she and I had been talking afterward, and she and a number of other students, I think Tony Gittens was involved in that. They were called before the judiciary to be expelled from school for disrupting this program. All right, so when they went to their judiciary hearing, that's when some more students came to disrupt the hearing. I remember Dean Snowden—I was—funny, I was always outside it seemed like, on all these, these early demonstrations. And watching, and they disrupted the hearing. Kept the hearing from being—from, from taking place, because we knew that, as in past, if you went to a hearing, automatically, that meant you were going to be expelled. I'd never known anybody to make it through the hearing. Called them kangaroo court, I think. [laughs] Something like that. So, that, that's the Hershey incident.

00:16:08:00

Interviewer:

Talk also about going to hearings—

00:16:11:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Oh, excuse me. There's, I forgot. After, after Hershey, right? After the Hershey demonstration, there was a polarization, I remember in among students. One side of the, the student government leaders and fraternity leaders called a press conference to apologize for the demonstration. And, they angered me so. I was so angry. I was a managing editor of the newspaper, and I said that they, how dare they speak for the student body? They said they were speaking for the responsible students. Now, Gloster Current was there and, and some others who were, who were leaders in student government. And—that polarized, that really polarized, polarizes those who supported the demonstration, or at least their right to have it, those who said it was a disgrace and embarrassment to the, to the university, and so forth. And, I just made a vow after that. I said, well, we'll have to get serious about this thing, because the other side is serious.

00:17:13:00

Camera crew member #3:

Can we cut for a second?

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

Camera crew member #3:

That was great.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Camera crew member #3:

That was great.

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

I just remembered that, and you were talking—

Camera crew member #3:

[inaudible]

[cut]

00:17:20:00

Camera crew member #2:

Marker.

[slate]

00:17:24:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you can talk about when you find out that Tony had been expelled, and the walk, as you talked about that.

00:17:30:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Summer of 1967, Tony Gittens called me. I was home for a while, and I planned to come back, but he called me and told me that he'd gotten a letter from the school, that he was being expelled from the school, and he was very upset about it. He said not only him but, there were eighteen others. And when I heard, I said, Well, I'm, I'm coming back anyway to work

this summer. And I came back to Washington. He said, We're having a meeting, and went to his house, and it's a pretty tense time. Because to me, to be expelled from school, if you're a senior, was an, the ultimate kind of punishment. And no hearing had been held or anything, and there were eighteen of them. I knew, I knew several of them. And after the meeting was over, we talked about lawyers and all that, how to deal with it, and, and he lived near Dupont Circle, so we went for a walk, and we were coming down 16th Street, and walking around, just talking about, about what this meant. And, I felt this, I felt an anger that I felt Tony was a kind person, very nonviolent. He always supported nonviolence, and peace, and harmony, and love, and I was more abrasive. And here he was being expelled. I felt that it was as if an innocent person, whom I, whom I felt was innocent in motive, and whom I cared about deeply, was just being drummed out of school. What would happen to him? And I decided, I said, Well, Tony, we're not gonna let that happen. I said they, you know, they can't put all—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

—of us out of the school, you know, the students make the school, and I decided to do something about it.

00:19:15:00

Interviewer:

Fantastic. Thank you. Yes.

Camera crew member #1:

Did you [inaudible]?

Interviewer:

Yes, he got enough [inaudible].

[cut]

[camera roll #2011]

00:19:21:00

Camera crew member #2:

Marker.

[slate]

00:19:24:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you can talk about Charter Day, and give, be as descriptive as you can, as if we have no footage, and you're just describing it.

00:19:31:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Right before Charter Day the—Tony and I had gone up to see Dr. Nabrit, and ask him to response to the sixteen demands that we'd drawn up, a coalition of students had drawn up sixteen demands. And we asked him to respond to it by Charter Day. Said either at Charter Day exercises or before. So, we left his office. I wasn't very optimistic, because he talked all the time about Amsterdam and his latest trip. So, I really wasn't very optimistic that he would do it, but anyway. We had met the night before, UJAMAA, which was a, a coalition of, of protests organizations, non-official groups. We had met, oh, about two days before Charter Day, and decided that if Dr. Nabrit did not respond to those sixteen demands, during Charter Day exercises, that we were going to disrupt the exercises. And so, we went there with that in mind. There were about fifteen of us who said we would go up on the stage, and ask him to respond to our demands, and the rest would hand out leaflets to the audience to tell them why we were doing this and what this was about. So, we got there, well, we sat in different places in the auditorium. I think I sat with Tony. And the guards were there, security guards were there, and they had just killed somebody not too long ago who was robbing the Punchout, which was a student hangout canteen, and one of the security men had, had shot the man. So I, all I could see was this gun. I remember this big, tall security guard, who was over six feet, and he had a gun, and they, they were all, all over the auditorium looked like. There might've been five or six of them, but anyway. When Dr. Nabrit had finished the preliminaries, and he got into the program, and Dean Gandy got up to give the address. And he gave the address. Didn't say one thing about our demands. He sat down, and then Dr. Nabrit got up to give the distinguished alumni their awards. So, I said, Tony, I think if we're gonna, I don't think he's gonna say anything, and the program's gonna be over, so we'd better do something. And he said, Well, OK. You—let's get up. So I said, All right. So I got up. I was, you know, we walked toward the stage, and all of the security guards came to the front and [siren] stood in front of us. And we were standing there, and, well, I said, I said, Tony, I don't know. What are we gonna do now? You know, he said, Well, let's sit up on the stage. So, we sat on the stage. And, finally I said, I can't get up. I said, I just, I, I'm just afraid. I, I can't get up. So he said, I'll get up. So, he got up. So, when Tony got up, then I said, Well, I can't leave Tony standing there by himself. I think Q.T. Jackson got up, and some more. So, the rest of us got up there, and then we stood on the stage, and Nabrit turned, and Tony went over to him, and he said something about, Dr. Nabrit, we asked you to respond to our demands, and since you're obviously not going to respond, you know, we feel you should relinquish the, the ceremonies and let us explain. So, it's a tense moment, and I remember Nabrit said, Why are

you doing this to me? Or something like that. He looked at Tony and me, and like, as if we had betrayed him, and then he walked off the stage. And we tried to hold our counter Charter Day exercises, explained to the alumni—and the faculty jumped up. You know, they were all in their robes. They fled the auditorium. Only about three of them stayed. I think one of the alumni stayed, and we tried to—they turned the systems off. We tried to talk. We had, like, a rally. Q.T. Jackson, but I was, I was afraid, really. I really was, for the first time I think through the whole thing, I was afraid.

00:23:25:00

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. [pause] OK. Cut just a second again.

[cut]

00:23:29:00

[slate]

00:23:33:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you can talk about takeover, and going from that rally, and the wonder of seeing all those people behind you.

00:23:39:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Well, you know, after Charter Day, we got letters. I got one, and Tony got one, and everybody involved just about, and some more people who weren't involved, got letters from the administration that we were called to judiciary hearing. And I said, Well, this, this was it. I, I had foreseen that, of course, and we're gonna be expelled, so we decided to hold a, a coalition meeting of student government leaders and, and all, all students really, who had been involved, and we met and decided that we were gonna have a sit-in in the administration building to protest these, these letters, because there was no student judiciary. And, we, we'd have a rally. We said we'd have a rally in front of Douglass Hall, and then after that—during the rally at lunch time, we would announce the sit-in, and we would go into the administration building. Well, I had estimated—I said, Well, maybe five hundred people will come you can count on. We didn't wanna be embarrassed that we—the fifty or hundred of us go in the administration building. So, we thought five hundred the most. We went to the rally, and Hubert Brown was the speaker. I didn't hear anything he said, 'cause all I could think of was, when he's finished, I've got to walk over to this administration building. I promised to go up into Nabrit's office. Right? And sit down on the, tell the man to leave.

So, I said all right. I didn't hear anything. All I heard Hubert say was, Now, we're going. Now, something. And I stood back to see how many people were going, then I said, Well, I can't do this. I've got to go regardless. So, I just walked. I just walked over there. I didn't look back. I said, Well, however many come, come. And I've made a commitment. And it was overwhelming. The whole building was full of students. I went up to Nabrit's office. The third floor was full, the second floor, and his secretary, all the workers were, like, they didn't say anything. You know, they just looked at us, and we sat on the floor, and, I kept thinking, where did all these people come from? Now, I just never realized that many people would support us, but I was afraid. I was afraid all the way over there, until I saw the people come, and, well, I was afraid then, because I said, What will we do now, with all these people? Now that we're over here, what will we do now? So, I just sat there, waiting. Finally, a couple hours, they closed up offices, and they started leaving, the workers. Some of them said, It's about time you all did this. I was surprised. They said, We were wondering how long it was gonna take you to do this. It's about time. And, they all went home. And, evening started to fall, and we said, Well, we've gotta do something. So, we formed a, a steering committee that came out of the student leadership, and broke down into different areas. Communications, food, housing, sleeping quarters for everyone. I've forgotten all of the subcommittees, but we had about eight to take care of—

[rollout on sound roll]

[cut]

[sound roll #206]

00:26:59:00

Camera crew member #2:

Marker.

[slate]

Camera crew member #2:

[inaudible]

Camera crew member #1:

[inaudible]

00:27:08:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you could, give me a sense again of the day, the take, the takeover, and the rally, and, and if you could say the expulsion, the part that you had earlier.

00:27:18:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

After, after Charter Day, we got letters from the administration that those of us who participated were called before the judiciary for hearings, and we knew that, that was the same thing as being expelled. So, I had expected this, and we met—that is the student leaders, the protest leaders, we met and decided to have a sit-in, in the administration building. And we're gonna sit there until they agree to set up a student judiciary. Well, the plan was that Hubert Brown was gonna speak. He was president of the student government association. He would speak, and no long speeches. We said no speeches. Just tell people what happened, the reason we're having a sit-in, and we're all gonna go over there. And we estimated that maybe five hundred would, would join us. Well, the day came. I remember it was very bright day, beautiful day, and I went out, after lunch, and I told one of my teachers that I liked what was gonna happen. I told him to stay—I didn't tell him everything. I said, Stay away from the administration building. And I went over to the rally, and when Hu—I couldn't hear. I couldn't hear what Hubert was saying. I was afraid, really. I said, What are we gonna do? We gotta really do this. Once you say you're gonna do this thing, you gotta do it. So, I remember Hubert said, Let's go. And, I turned, and I was staring at the building. I said, I've got to do this. And I, I walked, started walking toward it. I was, I wasn't sure how many were coming. I said it doesn't matter. You know, I gotta do it. I gotta go ahead with it. And I thought just a few will come. I was so afraid that we were gonna be embarrassed, and I went on in anyway. And looked behind me, and there were all these students coming. The, the place was filling up. First floor, second floor. I got in the elevator and went on up to the third floor, and went into Dr. Nabrit's office. Right behind me, there were enough students to fill the whole floor of the third floor, which was a big area. And there are about ten of us that went into his office. He wasn't there. And we sat down and decided to wait to see what they did next.

00:29:28:00

Interviewer:

OK.

Camera crew member #3:

[inaudible]

Interviewer:

Cut. Yeah.

Camera crew member #3:

Excellent.

[cut]

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

OK?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

OK.

00:29:32:00

Interviewer:

OK.

[cut]

00:29:34:00

Camera crew member #2:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:29:37:00

Interviewer:

OK. Give me a sense of all your fears at that time.

00:29:40:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Well, a lot of the students who were inside the administration building were talking about the fact that it was, there's no problem, that we had nothing to worry about, that they wouldn't do

anything to us. There was no-nothing to fear from the police or from the army, and, and it, it frightened me, because they seemed so naive. You know, and, and they didn't really understand how serious the authorities were, and I, ***I have been at—in October of '67, the Pentagon for the big peace march. I had gone to that, and, and I'd seen how they had beat those people at the Pentagon. You know, young White people, and I said, they'll do that to them. I know what they'll do to us.*** And Orangeburg had taken place. But it seemed like our students thought, and they said they thought, that we're Howard, and we're different. That Howard is different, and they won't treat us—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

—the way they treated other students and, it, it scared me.

00:30:35:00

Interviewer:

Sorry.

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

OK.

Interviewer:

It's just it—

[cut]

[camera roll #2012]

[slate]

00:30:41:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you can, give me a sense of the negotiations and that sense of nonstop back and forth.

00:30:47:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Well, there were four of us that were chosen, the negotiating team, and the, the first problem that we had was that, to be chosen, it had to be done by consensus. And there were maybe a thousand students whose opinions had to be, had, had to agree. And, there was a steering committee of about eleven who made the nominations to the students. They agreed, but they said whatever we did, we couldn't do anything without bringing it back to them. So, whatever points that, that the administration would agree to, or the, at this point, the board of trustees would agree to, we had to then tell them, we'll take this back to campus, ***and so we were going back and forth. Back and forth on, on a lot of issues, and came down to two that were a problem. First was Nabrit's resignation. And the trustees told us that he planned to retire the next year, so that they felt there was no need to, to ask him to resign. And secondly was on the matter of Black, the word Black. We wanted Howard to make a statement about its commitment to the Black community, to the welfare of the Black community, and the trustees said no. They couldn't do that.*** I think it was Kenneth Clark, yeah. Kenneth Clark, who, who explained to us that, because Howard got so much money from the federal government, that they couldn't afford to make an overt commitment to any one group, because that would put them in violation of civil rights laws, or fairness, or whatever. But they could make a statement saying that they were committed to general welfare of humanity and so forth. So, we got everything, agreed to everything except those two. It took us maybe two days, I guess, of talking, going back and forth from the hotel back to the administration building. And now, those two points is where we, where we stopped.

00:32:48:00

Interviewer:

So, what happened when you went back? I mean it, the point you realized you couldn't go any further, when you brought it back to the, to the student body, how did you try and deal with that, and to, to get it over with?

00:33:00:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

[sighs] Well, the, the student body told us, their, their sense was that we, we were threatening to betray them. I had, I, I remember one night, the night before we left, they were very angry, because they said we—if, this was the first time they'd seen us vacillating that we weren't united. Some of the steering committing was in favor of accepting the trustees' offer. Some said no, so the students finally told us to work it out among them, ourselves, the eleven of us. It ended up an all-night marathon. And it got down to the word Black, because Tony said we should have mercy on Dr. Nabrit, that we should give him some respect, because I said no. We should make the man resign. Tony kept saying no. We shouldn't do that, so I said all right. But then, when it got down to the Black issue, then I said, Well, maybe we can trust them. We can accept this argument, but others said no, and we stayed up. There was a core of people that really felt this was a central issue, and that it broke us. It broke the coalition down, that issue.

00:34:13:00

Interviewer:

If you can give me a sense. What was the Black issue?

00:34:18:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Well, ***specifically the Black issue was that Howard should exist for the benefit of the Black community, that it, it ought to be involved in economic change and political change, that it had a mission, let's say, or, or a purpose, a goal. That didn't, didn't allow it just to be a place where you came and got a, a liberal education, and, and became a, a member of the middle class, and went on with no consciousness.*** I think we called it relevance. All right? Relevant to the Black community. And, that was the point that we could not win. We did not win. Some felt we could've won it. I felt that we couldn't.

00:35:01:00

Interviewer:

So, what was it like, now, you going back in. You've decided that you have to end the takeover. What is your feeling at this point?

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

I felt, I felt let down.

Interviewer:

I'm sorry. If you could, say—

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

At the end of the takeover, I felt a let-down, because—

Interviewer:

Excuse me—

Camera crew member #3:

[unintelligible]

Interviewer:

—sorry. Just wait till I finish. Go ahead.

00:35:23:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

At the end of the takeover, I felt a let-down, because first of all, our unity had been broken. Our ill, ill, ill will surfaced. Conflicts surfaced. People began to accuse others of selling out. The students, I think some of them felt we had sold them out, because we wouldn't stay on and on about this one point. And I told them that, the police, and the army, the 81st-82nd Airborne, whomever, were coming out of the Pentagon, and people that we had stationed downtown had called us and said that they are bringing up the army and the police that are on 14th Street, or Georgia Avenue, or whatever. See, we're in this building. They can't see what's going on out there. And they've surrounded the area. And when they, you know, when, when the cameramen and all this pulled out, they're gonna come in, take the building, and I knew, to me, that those students were not prepared to, to die. They were saying they were prepared, but they weren't. I didn't believe it. And I said, Well, if you are prepared to stay here and die, I remember I said, I'll stay and, and die. But, in my heart, I really—type, type of person I was, I, I couldn't lie about something like that. I said, OK, I'll stay here and die. I don't think we ought to, but I'll do it. And the rest of them were saying, Well, we're saying this, but we don't really think they're gonna come. And so at, at that point, I felt, oh [sighs] I felt that maybe I had gone a little too far. Maybe I had pushed things further than people really should've gone, because they, they really didn't understand. And they went out with this, "We're a winner" music, The Impressions. I didn't feel that way about it at all. I felt that to win something, you, you, you needed to have a sense of what you had done and what you had not done. And we had not done two-thirds of what we said we were gonna do, because the consciousness of the students, to me, had not been raised significantly from where it, they were when they came into where they were when they left.

00:37:32:00

Camera crew member #1:

I have to cut, please. I have to change a battery.

[cut]

00:37:35:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Can you say—

[slate]

Interviewer:

I'm gonna ask you—

Camera crew member #1:

Speed.

[slate]

Interviewer:

—to talk about, you had a sense, you know, that you had said at one point, that you thought—you didn't realize how long it was gonna take to really accomplish what you wanted, and can, can you give me a sense that, as a student, you said as a twenty-one-year-old student—

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—I didn't realize how much time it will take to do that, and that was the sense that you left the A building with. I'm gonna ask you, when you left the A building, what did you personally feel?

00:38:03:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

When we left the A building, I, I felt that we had not done things the way we should've done them, that at some point we should've cut off—left the building, and just said we will not have classes for a while, until we could get ourselves together, and I also felt that Tony had been right when he, he told me, he said revolution takes a long time. And we can't expect to accomplish everything with a sit-in or with one demonstration. I think he was a, more of a student of revolution than I was. And, I realized he was right. And at night, I stayed up almost all night. People were calling me, and I just didn't wanna talk to anybody, because he was right, and I felt that opportunism was about to take over. I could see people coming, making friends with this trustee and that trustee. And, that I felt that was, was not going to be what I had wanted it to be. I was tired from lack of sleep, and I just wanted to withdraw.

00:39:13:00

Interviewer:

K.

Camera crew member #3:

Let's cut a second.

[cut]

00:39:14:00

[slate]

00:39:15:00

Interviewer:

OK. If you can talk about the Charter Day demonstration up until the time that you go up on stage.

00:39:20:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Well, when it became clear, during the Charter Day cer-cere-ceremonies, that that Dr. Nabrit was not going to respond to our demands, it was about the end of the program. He was about to give out the awards. I, I remember turning Tony. I said, I think we need to go up now, because he's not going to say anything. And so he said, All right, well, you get up. I was sitting in the aisle. So, I got up. That was the cue for everyone to get up. So, we got up, and we started toward the stage, and the security guards moved quickly, and got in front of us. And they were standing there. All of them were armed. And I, I remember the fear, because I said, If we step past them, maybe they'll hurt us. I didn't know what they'd do. So, I said, Tony, what we do now? And he said, Well, let's sit on the stage. We'll just sit on the stage. So, that way, we won't have to push past them. So we sat up on the stage, and, well, [sighs] Tony said, I think we're gonna have to get up, you know? This wasn't working. They were going on like we weren't there. So, Tony got up, and I thought, Well, if he got up, I have to get up with him. I promised that I'd do this. So, I stood up, and, and, we stood there, and I kinda inched my way toward the podium, and behind Tony, and Q.T. Jackson was on the other side, and they told Dr. Nabrit that, here were our demands again, and we're asking you to respond to them. Will you respond to them this time, at this time? And he's, he just turned away from us and walked away. He looked at us. He said—like, How could you do this to me? And he just walked away.

00:41:02:00

Interviewer:

OK, cut.

[wild sound]

Camera crew member #3:

That's very good.

00:41:04:00

Interviewer:

Yeah.

[cut]

00:41:05:00

Camera crew member #2:

Speed marker.

[slate]

00:41:06:00

Interviewer:

OK. Given Howard's civil rights history, what was missing for you in that?

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Well, Howard was, to me, at least a, a place that—

00:41:17:00

Camera crew member #3:

Stop. Just a second.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. K.

Camera crew member #3:

Sorry.

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Yeah.

[cut]

00:41:18:00

Camera crew member #2:

Marker.

[slate]

00:41:20:00

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

Well, to me, Howard was living on, on past reputation that had really cut off in the '50s. They were not addressing current issues or current problems. [phone rings] It just wasn't there, and in fact, the, the things they had addressed only affected a small minority of Black people. But for concern for the masses, it wasn't there. Concern for, for, for real change wasn't there, that they were concerned with getting something for a few Black people, "the talented tenth" of Du Bois—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Adrienne Manns-Israel:

—so they could become rich, and wealthy, and powerful, but they were not concerned with the rest of us.

00:41:55:00

Interviewer:

Perfect. Perfect.

Camera crew member #2:

[inaudible]

Interviewer:

Thank you. Thank you very much.

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:42:02:00