INTERVIEW WITH DR. FRANK HALE

APRIL 10, 2001

Q.

My name is Marge Bennett. I'm interviewing Dr. Frank W. Hale, Jr., born March 24, 1927. The interview is taking place at the Ohio State University Archives conference room, 2700 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio. And we would like you to share some of your memories about your early childhood school days in Missouri and Kansas. Could you particularly address those memories of persons or events that helped to shape your professional career?

A.

As long as I live, I shall cherish the memory of my childhood days in Kansas City, Missouri. There were only three of us - my mother, my father and me – and we were a very, very close family. I was especially blessed to have been born to a beautiful young couple that was defiant of the jaded culture that had quarantined American Black from the paths and opportunities afforded to their White counterparts. Like many Blacks, my parents worked, scraped, and sacrificed to make life comfortable and meaningful for me as a child.

Although there were only a few public places where Black people were welcomed or could enjoy themselves, my parents made every imaginable opportunity available to me. I clearly recall our auto tours through Swope Park and through the plush neighborhoods with manicured lawns and geometric gardens and with restrictive covenants that barred Black people from ownership. All the while, I was unmindful of the ugly face of segregation and racial discrimination that I was later to discover during my preteen years.

I was blessed that my parents enjoyed a warm, personal relationship with Mr. and Mrs. Vertis Barnes, Sr. and their son Vertis Jr., who became "my brother" and best friend for life. We skated together, played ball together, rode our bicycles together, and even played "follow the leader" together in various and precarious ways. We made extra money parking cars together when the Kansas City Monarchs, a Black baseball team came to town. Vertis and I lived across the street from each other on 24th and Brooklyn, only two blocks from the Kansas City Blues Baseball Stadium. The Kansas City Blues was a "white only" farm team of the New York Yankees. Vertis and I felt well compensated for the nickels and dimes that we made for parking cars in the vacant lot next to my apartment. Early in life, I was somehow made conscious of the value of money to the extent that parents saw to it that I saved a portion of my earnings from parking cars and selling the Black newspaper, The Kansas City Call. I remember the day that my uncle and aunt, Dr. and Mrs. William P. Young, came to take me to Campbell, Ohio, to live with them. My mother had become ill, and had to be hospitalized indefinitely in a tuberculosis sanitarium. It was a devastating moment for me.
and my parents; however, I was fortunate to be able to live with relatives who loved and cared for me. My uncle had his practice on the second floor that overlooked the steel mills, and we lived in an apartment down the hall from his office. I was always fascinated as I looked at the large steel furnaces that were ablaze, day and night. Having completed the first Grade in Charles Summer School in Kansas City, I was enrolled in the second grade in the Campbell Public Schools. Up until that time, I had enjoyed the acceptance and stimulation which I received in an all-Black school. In my new environment, I immediately felt lost in space, surrounded by all white faces for the first time in my life. No one seemed anxious to befriend me. Because I was a total stranger in the school where I had been assigned, I felt isolated as the only Black student in my room. In fact, as I recall, there were only two other Black children in the whole school. Most of the students had long and unfamiliar last names. My teacher's name was Miss Slovosky. I had earlier become familiar with one and two syllable last names in the Black community names like Jones, Smith, Johnson, Harris, Williams, and Roberts. I felt puzzled, frustrated and abandoned from the onset. My earlier source of confidence was stretched beyond my ability to cope. Because I received little or no encouragement to participate in the classroom or on the playground, I withdrew into myself. It was a dark, dark period in my early life. The clouds in my mental sky increased with each day. That numbing experience took its toll on me, because I only barely completed the basic requirements for passing the second and third grades while I was living with my aunt and uncle. I received all E's on my report card, and "E" didn't mean excellence in those days. It was the grade between "D" and "F" in the grading system. It was a "social" pass, a pass with serious reservations. I sagged with embarrassment as I took my grade card home to my aunt and uncle. The grades telescoped my blanket of academic deficiencies. I couldn't read, add, subtract, spell or write well at all. I fidgeted, day dreamed, doodled, looked out the window, and reluctantly paid attention to the teacher while instantly blocking out most any thing she was saying or demonstrating. This experience left a deep negative imprint on my psyche in terms of what school was all about.

I left Campbell, Ohio to return to Kansas City upon my mother's marvelous recovery at the end of my third grade year. It had been two years of hell in school, buffered only by the loving attention which I had received from Aunt Isy and Uncle William. It appeared that I had no chance of surviving academically at all, except for my providential encounters with my fourth grade teacher, Miss Luvada Lockhardt. In a short period of time, she with glowing smile and tender care, turned my school life around at The Beacon Light Seventh-day Adventist Church School. Her warm manner registered the magnetic assurance and selfless simplicity that envelops all true teachers. In short order, Miss Lockhardt recognized my limitations and she went to great lengths to help me learn and to succeed. She took the time to attend to the needs of each student, and helped each of us to set realistic goals for ourselves. I will always remember the day when I received three Mr. Goodbar candy bars for winning first place in the spelling bee. At the end of each week, Miss Lockhardt would give my mother a stack of four or five books with supplementary assignments to assist me in catching up. As a result of the cooperative relationship between the teachers and my parents, I became an excellent student during one school year, and was able to progress to the point where I won a 4-year scholarship to Howard University by the time I was graduated from high school at age 16. I have absolutely no doubt that Miss Lockhardt made the difference in my life at a young age.
that laid the ground work for my being successful academically and professionally in the future.

Q.

I want to know how you got to the Ohio State University. I knew you went to school other places and you worked other places. This is a real question, my very own.

A.

Prior to my completing the Master's degree at the University of Nebraska in 1951, I had mulled the possibility of pursuing the doctorate in Communication and Political Science at the University of Nebraska, at Pennsylvania State University and at the Ohio State University. All three institutions had been recommended for consideration by my faculty advisor at Nebraska. While I was thoroughly delighted and impressed with the strength of the academic program at the University of Nebraska, I embraced my desire to pursue the doctorate at Ohio State because of its eminent bank of stellar faculty in the Department of Communications. The contribution of notable scholars like Franklin Knower, W. Hayes Yeager, Ruth Becky Irwin, John O'Neil, Wallace Fotheringham, William Utterback, John Black, Paul Carmack and Earl Wiley made a distinct impression on me, and so I applied for admission and was accepted into the Ph.D. program in communication and political science in the summer of 1952. It also proved to be a strategic move for me because, at the time, my parents were living in Springfield, Ohio, less than one hour's drive from Columbus. Before coming to Ohio State, I had taken my first teaching position at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. I could now see my parents with some regularity, rather than on rare occasions such as at Thanksgiving or Christmas.

By June of 1955, I had completed the requirements for the doctorate and was graduated on June the tenth of that year. I was more than delighted with the culmination what had been an exciting and engaging experience in the academy of Scarlet and Grey. The spirit of those challenging days were so compelling that I did occasionally dream of having the opportunity to connect with the university in some capacity in the future. I spent eight years at Oakwood College as an administrator and five years as President of the College.

Little did I anticipate that in December of 1970 that I would be presented the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Ohio State University Alumni Association during the annual convention of the Speech Communication Association which was holding its meeting in New Orleans. The presentation was made by Dr. Keith Brooks, Chairman of the OSU Department of Communication. Little did I anticipate that less than a month later I would be invited to visit Ohio State to be interviewed for the position of associate dean of the graduate school, a position for which I had not applied. After spending a most challenging day of interviews by several administrators and committees, on January 27, 1971, I was offered the position by Dr. Arliss Roaden, vice provost and dean of the Ohio State University Graduate School. It was a position which I assumed in June of 1971; and held that post until June of 1978. The position gave me the opportunity of establishing the Graduate and Professional Visitation Days Program which was effective in the recruitment of top African American seniors from historical Black Colleges. So that is one aspect of my Ohio State
experience. I don't know if you want me to tell me more.

Q.

I want it all

A.

Prior to coming to Ohio State I had served Oakwood first as a teacher of English and Speech. I was the first faculty member at the institution to earn the doctorate while there. At the time, the only other person holding the doctorate was Dr. Eva B. Dykes, the first African American woman in the United States to get a Ph.D. in English. She was awarded the degree in 1921 from Radcliffe, which at the time, was the women's division of Harvard University. She was a wonderful mentor who, in many ways, helped to prepare me for the development and professional advancement which was essential to my academic growth and maturity.

Following my experiences in the graduate school, I was appointed to serve as Vice Provost for Minority Affairs in 1978, a position which I held until December of 1988. During my entire tenure of service at Ohio State, I also held the rank of Full Professor in the Department of Communication. I was fortunate to have established numerous programs for the benefit of racial and ethnic minorities. It was during my years as Vice Provost I was fortunate to have helped to establish the Minority Scholarship Program, the Young ScholarsPrograms, Alpha Kappa Mu, The Black Graduate and Professional Student Caucus, as well as a variety of other programs, including the establishment of the Black Cultural Center. It was in 1999, that Dr. William Kirwan, OSU's new president at the time, appointed me Distinguished University Representative and Consultant to coordinate the President and Provost's Diversity Lecture Series. A cultural Arts component was added to the series in 2003. All in all, Ohio State has contributed, in an overwhelming way, to the joys which enabled me to envision and create programs that could make a difference in the lives of students of color.

You might be interested to know that I had to make a difficult and tough decision before accepting the offer to come to Ohio. It was a time of serious soul searching for me.

Q.

What was the year?

A.

It was in 1970, just before I had completed a five-year term as President of Oakwood College, and the Board of Trustees had reelected me to a second five year term. About the same time, I had received an inquiry from Howard University to determine whether or not I was interested in the deanship of the School of Communications. Shortly thereafter, my name had been recommended to serve as an Assistant Secretary for higher education in the U.S. Department of the Navy. All of these remarkable contacts had come within a brief thirty-day period. As gratifyingly satisfied as I was with appreciation and recognition, I ultimately accepted the position of the associate deanship of the OSU
Graduate School. It became quite apparent to me after sifting and weighing some of my options, that my academic roots had been anchored during my years as a doctoral student at Ohio State. The plea of graduate African American students during my initial interview was more than sufficient to help me make the decision to come to Ohio State. I had not visited the campus with a predisposition to accept or reject the position were it offered me. Isolated as the Black students felt, overwhelmed by an enormous sea of whiteness, their pleas were not lost on me. Sensing their bewilderment, I cast my lot with them and the university which also recognized their need for role models, as well as the University's need to make the institution more inclusive by recruiting students, faculty and administrators of color.

Q.

When I was in the admissions office, there was a little tiny program called "Operation Bootstrap" for minority students. I think I remember that. You have done so many things to help this grow. Like I said earlier, especially the professional school. What do you think has been the most significant thing you've managed to bring to this university in that part?

A.

I humbly believe that God has allowed me, in collaboration with others to establish a number of initiatives to help make the institution attractive to students and faculty of color. The Graduate and Professional Schools Visitation Program, established in 1971 has proved extremely effective in recruiting some of the brightest African American and other students of color into the Graduate School. Thousands of students have benefited from the program and have gone on to earn graduate and professional degrees in large numbers. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, Ohio State was the number one producer of Black PhD's in America. More than 2,000 students have become graduate alumni as a result of this program.

In 1982, I envisioned the need to establish an undergraduate counterpart to the GPSVD program. Thus, in 1982, the Minority Scholar Program was born. Since that time hundreds of minority high school honor seniors have been admitted to the institution and awarded scholarships. Such a "community of scholars" has helped, once again, to give Ohio State national recognition for providing multiple opportunities for students of color.

In 1982, I also, along with Dr. William Holloway, Dr. William Nelson, and Dr. Mac Stewart, convinced President Edward Jennings to create a Black Cultural Center on campus to provide a "home away from home" for African American students. Dr. Jennings stepped up to the plate and followed through on our recommendation by providing Bradford Commons as the facility to home the Black Cultural Center. That center provides students with the opportunity to hear eminent scholars of color, conducts workshops and seminars, counseling opportunities for students, sponsors musical concerts, schedules classes that are included on the university calendar, and offers work-study positions for scores of students easy for

In 1971, I had the vision to found the Black Graduate and Professional Student Caucus. It was designed as a means of helping graduate students of color to collaborate in determining the issues
that most directly affected them, and to seek solutions to expand equal educational opportunities for themselves. They also were to recognize the need to assist new graduates in learning how "to negotiate" the expansive system of policies, regulations, etc. The Caucus provided a social base where students of color could plan programs and activities outside of the classroom for their social stimulation.

I should have mentioned, getting back to the Hale Black Cultural Center, that each Thanksgiving, The Center hosts a Thanksgiving Dinner for all students of color and students generally who have not been able to get home for the holiday. Hundreds of students are guests each year, most of them being International Students who have been unable to return to their overseas homes. The Kroger Company has been the financial sponsor of the event for nearly twenty years. The menu is always complete with the traditional holiday food of turkey, mash potatoes, green beans, corn, greens, sweet potatoes, pumpkin pies, cake, ice cream, and punch.

Most recently, I have enjoyed my role as Vice Provost and Professor Emeritus, and Distinguished University Representative and Consultant. Since 1999, I helped to establish and coordinate the President and Provost's Diversity Lecture and Cultural Arts Series. This program, one of a kind, has engaged some of the most eminent scholars in the United States on issues of diversity. I have been unusually blessed to have been able to participate in the establishment, growth and development for constituents of color on the Ohio State campus.

Q.

You talked about your role in recruiting Black Students. Was that the Freshman Foundation Program?

A.

No. Earlier I talked about the Minority Scholars Program (MSP) which I helped to establish in 1982. Let me tell you how that program came about. I was eager to establish a program to attract top caliber high school seniors of color. I was also eager to develop a program that would keep our most academically students of color within the state. Prior to 1982 African American students who became National merit Scholars and National Achievement Scholars, were, for the most part, lured to Ivy League Colleges whose representatives came into the state of Ohio with "suitcases" full of scholarship money. In 1980, for example, Ohio State was only able to attract only four Merit and Achievement scholars from within the state. Seventy-six of those stellar state students accepted offers from institutions outside of the state. Burning with sincerity and commitment, I began to give attention to strategies that would increase the retention of students of color on campus. Recognizing the financial needs of students, our staff was successful in attracting some of the very best high schools from within the state. The 1982-83 academic year got us off to a triumphant start as twenty-one high school seniors from Columbus, Ohio, were awarded tuition free renewable scholarships. It was the initial effort that opened the door for making the Minority Scholars Program one of the model programs of its kind in the nation. There were a number of factors that contributed to the almost immediate success of the Minority Scholars Program. It was fortunate for us that we had a team of competent staff persons.
On our team, we had Rev. Keith A Troy, now pastor of the New Salem Baptist Church, who had an exalted reputation as a wonder worker and as a recruiter par excellence, and as a superior academic counselor. He also brought a delightful and disciplined, yet a witty, perspective to his position. After the Minority Scholars Program took off, several hundred scholars from around the state were recipients of scholarships based on a cumulative grade point average that was 3.0 or above. The MSP was responsible for establishing a significant "Community of Scholars". Because of the star reaching pragmatism arid idealism of the program, it led our office to an unsparing pursuit in our outreach to superior students of color. It was the initiative of the Student Reception Model that enabled us to triumph - doubly - on our recruitment and selection of students for the Minority Scholars Program. The model focused on meeting juniors and seniors in large group settings in an informal atmosphere where refreshments and snacks were provided and where comprehensive information and concerns were in a time frame covering approximately one hour. Members of the OMA staff made 5-10 minute presentations each, also entertaining questions and in assisting students in completing application forms that were brought to the campus by the visiting OMA staff team to begin the application process.

Perhaps I should mention that the Freshman Foundation Program (FFP), established in 1970, was a predecessor to MSP. The Office of Minority Affairs established in 1971, began to enroll four hundred new students each year until the time that I took over the reins of leadership in OMA in 1978. By that time nearly 3400 students had been enrolled in FFP. It was a combination of federal, state, university and parent contributions as well as across the board support university wide that made the recruitment efforts successful.

Q.
How about the Hale Cultural Center? Do you know I never was there?

A.
So you've got to go. You call me One day, and I'll come over here, pick you up, and take you over there.

Q.
Oh, I'll do that.

A.
Well, as early as 1972 a proposal for a Black Cultural Center had been presented by the Department of Black Studies to the senior administrative staff for their consideration. The rational for such a center grew out of the negative effects that institutional racism, under representation, social isolation and cultural disorientation had had on Black students. The proposal was hotly debated both within the Black community on campus, the proponents of the proposal and the campus power structure. The campus patriarchs viewed the proposal as promoting a separatist, segregated concept
nevertheless, Black constituents (students and faculty) had supported the concept of the center, generally, as being good for Black students as a "home away from home." The issue of which office would serve as the administrative home for the center created an outpouring of interest Black students voted overwhelming that the center should be under the auspices of OMA. Black faculty were also in favor of OMA serving as the home base for the Cultural Center. A small minority of Black students and administrators in the Office of Student Affairs wanted the center to be housed in Student Affairs. Central administration refused to release funds for the center unless the Black campus constituents supported the administration's point of view. The Black community on campus stood their ground and refused to be bought. As a consequence the proposal for the center remained in limbo for a decade.

I dared to revisit the proposal in 1982 by asking Dr. Edward H. Jennings to provide funding so that Bradford Commons could serve as a Black Cultural Center. Dr. Jennings did not hesitate to take the initiative and in short order allocated $350,000 for the renovation of Bradford Commons. The rest is history. The Center now serves as an antidote to the perceived impersonality of administration. Today, the center is open to all students and faculty regardless of race. It serves as a major vehicle for bringing students of different backgrounds together to gain an understanding and appreciation of the richness and diversity of various cultures and learn of their profound impact on the development and advancement of western and global civilization. The center officially opened October 11, 1989. Eminent scholars and leaders of national repute have given lectures in the Center. Scheduled classes offered by the university are made available to students throughout the year. The center houses a first class computer laboratory, a seminar room for advanced classes, a tutorial room where students are assisted in their classroom endeavors, and a large lounge that accommodates nearly 400 students for Thanksgiving dinner each year, Hosted by OMA for more than a decade, and sponsored by the Kroger Company, it is a tradition that brings students (mostly international students) each year to join with others who are unable to go home for the holidays.

I was very surprised when the Board of Trustees honored me by naming the center the Hale Black Cultural Center, and designating the building in which is housed as Hale Hall. At the same time, the trustees voted me Vice Provost and Professor Emeritus and established an endowed scholarship in my name in November of 1988, prior to my retirement on December 31 of that year. Dr. Jennings had made the recommendation to the Board based on my years of overall service to the university.

Q.

It sounds like a great recruiting tool also.

A.

Oh yes. The center is a testimony of this institution's intent to promote pluralism within the landscape of diversity on our campus. It stands as abridge between Blacks and other ethnic groups on the campus. It represents an opportunity for students to come to OSU to affirm, to assert, to enunciate, to emphasize, to propose, to contend and give voice to their social isolation in society and to their overall concerns.
The center is a serious attempt to deal with the need to increase and expand the pool of Black scholars across the landscape of disciplines from art to zoology. The center serves as a focal point and as a forum for Black students to rediscover their origins, reshape their identity and develop and improve their personal and analytical skills in laboratory of leadership.

Q.

This is quite an obvious question. What was your most difficult time here?

A.

My initial effort in the Graduate School to develop an all-encompassing program to recruit prospective minority graduate students and to provide them with adequate financial resources such as fellowships and associateships to keep them in school. The presence of Black students was abysmally low. I initially felt discouraged by the reality; yet, I was encouraged by the conviction that something should be done and would be done if I worked hard and established partnerships that included central administration, deans, department heads, and administrators at historically Black colleges. It was this formula that formed the basis of the Graduate and Professional Schools Visitation Day Program.

When I was a student here in the 1950's, there wasn't one Black professor on the campus at that time. The few Black males who were in attendance at that time lived in private housing on East 11th Avenue. It was difficult for me to adjust to the second class treatment that Black students faced at that time. The handful of Black students learned to enjoy the camaraderie of each other by studying together and engaging in social activities. At the time I enjoyed the special friendship of Samuel DuBois Cook who later became the first Black professor at Duke University before assuming the presidency of Dillard University. We enjoyed sharing a library carrel as we pursued our research for the PhD degree.

Q.

Your overall experience sounds wonderful.

A.

It’s been beautiful. It’s been a wonderful life.

Q.

And you're back.

A.

Yes I'm back, and I've been blessed to have had so many beautiful experiences. Ohio State has come a long way in the area of race relations. And if I were to leave here today, I would feel gratified and
satisfied that I had the opportunity to work with good people. So many have been cooperative and very supportive in moving OSU in the right direction toward inclusiveness. Yet, we still have a long, long way to go. The most pressing problem in America today is still the problem of race. It's a problem that few really want to talk about. It reminds us of our failures, failures we like to deny. In the near future, we are going to be faced to deal with our dramatically changing demographics. People of color, more and more, are beginning to change the complexion of America. We are going to have to talk less and listen more to those who no longer are prepared to accept equal opportunity on the installment plan. A difficult job faces us, because power seldom is willing to share its position or benefits voluntarily. We've been conditioned to believe in a kind of social Darwinism that touts "self preservation is the first law of nature." Taken to the extreme, it promotes a sense of philosophical greed and exploitation. The Christian ethic espouses the concept of "self sacrifice" as practical by Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Ghandi. Those persons sacrificed their own well being for the good of others.

Q.

Do you think things are changing?

A.

Yes, definitely. I grew up in a generation of walls, Black walls and white walls. Everything was divided by color - hotels, theaters, restaurants, public parks, hospitals, cemeteries, and even churches. The Brown vs. Topeka decision brought about a dramatic change in public education. Rosa Parks, the Montgomery Boycott, the Little Rock Nine, The March on Washington, The Civil Rights initiatives of 1964, 1965, and 1968 opened doors that historically had been closed. Since the assassination of Dr. King, universities have been more open and accommodating to people of color and women. This university has established such landmark programs as the Graduate School Visitation Days Minority Recruitment and Fellowship Programs, the Minority Scholars Programs, The Young Scholars Program, and the Hale Black Cultural Center located in Hale Hall. It has also introduced a Diversity Action Plan that has made diversity a central and vital part of the university's mission. More and more people of color are being added to the faculty, and the presence and participation of students of color has also increased.

Q.

Are there any other things you wish I should ask about?

A.

Well, I perhaps should mention that when I was Vice provost for Minority Affairs the community - The Columbus community and the national community – were very supportive of our efforts. Additionally, high school counselors around the state, helped us to identify high caliber students in major metropolitan areas such as Cleveland; Cincinnati, Columbus, Akron, Toledo, Dayton, and Youngstown. The world also needs to know that many OSU alumni of color have gone on to
establish very significant professional profiles. Our office published two editions (1972 and 1982) of They Came and They Conquered which highlighted African American OSU alumni who have been most successful in leadership capacities all over the world. This booklet has, served as an effective recruiting tool for both students and faculty. In fact, other institutions of higher education have purchased copies of the book and have begun to replicate the idea for their own public relations and promotional purposes. I think that now that we have graduated hundreds of minority high school scholars, we ought to prepare a similar publication to highlight our successes in that area.

I do have additional materials that should be helpful to you in your quest to get materials concerning my roles here at OSU. I will be pleased to share copies of my publications, articles, books and speeches for your archives.

Q.

Thank you.

A.

I certainly thank you as well. My wife had a heart attack last month and I hope to be able to share additional information with your office once she has overcome her current crises.

Q.

What's your wife's full name?

A.

Ruth Colleen Saddler Hale. We were married June 16, 1947. We have three children, four grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

Q.

I have five great grandkids

A.

The oldest?

Q.

Is seventeen.

A.

Is that right?
Q.
Well, I hope it hasn't been too bad for you.

A.
No, it hasn't been.

Q.
Thanks to your secretary.