

MC: Start off, if you can go ahead and say your name, where you're from, or just a little background information. That'd be great.

BD: Uh, Willis Bing. Davis Bing is a nickname. Uh, Willis Bing Davis from Dayton, Ohio.

MC: Okay.

BD: Was born in Springbrook, South Carolina, but I grew up in Dayton, Ohio, and a product of the Dayton Public Schools.

Uh, graduated in 1955 from, uh, here at high school. And I, uh, was fortunate enough to have as my homeroom teacher and also as my foot, uh, basketball and track coach, uh, a DePauw graduate, uh, Dane Dooley. Uh, Dane Dooley was a graduate and former athlete from, uh, DePauw, who, uh, nurtured and worked with me, uh, from the time I was in junior high school in seventh grade, uh, all the way through. And so I attended the same school he taught at, and it was he who, uh, brought me to a DePauw University to talk with the admissions director at that time, uh, Dr. John Whittick, who had also been a DePauw graduate and a former teammate on the same basketball team with, uh, my coach. And it was because of, uh, my coach that I attended DePauw, uh, university, uh, starting in 1959, uh, I'm sorry, starting in 1955. And I graduated in the class of 1959.

MC: Okay.

BD: Um, I majored in art education, uh, played the basketball track while I was there, and met much of the, uh, African American community in particular, uh, of Greencastle. Uh, and, uh, returned to my home, uh, in Dayton, Ohio to begin a career as a teacher in 1960 and taught, uh, high school, uh, for about six years.

Uh, then a federal program in 1967. And then in 1968, um, Dean Farber began to communicate with me, uh, while I was still teaching in a federal arts program about the possibility of coming or returning to DePauw University as its first African American full-time professor. Um, after the second year, I was more open to that possibility. So in 1970, uh, I began my, uh, teaching career at the university level at my alma Mater DePauw University. I taught at DePauw University from 1970 into 1976. Um, I was brought there as assistant professor of art and also to head up, uh, what was then, uh, embryonic Black Studies program, uh, there in Locus Manor.

BD: So I, I, uh, spent halftime, uh, teaching art and halftime working with the committee. Uh, developing a black studies program at university and also, uh, to develop, um, a larger pool of, of, of potential faculty. So I worked with all the departments in helping to identify potential, uh,

minority faculty who had come to the university, uh, as an instructor, professor, or either as a visiting scholar.

BD: Um, and had a, a wonderful experience, uh, overall, uh, and particularly, uh, because of the, um, wonderful contacts and support and nurturing, uh, components I had, uh, in the African American community of Greencastle.

MC: Okay, that's great. And I know that you, uh, mentioned about the, how I was very nurturing your community in Greencastle. Um, could you talk about any segregation that there might have been during that time?

BD: Any what?

MC: Segregation.

BD: Segregation. You know what, uh, things don't change that much. Uh, what was going on in the world was going on also in Greencastle, Indiana in terms of, uh, not being, uh, always inclusive and always understanding and the appreciation of the diversity that was already there...

MC: Right.

BD: And, and the diversity that was coming in. But with the small number of students, I met, as a matter of fact, um, it may seem, um, surprising, uh, that here in, in 2005, uh, from my freshman year, uh, there was one other African American that was, uh, brought into the university. So there was two African Americans in, in my freshman class in 55, myself from Dayton, Ohio, by way of, um. My coach DePauw graduate, and a young lady who was an outstanding scholar, uh, from Kansas City, Missouri by the name of Melba Zachary. So, uh, we were the two, uh, African Americans in that class. And if I remember correctly, I don't remember all but there probably was not more than 10 African Americans, uh, totaled throughout all the classes that were there and maybe not quite 10.

BD: So it was a, so when you look at that aspect and look at society at that time. Um, you can envision. So, so in terms of, uh, there's already been a, a battle, uh, led by, uh, or involved with by Vernon Jordan, the Great Vernon Jordan. Uh, in terms of the barber

MC: Yes.

BD: In, in downtown, uh, Greencastle. But, uh, um. What you had going on in the country, even though Greencastle was smaller, sometimes the smaller and the ruralness, uh, may intensify some of the problem. But, uh, uh, it was the same all over. Uh, DePauw just had its own uniqueness and sometimes that was, um, uh, lack of understanding, insightfulness, sensitivity, uh, or just, uh, sometimes just blatant 'cause sometimes it was from, people were very intelligent in every other way.

MC: Of course. And because of the segregation, were, um, how was your experience as a very, um, well known basketball player? Actually, I heard you were MVP of DePauw.

BD: Yeah. Uh, it, it was, uh, not unexpected. Uh, I had been very well prepared by my community and my, particularly my community and my church, uh, uh, as to how to survive in, in, in a dominant society. So I, I came with a, a degree of self confidence and awareness of who I was as an individual. Uh, and so, uh, I, I. I knew what I was getting into. Certainly I didn't know it particularly, but, uh, I was, I was aware and sensitive. Um, athletically, I, I, I do recall a couple of experiences, uh, uh, one memorable and one not so memorable. The one not so memorable is that it was not uncommon to go into even arenas, uh, in our league at that time.

It was the ICC Indiana Collegiate Conference with Butler in St. Joe and Valpo and Evansville and Indiana State.

MC: Mm-hmm.

BD: DePauw and, and maybe a couple others. It was not uncommon to go and Wabash of course, it was not uncommon to go into an arena and have hot pennies thrown at you or have, uh, racial appetites, uh, yelled out at you. Uh, that was, that was, that was part of the struggle that you were going through to fight so. Uh, the positive one I remember just as well of going into a small town and having the coach at that time, um, great Kyle Luther, who was a outstanding coach that went on to Murray State, uh, prior to my graduation, but I remember him getting off the bus once uh, at an eating place. And I was fully aware that he was gonna go in and make sure, uh, that uh, uh, it was okay for an African American to also eat with the team and participate. And I know that had it not been, 'cause there was times when it did not, then we were passing it on. If, if, uh, we would pass that uh, restaurant or, or eating place on, they did not, uh, cater to African Americans that were on the team and that was, that was me. So I was, I was, I was very much aware of that. Uh, and even, uh, I was accustomed to even experiencing even teammates that may not have had full sensitivity.

MC: Oh, wow.

BD: Understanding that had to be overcome. I remember, uh, one of those, so those, so, so that, that's, that's all, that's all, all part of the course.

MC: Right. And was that experience the same with track?

BD: With track?

MC: Yes.

BD: Oh, oh, oh. Yeah. It goes across the board.

MC: Uh, okay.

BD: Um, um, be, because it's DePauw.

MC: Of course.

BD: Because you're traveling or because you're on the campus at black stock or, or wherever. Uh, you, you, you, you, you experience that and really. Um, we would talk that when we experience someone like that, then it really is not us, it's more them.

MC: Mm-hmm.

BD: Uh, their lack of understanding or a lack of broadness or lack of, uh, uh, just full appreciation of a, of another human being.

MC: Right. And you know, actually I can also say that I can relate to you as well and you know, when I was in middle school especially, I played a lot of sports and because I'm a minority and I'm Asian, I've had a lot of the kind of racist comments and so I kinda know how it feels and...

BD: Sure you do.

MC: Yeah.

BD: Because I recognize, uh, your name, but I not always sure. I certainly can't see the, uh, hear, hear a particular accent. But what is your ethnic background?

MC: Um, I am Korean. My parents are both from Korea, but I've lived in America my whole life,

BD: Uhhuh.

MC: So no one really can tell when they do speak to me on the phone until they meet me personally.

BD: Sure.

MC: Yeah. Um, talking about education, can you speak about your education in DePauw?

BD: Sure. Uh, how many days do you have?

MC: How many days do I have? Just a few hours actually.

BD: Yeah. Uh, yeah. I had a, a, it was a, a unique educational experience.

MC: Okay.

BD: I've spoken about it often. Unique from the standpoint of that, uh, as an African American, uh, I was aware that I was not fully prepared, uh, in high school. Uh, as I could have been or should have been. And that goes to the same kind of, uh, uh, of, um, racism that you encounter being a minority in, in, in most cities.

Uh, so I, I, uh, I knew I had to work a little bit harder than the others just to, just to make it through academically. Uh, but I was, I was up for the challenge and I was determined, uh, that I was going to do my best to, to, to be the, uh, first graduate from my family, from, from college.

And, and I had a lot of support and, and a lot of, uh, expectations and responsibility to try to, to excel. Uh, but I was really, uh, encouraged. As a matter of fact, some of my, uh, most memorable, uh, experiences educationally has been, uh, uh, listened to some of the, the outstanding scholars and lectures and, and instructors that were at, at DePauw.

MC: Yes.

BD: Uh, that just challenged you and gave you good information and, and, and encourage you, um. I, I didn't feel as, as, as much, uh, resistance to me, uh, from, uh, in the classroom as I did on the campus or in the community. Uh, um, there, there may have been, but, uh, it, it, it certainly didn't raise its head to the point that it, it, I can recall incidents where I was fully aware, but, uh, the educational experience was, was great.

Uh, it, uh, taught me how to. To, to study, to learn, to, to seek knowledge. Uh, I, I was, uh, encouraged by my fellow students. I, and enjoyed the intellectual discussions as well as some, some of the debates and arguments. Uh, but my educational experience was good. And it, it, um. Filled in some of the weak, uh, gaps of the efficiencies in terms of, uh, how to properly study and get the most out of study time.

Uh, and some of the, uh, courses that I took, uh, speed reading, uh, and, and, and the, and the nurturing support from, from many of the, uh, instructors that I had, knowing that I, I, I came without necessarily the, the best academic preparation for college. But, uh, um. Had a great deal of determination to make up for any deficiency that was there.

BD: But my educational experiences, I recollect, was, uh, very, very positive and, and still is, um, from the standpoint that, uh, when I get the, uh, alumni magazine, right, I enjoy reading what all my, uh, colleagues and classmates are doing and, and all the different programs that are going on. And then that's inspired, it inspires me to, to do the best I can do in my field because, uh you, you, you really represent, uh, DePauw, whether you, uh, acknowledge it or not, but, uh, what you do, really what I do is really anchored in a lot of what I gained, uh, both personally and, and, and educationally and professionally as a student and as a faculty member of Depauw University.

MC: Well, that's great. It's always good to hear that alumni is still hearing positive things about DePauw, and it definitely helps a current student feel better about the school that they're attending.

BD: Well, you know, something too is, is that, uh, and you probably know from just talking to some of your best friends, is that, but when you're there, you, you, you, you, you sometimes complain, but the, the more distance you get and you have more time to reflect, you realize how rich it was.

MC: Oh, yeah.

BD: So I left with complaints and not many, but, uh, like any other student, but as I, I look back and, and the education has served me very, very well and the experience, and when I mentioned education, it's not all in the classroom, but, but, uh, uh, what I gained from, from people there and, and some of the most memorable people besides the faculty and some of the administrators that I had a chance to, to hear and be inspired by also was inspired by, I remember the couple of custodians that were in, in the art building that was, uh, important to me. Oh, yeah. I remember the custodian, uh, Duffy Hughes, who I worked under, uh, as one of my jobs as a custodian there, uh, in the old Beacon Gym was very, very important to me. Um, Mr. The Garbage man, Mr. Louis Williams. Uh, I, I remember him fondly was very important to me and his family. So, so my education wasn't only in the classroom, uh, which is how it's supposed to be.

MC: Right. And it's so good to hear that you gained so many, so much light from people at DePauw, but were you an influence on people's lives? I mean, as a, sports. I mean, I mean, as an athlete, as an alumni, and also as a professor.

BD: Well, you know, probably so, you know, in every, you don't really think about those things and, and you don't do things, uh, for that to be an influence. But, uh, I, I hope that, uh, that someone, uh, wanted to do something with their life as a result of, uh, something I may have said or done or, or just being better.

Yeah. I, I'm, I'm sure there was some influence. I know. Um. As a teacher, I was, I was, I still, uh, hear from some of the students that I had at, uh, at DePauw.

MC: Yeah.

BD: As was the students I taught in, in elementary and high school. And so that, that's been very important and, and teaching for me was, uh, one of the ways, uh, one of the primary ways that I try to give back some of all that I've been given as a result of the opportunities that I had at, at DePauw and in Dayton and other places too. So, uh, I, I, I hope there's been a, a positive influence and, and I think so.

MC: Well, I definitely think, um, your artwork has done a lot of influence on people. Can you talk more about your, um what you do now, as in art, your museums or famous thing you've done.

BD: My, uh, and I didn't mention that, but one of the strongest influences on me was, uh, Mr. Richard Peeler my ceramic instructor, my art education instructor while I was a student. And then also, uh, the years, uh, when I was teaching there. Uh, it was very important, as was some of the other teachers they read and Ray French and, and, uh, and other teachers that I encountered. Uh, but, um, my art has been, uh, a blessing as a result of Depauw, uh, while I, um have spent all of my adult years since leaving DePauw is trying to develop my own personal style and voice.

MC: Yes.

BD: But I know that the, the foundation is anchored there in the instructions that I receive, uh, as a student and also the encouragement I received, uh, uh, to be, uh, the best I can be as an artist. And, uh. Uh, I set out to certainly teach, but also to, I made a personal commitment that I would continue to grow and learn and develop as an individual professional artist too and that, that, that's, that's still with me. Every day I wake up, I, I, I, I hope to get a little bit better. Uh, but my art has, uh, has taken a, a very personal turn shortly after leaving, um. DePauw. Uh, even as a high school teacher, I was very conscious of using my art to help express what I felt and saw around me.

And so, uh, I have consciously included social commentary in my work.

MC: Mm-hmm.

BD: Uh, as a means of a, of expressing what I feel and see. And so, uh, while I may not have been given that direction, in art, I certainly was encouraged to, to, to, to master, uh, the craft and, and develop my skills and to grow artistically. Uh, and, and, and I was encouraged to seek and find my own voice, uh, rather than to merely emulate uh, the teachers, the great teachers that I had, because I would be doing them a disservice if, uh, here after 40 some years, my, my work only looks like it did when I was a student or only looks like my professor's work, then I would not have, have, have found my voice.

So, um, uh. To look at my work and read of my work, you wouldn't, would not just assume that that would be what would be coming out of, out of DePauw's art experience. But, uh, it, it is because we were, we were encouraged to, uh, to grow and, and to find our own personal vision. Um, I have, uh, enjoyed, uh, the work that I've done and I made decisions in my heart that it would be reflective of me rather than merely, um, uh, copying something that I saw or merely copied someone's style that I saw.

MC: Exactly.

BD: Uh, so I've been very blessed and very encouraged by the receptiveness of my work, uh, both, uh, here in the US and in other countries in some places where they don't encounter me as a person, but only my work and, and give a positive artistic and, and, and, um aesthetic response that, uh, is nurturing and encouraging to me. So, uh, I, I also, um, consciously elected to, to, uh, work in a variety of mediums. And so, uh, I, I don't only paint, but work in, in ceramics, which is a, a primary, uh, medium of mine. But, uh, photography, mixed media, jewelry design, things that I learned at DePauw and things that I taught, I still do as a professional artist.

And so I was one of those kind of artists who, who, who does not only work in one direction or, or one particular style or one particular, uh, technique or discipline.

MC: Right. Um, well, besides your art life, basically, do you have other organizations that you're involved in or Oh, yes. That you can speak of?

BD: Yeah. That, that's, that's important to me. And I, and I, I consider that a part of my art life. Uh, I was never much of a, of a joiner in terms of organizations. Mm-hmm. No fraternities? Uh uh. No. No Boy Scouts. I, I, I didn't have that kind of experience and, but, uh, I have been involved, uh, since shortly leaving DePauw, very much in terms of, um, uh, developing, participating in, or working with, uh, uh, professional, uh, and not professional arts organizations all, all, all the time that I've been out, uh, that. Would that represent, uh, represent, um, getting involved in, in helping to develop the Indiana Black Ex Expo art exhibitions.

MC: Okay.

BD: Uh, that they have that begin, uh, while I was at, at teaching at DePauw, but also the uh, uh, state that I've lived in, I've been involved with uh, developing arts and humanities councils that can work with communities. Uh, Governor, the governor of Indiana, uh, allowed me to be one of the members to help develop the humanities program for the state of Indiana while I was, uh, teaching there. But here in Ohio, uh, for like 17 years, I served on the Ohio Arts Council in the last eight years, uh, uh, appointed by two different governors, uh, uh, Republican and Democratic governors to serve as vice chair, um, uh, on our number one arts council that, that supports and guides the artistic development, uh, in all disciplines, including, um, uh, classical. And contemporary, uh, and the National Endowment for the Art. But for the last, since 1973, I also have been very much involved, uh, in an organization called The National Conference of Artists. And this is the oldest and largest organization of African American visual artists in the world.

BD: Uh, and, uh. This organization, um, I, I've stayed in touch with no matter what else or where I was living and served two years, uh, two terms as national president and currently, uh, the last six years have been chair of the board of this organization, uh, which is, uh, instrumental in

trying to, uh, perpetuate, uh, the full appreciation of African American arts in the country and the world but uh, international conferences in Brazil and in Africa and, and in South America.

MC: Wow. I know, I always find it great to be part of organizations because you kind of have a support group we can go to and

BD: Uhhuh.

MC: I think. Um, but I also had a question if you, um, had any relation to maybe the NAACP or if you knew anything about that? I know I read about how, um, you were a speaker at the 31st Annual Freedom Fund dinner for the Greencastle branch.

BD: Oh, Mary, Mary Cho. You sure a good student. You, you've done some research.

MC: Well, thank you.

BD: I've, uh, uh, I should have, and I, I'm a member now that SCLC and some others civic organization, um, that's been important to me and, and I view. Well, the problem that we have in America and the world of racism is so big. It takes many organizations and many efforts. Uh, and I try to support those as many as I can. And certainly NAACP and, and other organizations, uh, uh, I try to support, uh, both physically and. And, and financially when I believe what they're doing.

So that was a, that was a treat to be able to come back and be a keynote speaker there. And that led to also being a keynote speaker at the, uh, Hammond, Indiana NAACP banquet. And just recently at, at the Oxford Miami University NAACP. Uh, so I haven't been an active member. I've been a funding member and, and supportive of that particular group but, uh, many organizations that uh try to do good. Uh, I, I try to get behind and gives not only lip service, but also, uh, finances.

MC: Okay. Um, really quickly, I kind of forgot to ask this about when we were talking about education and all that, but I understand you were also a teacher at Dayton's Colonel White High School. Were there other jobs that you held?

BD: Oh yeah, yeah. Colonel White was my first job. Uh, that, that was just a few months out of, uh, DePauw.

MC: Okay.

BD: Uh, I started there. I was, uh, we say green 'cause I was just 20, just barely turning 21.

MC: Oh wow.

BD: It was my first teaching job. Uh, and, uh, uh, I still. Hear from those students too.

Um, that where I started, that's my first job after graduating from DePauw. And, uh, it's a long story connected to it that also has, uh, uh, a DePauw, uh, connection relative to my, my coach, because my principal at the high school, uh, working with my coach from the City hall graduate, uh, getting me uh, focused and, uh, on my academics and my education.

A part of that, uh, that, that nurturing and focusing and, and enticement was that I was scheduled, uh, to go to DePauw and then come back from DePauw and teach art at my high school and coach basketball. This was the principal and the, and the coach talking.

MC: Okay.

BD: And so, uh, when that did not happen, uh, my principal knew of a job owner, Colonel White, uh, from a former assistant principal of his, and they directed me there. Um, I taught there until I came to DePauw. I taught at DePauw until '76 and when I, uh, uh, resigned from that position, uh, I was approached by Miami University before I'd gone to graduate school in Miami at Oxford, Ohio. And at the time I was taking, um. Some ceramic, uh, classes for an MFA in, in ceramics at Indiana State at Terre Haute and I got a call, I was in class, and then the next day they flew a plane over to get me and took me to, to Oxford to uh, interview and um.

MC: Oh wow.

BD: They wanted me to come as assistant dean of the graduate school, the entire graduate school, and also associate Professor Mark where I would teach art half time. And this was a year after the university had done its, um, self-study on, on minorities and women, and found out that it had less than 1% minority and, and very few programs that would, uh, uh, uh, recruit and. So I was brought in and, uh, trained as an administrator to go out and assist in the recruitment for, uh, minority students for all 72 graduate, uh, uh, all 72 departments and all the graduate programs.

MC: Okay.

BD: Um, and so I taught there for two years, from '76 to '78. Um, and then I had a telephone call from, uh, vice chair of the, uh, vice president of the Central State University, which is an historically black college, uh, here in Ohio. And they were looking for someone to, uh, redesign their entire art program. And, uh, offered me a year, uh, leave from Miami to go down and do a curriculum revision and revamp their program, uh, which I did. And then after the completion of that year, uh, they extended the offer to me to implement the program that I had been designing with the faculty for a year. And so I was appointed, uh Chair of the art department at Central State.

MC: That's great.

BD: Uh, in 1978 and, uh, I stayed there until I retired in 1998 and I retired to, uh, open up the studio where I am now, uh, at a gallery and do my art full-time. And what I have done is to switch. My focus where I used to do, uh, primarily teaching and do art in between.

Now I do art every day, but I still am in touch, uh, in the educational arena. So I, I go visit schools and universities and do lectures and workshops, and I do teacher inservice training here in my studio on how to use the arts across the discipline, as well as how to enrich their knowledge base on African and African American art and culture and their impact of that on African American culture.

So, uh, uh, I, I still work with, uh, with students except I do it now, uh, here in my studio or either visit the classes, um, sometimes. One day, uh, an assembly, three day residencies, or at the most a week residency. Uh, and, uh, it usually involves, uh, Bob's art teaching, working with, with others.

MC: Okay. Um, I know earlier you just said something about your studio and I learned that you have a art studio and gallery.

BD: Yes, yes. I've been very blessed, um, upon retirement. Uh, this is what I'd always dreamed to do, and it happens to be less than two blocks from my home. But I was able to, to, uh, take some savings and purchase a building and, and then with, uh, in a neighborhood that's being revitalized. Matter of fact, this neighborhood I'm sitting in now is the Wright Dunbar neighborhood, and it's named for, uh, two of the most famous people from my hometown of Dayton, Ohio.

MC: Okay.

BD: Uh, Wright Brothers, Wilbur and Orville Wright are the two brothers that invented the first flying airplane.

MC: Oh, wow. Okay.

BD: And that was done about 20, 20, 25 feet were, I'm sitting here and this neighborhood, and then the other individual. Uh, at the turn of the century was, uh, the first African American to get international acclaim as a poet and a writer, Paul Lawrence Dunbar. So this neighborhood is a Wright Dunbar historical neighborhood where I purchased a building, uh, put in the studio and a workshop for youth. And, uh, have also a professional sales gallery, uh, from my, uh. For my work. Um, and, and this is part of community and it was done with, uh, a lot of community support, uh, being my hometown. They have really rallied behind me and through, uh, various grants from the community. Uh, they were able to, uh, uh, do some reports for years ago. Uh, place me in this, uh. Totally paid for studio and gallery, uh, that I can, uh, now, uh, continue to work with the community and continue to produce my work that I ship around the world.

MC: Well, congratulations on that. I know it's,

BD: Thank you Mary Cho.

MC: Oh, you're welcome. Um, I know just to kind of sum it up, I just hearing on this interview, I've learned a lot of interesting things about you and I know I, I read something about how you have a trademark pastel painting, which is called Ancestral Spirit Dance.

BD: Yeah, girl, you should have done your homework.

MC: I think. I think that is just very interesting and really to close it up, I would love to more, to know more interesting information if you have any that you'd like to share with me.

BD: Well, you know, uh, that series uh, may speak to also some, uh, philosophical thoughts I hold that ancestral spirit dance is the most important, uh, series that I've been working on, which began in the old library, uh, in which used to be the art building.

It began in, uh, in Greencastle in 1973.

MC: Okay.

BD: This series have been continuous and the series is a special series of, of drawing, painting, ceramics, or whatever I'm, medium. I'm working at the time, but it's about, um, me celebrating those on whose shoulders I stand. It's about the ancestors. It's about me acknowledging and recognizing that I did not get here by myself. I am not alone. And that I'm a part of long continuations of great people because of my ancestors were great. My heritage is great. And so this is the way visually and artistically, uh, I tried to share that uh, that, that concept and that feeling that I have is that, uh, that we stand on the shoulders of others.

MC: That's great. Um, I know you said pastel and you also said ceramics.

BD: Uhhuh.

MC: Just, just really quick, um, I was actually quite intrigued about one of your ceramics pieces called the Earth Form number eight. I'm not sure if that's correct, Uhhuh. Um, can you talk about that a little bit?

BD: Yeah, that's part of series. It's a several series. The Earth Form also is, is related to the ancestral space.

MC: Oh, okay. Okay.

BD: Containers that I make, I, I use basically, um, one of the two basic ways of working with clay. Uh. Throwing on a potters wheel or building, uh, structures by hand are called hand building. And so I do a lot of hand building and some degree of encompassing, uh, drone, uh, portions onto that piece.

And so that Earth Form is a part of the, uh, the vessel series that I've been working on. But the, the themes remain the same. I deal with just, uh, of all the pieces, uh, three or four important themes that are important to me. The ancestors are recognizing and respecting elders, those old folks that we know, that we should sit at, feed at and learn from. And I know with your ethnic background, you're very familiar with, uh, respect for elders.

MC: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

BD: Or learning. Uh, but, uh, that's one of the themes I work on. Uh. And the other kinds of themes, uh, deal with puberty, ritual, uh, uh, coming of age.

MC: Okay.

BD: And of age when you become a young lady or a young man. And so I make things that remind us of that important station of life that we all go through. And, and, and I tie in my concern for my urban community because I deal with themes that we need to address in the community to make the community strong or make it stronger, or make it as strong as it used to be.

And so, uh, uh, remembering elders. Respecting ancestors, uh, helping young people, uh, go through that rite of passage of becoming a young, productive individual as an adult. Uh, so those are the kind of themes that I select for my work. And I, I sometimes get criticized for that, but it's okay, uh, because artistically, uh, uh, I, I look at other artists historically that have made statements about what they see happening in the world.

Um, nothing was more pungent as an image than Picasso's, *Quantico*. Uh, nothing was more pungent in terms of a social commentary of Francisco Goya's *Horror, horror*.

MC: Mm-hmm.

BD: With the with, with, with *Brother Killing Brother*, or the great work of, of Kathe Kollwitz who gave us these wonderful, powerful, uh, just moving images.

Uh, from the experience of the Holocaust. Of Ben Shahn's, um, great master artist, uh, another Jewish artist who gave us images of, uh, social injustice of the *Scottsborough boys*. So, so I have, uh, that in my understanding, my art history, understanding that that what I do and how I choose to have my work reflect social, uh, ills or social injustice is as valid as someone painting the landscape or still life.

MC: Okay. Um, and is there just any other interesting information that you would like to share or about your life thinking.

BD: Uh, before you called back, after talking with you, uh, I was thinking of one thing that ran through my mind as I was driving back to the studio to get your call.

MC: Okay.

BD: Uh, is that, uh, uh, and you didn't ask it,

MC: Oh, how about the protest?

BD: Yes, I'm very, I'm very, I'm very impressed. So I'm very impressed with, uh, with DePauw.

MC: Okay.

BD: Uh, uh, I, I think DePauw is becoming the great university I always thought that it could.

MC: Mm-hmm.

BD: You know, I, I, it's becoming, it's getting closer and closer and I'm so pleased to see that. 'cause you were asking me when you, when we first called about, uh, some of the experiences that may not have been as pleasant as I may have experienced at DePauw. And you were even talking about controversy.

MC: Yes.

BD: I dunno what you had read. Uh, or what you, what you knew. But yeah, there, there, there was some of that. Uh, but, uh, uh, and I, I was so sad when I left and I was sad I, at the time that I, I had to leave, or at least I felt, felt that. But, uh, I've been very pleased, uh, over the past few years of, of just the growth and development that DePauw has made not only a continuation of physical structure that's that, that's, that's to be expected, but, uh, it is, it's, it's growth and development in terms of being more inclusive. Uh, when I walk the campus now and see the diversity of, of students there, uh, I, I know it's becoming rich. I know the campus is becoming, uh, what it, it can be.

Uh, and so, uh, if it was anything, because I, I thought a question may have alluded to. Uh, some of that, but I, I, I, uh, I like what I've seen and I know, uh, it's, it's all things take time and, and, and change. Sometimes it's slow, but sometimes it's accelerated too. But I've been very encouraged by, um, what Dr. Bottoms and the administrators have done and the faculty have done, and, and, uh, I, I'm very, very pleased to be a, a graduate.

MC: Okay. And I, I definitely agree with you about how you said that DePauw has grown, rich and its diversity. Just because, you know, as a minority myself, coming into a school where mostly the stereotypes you hear is you

BD: Mm-hmm.

MC: A rich white school.

BD: Mm-hmm.

MC: And it was kind of difficult, but I was a lot more diverse than I thought. And I am kind of pleased with my, um. With what I have here too.

BD: You know, when I think back, and this is all happened in my lifetime.

MC: Yeah.

BD: Back and, and I started mentioning that there was just two of us in, in 55.

MC: Oh yeah.

And, and, and, and the upperclassmen probably totaled seven, eight, or nine.

MC: Yeah.

BD: Uh, uh, and then to, to, I remember someone asked me when I came there in 1970, wasn't I, wasn't I proud to be the first African American full-time faculty, and I just reminded the student. I said, this is 1970. And the school began in 1870.

MC: Mm-hmm.

BD: Or somewhere in there it said, uh, it is not necessarily a point of pride that it's taken this long.

MC: Oh yeah.

BD: You know, but I was pleased to, to to, to see the growth and, and the number of black people there. Now it just makes the university better. It's always been a good university. It is now, has a chance of becoming great.

MC: And I'm sure being one of the first African American, um, professors, you have made some sort of influence on DePauw. And because you did say you were also the first to graduate in your family, I'm thinking...

BD: Uhhuh. Yeah.

MC: So I'm definitely thinking you made an influence on...

BD: Oh, I hope so. I, I hope so. Uh, you, you always do your very best and you always give your very best. And, and that's all you can ever do. And you, you hope that it, it makes a difference. And, and most of us want our lives to be, uh, a difference maker.

MC: Right. Well, I definitely believe that you are a big difference maker and I, um, I appreciate this interview so much.

BD: Oh, Mary, sure. I'm just so glad you called because...

MC: Oh, no problem.

BD: I'm the, the, the, uh, earlier, uh, notice that you would be calling and I'm sorry we had a hard time hooking up.

MC: Oh, no. No problem.

BD: Things happen. I never worry. Things happen when they're supposed to happen.

MC: Right. But, um,

BD: Okay. Now Mary, uh, I'm sending you some information for your display. Got our book already for you and you, you say you're gonna email that your address over to me?

MC: Yes. Um, when I get back to my room, I will email that to you.

BD: Okay.

MC: But, um, before we end, I would, if you don't mind, um, can you gimme your home address, please?

BD: Sure. Uh, 2 0 1.

MC: 2 0 1

BD: Lexington Avenue.

MC: L-E-X-I-N-G-T-O-N?

BD: Correct. Okay, and that's Dayton, Ohio.

MC: Okay.

BD: 4 5 4 0 2

MC: 4 5 4 0 2.

BD: Let me give you that home number there if you need that number to reach me.

MC: Oh, sure.

BD: That's 9 3 7.

MC: Okay.

BD: 2 7 6.

MC: 2 7 6.

BD: 3 5

MC: 3 5

BD: 0 7.

MC: 0 7. And I'll give you a call if I need any more information.

BD: Okay. And you're gonna put up, uh, are you gonna work with the Putnam County Museum?

MC: Well, um, actually this is, um, it's a winter term that we're taking right now, Uhhuh, and our professor works with the Putnam County Museum. So basically we're making exhibits over African American history.

BD: Right.

MC: And I'll be making an exhibit over you. And then they will, if they choose that the exhibits are good enough or well presented, then they will take the following and present it at the museum.

BD: Oh, that's good. That's good. Winter term. And are you a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior?

MC: I am a first year student.

BD: You a freshman?

MC: Yes, I am.

BD: Well, where did you grow up?

MC: What?

BD: What town did you graduate from?

MC: I grew up in Indianapolis and I graduated from Warren Central High School.

BD: Did you really?

MC: Yes. And you see that school is very diverse. So coming from a very big school with a lot of diversity into a kind of smaller, you know. That was a big transition for me.

BD: Oh, I, I can imagine. But I'm familiar. My wife is from Indianapolis. She's an addicts, a Crispus addicts graduate.

MC: Oh, okay.

BD: And my in-laws are still there, so I, I get to Indianapolis quite a bit. I'm on the board for the Indianapolis Art Center, so I'm over there quite a bit there in broad rep area.

MC: Well, that's great. Do you have a lot of art shows there?

BD: Uh, I had a, a major show there two years ago, and I'm opening a show at Indiana University, Kokomo, and I'm going over there for two days, February 10th, 11th. And I'm, uh, the show is traveling, so I'm gonna try to bring it down south of Indiana. Yeah. Uh, but I'm always looking for those opportunities to, uh, just to share the work. So, uh, uh, I, I'm hoping to get back to Indianapolis. It's been two years since I exhibited there.

MC: Oh yeah. I would love to see one of your artworks and I know if I go, I can take my little brother. He is definitely into art.

BD: He likes art?

MC: Oh yes, he's,

BD: Oh, great. Now what grade is he in?

MC: He's um, he's in middle school. He's 11 years old. He just started sixth grade.

BD: Oh, that's great.

MC: But, um, he draws for me all the time and, oh, maybe he'll be the, he'll be the next Bing Davis. I don't know.

BD: Oh, hey, hey, hey. I'd like that. What's his name?

MC: His name is Timothy.

BD: You tell Timothy I said hello.

MC: Okay. I will.

BD: Okay.

MC: All right. Well thank you so much again.

BD: You're very welcome, Mary, call if you need anything at all.

MC: Okay. Thank you.

BD: Okay, dear.

MC: Have a good day.

BD: You too.

MC: Bye-bye.

BD: Bye.