Transcript for S. Joanne Morris interview, conducted June 25, 2018 in Boatwright Memorial Library Seminar Room 2, University of Richmond, 28 Westhampton Way, Richmond, VA 23173

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Mysia Perry: 00:00 Okay. Well, can you take the time to introduce yourself, please?

S. Joanne Morris: 00:03 Sure. Well, my name is Joanne Morris. I’m a 1979 graduate from the E. Claiborne Robins Business School. I am from Esmont, Virginia. That’s my little home outside of Charlottesville, Virginia. I currently live in Germantown, Maryland.

Mysia Perry: 00:23 All right. Thank you so much. All right, we’re going to start with a couple questions. My first question for you is, what is your first memory of the University of Richmond?

S. Joanne Morris: 00:34 Now, before we say--you want me to tell everything, right?

Mysia Perry: 00:37 Yes, tell it all.

Ayele d’Almeida: 00:38 Absolutely.


Mysia Perry: 00:40 Please be transparent.

S. Joanne Morris: 00:40 Okay. So, you know, before I came to the University of Richmond, I was a student at Albemarle High School. So my guidance counselor really helped us decide what schools, you know, we could attend. And I chose the University of Richmond because my brother had graduated from the University of Richmond that--earlier that year. And so, I knew a little bit about the school through him. But that was basically it. So they brought me on campus for the big weekend celebration and, all the African American students. And you know, we had this nice reception, and introduced me to the group here. And. So, my first experience sort of was like a nice weekend celebration, meeting people. And, everybody's so friendly. And I thought, "Wow this is great. This, this will be great to come here." So that was how I sort of got to the University of Richmond.
Ayele d’Almeida: 01:41 Can you elaborate a little bit more on how you got here? Like, as far as like your guidance counselor, like how the influence was?

S. Joanne Morris: 01:53 Okay. Well, well, you know, again, we had somebody who worked with us, was assigned to us in high school, which I thought was great. And she worked with us, you know, those that wanted to attend college. Now my--I’m from a family of 11 kids. And neither--my parents could not afford to send us to college. So I needed all the financial aid that I could get, I needed all the scholarships that I could get, and grants that I could get. And, as I looked at different schools, University of Richmond actually provided me more scholarships, academic scholarships.

S. Joanne Morris: 02:28 I was a pretty good student in high school. [Morris laughs] But academic scholarships, which was great. And then, I’ve got some grants. And then I was a part of the work study program. So I knew with all of that, I would be able to attend the University. And I knew it was a great school, so. My guidance counselor actually helped me. Because I had a four year scholarship to Knoxville College, a full scholarship. And I turned it down to go to the University of Richmond, so.

Mysia Perry: 02:56 All right, that sounds great. Can you tell us about your experience living on campus?

S. Joanne Morris: 03:04 Yes. So my parents dropped me off at the dormitory. I can’t believe all of the sudden I forgot the name of my dorm.

Mysia Perry: 03:16 Lora Robins [Court]?

S. Joanne Morris: 03:17 No. [crosstalk 00:03:19] Not South Court, but North? Nope, not North Court, South Court. South Court. Dropped me off, put me in my little room and said, “Bye.” And I just started crying. I cried for my first month here at the school because, I thought I would have more people that looked like me. And it was sort of like, a shock, a shock for me. And, I was homesick anyway cause I was just the type of kid, I didn’t really wanna leave home that much. I didn’t realize how much though, until they were gone. So I cried my first month. But I had really, really nice roommates and dorm mates. And they just helped encourage me through the process. But I was one of three Black women in my class. So the other two lived in other dormitories across campus. So I didn’t really get to see them. And...So I felt a little lonely, I think, my first month. But then after that, and you started getting to know people, it got better. Yeah.
Mysia Perry: 04:26 That’s great. Can you talk a little bit more about how it was, having a roommate here on campus? Especially with it being such a low percentage of minority students?

S. Joanne Morris: 04:36 Well, for me being from a family of 11 kids, we live on top of each other anyways. So you always had somebody in, sort of sharing your space with you. So I don’t think that piece was bad at all. And I, again, I had very, very nice roommates. They became really good friends of mine. It was just a different culture, you know. Getting used to someone so close … Being so close to someone with a different culture. But we did fine. I got along really well with my roommates. Just didn’t have that bond—cultural bond with other sisters on campus, so. I think that matters.

Mysia Perry: 05:18 Definitely. What would you say was your biggest adjustment as you came on the campus?

S. Joanne Morris: 05:26 Well. I learned how to be independent. You sort of are thrown in—I felt like I was in a survival mode the whole time I was here. I felt like I was surviving. Learning how to survive. And you’re sort of thrown in. And you have to learn, you have to grow up and say, “Okay I’m here for a purpose. I’ve got to study. You know, there’s a purpose behind all of this.” And I think just—I just focused on that, you know. Going through school, my classes. Knowing that as soon as I got out, I had to find a job and become an independent woman. So I think it helped me grow into being independent. And being able to deal with everything. You know, like some of my friends that may have gone to some of the other schools that wasn’t as … Even though we weren’t as—there weren’t as many African Americans here on campus, the real world is that you have all cultures. You have to be able to interact with all cultures and all people. And I think the University of Richmond helped prepare me for that, when I got out.

Mysia Perry: 06:35 All right, that sounds great. Did you have a special place for you, was there a special place on campus that you had?

S. Joanne Morris: 06:45 That I had?

Mysia Perry: 06:47 Yeah.

S. Joanne Morris: 07:26 You know, over here near the [Tyler Haynes] Commons building, there were some little trees. And we used to go and take pictures in these trees. I don’t know if they’re still there. But my friends and I, we used to go and just take pictures in these trees. I mean I have pictures sitting up on the, in the tree. And it was just so peaceful, and…So yeah, I think just
somewhere around this Commons area. I don't know exactly where the little trees are now. I might have to go searching one day, see if I can find them. But it was just calming to come out. I'm an outdoors person, so I loved being outside. And the campus is so absolutely beautiful, still. One of the most beautiful campuses, so.

Mysia Perry: 07:28

Definitely. Can we talk a little bit more about your experience at the B school [Robins School of Business]? Just becoming...Because it was such a ... It still is such a white dominated space. We just kinda want to elaborate, have you elaborate on what that was for you.

S. Joanne Morris: 07:43

Sure, sure. Now again my brother graduated from here. And he's actually the first African American to graduate from the University of Richmond Business School. So because he had such a good experience ... And of course he had to be a, you know, 4.0 student, and all that. So he was--So when I came to Business School, the Dean said to me, "Well, you know, your brother did such a great job here. We're expecting big things from you." [Morris laughs] So that was nice, it was nice that he knew who I was. And it was very difficult actually, for me, the Business School. It was hard. And you know I studied a lot. And I--but overall, I think I did really well. But I had one class that I really had an issue with. And in that particular professor, I remember it was a management class. Business management course. And I took pride in, you know, being a good student. And he said to me ... I flunked, I flunked the exam. And...I went to him and I just couldn't believe it cause I thought, "Wow I really thought I was comfortable with this material."

S. Joanne Morris: 08:52

And he said to me, "Well, so what if you flunk the class? It's not the end of the world. And so don't worry about it." Cause I wanted to know, what can I do to maybe help? Maybe I could do some make ups. Do something to help bring it up. At least so that I'll get a C. And, no. He couldn't offer any help for me. And I felt really bad because I knew someone else in the class. And we compared our notes. And my answers, while they were not identical, I felt that they were very, very, very similar to the answers that my friend in the class had. And so I really--That was the only negative, really negative experience that I had at the University of Richmond. But I didn't know who to talk to. Because I didn't have a mentor, I didn't have a guidance counselor. I didn't know who else to talk to about it. So it was just sort of something that I had to take with me and try to, try to learn from.
Mysia Perry: 09:53 Alright. My next question is, how you think that your race influenced your stay here at the University of Richmond?

S. Joanne Morris: 10:00 Influenced my stay? Well, I mean I felt certainly blessed with had the opportunity to been offered the scholarships that I got through the school. I felt that, when I left, I had very, very, very little debt. And I, here I am attending this University. Which was, even back then, it was like five thousand a year. Which doesn't sound like anything I'm sure to you guys. But back then it was five thousand dollars a year. To leave school after four years, and only have maybe you know a thousand dollars of debt, college debt. To me, that was, you know, a miracle. And so, being a Black student I know that some of those scholarships and grants were available for minorities. And so I was very appreciative to have been able to receive those gifts. I consider it gifts.

S. Joanne Morris: 10:56 And that helped me, you know, be able to attend the school. And...and it was an experience. Again, for me personally, it helped prepare me for the world. So I only have one negative experience here. Everything else I felt was, good for me, growing me, helping me develop. And, it would've been nice to have had more of a group of, you know, minority students to interact with because we build--you know, everybody is important. So you learn from each other and grow.

Mysia Perry: 11:32 Definitely, definitely. That sounds great. Can you talk a little bit about Greek life on campus while you were a student here?

S. Joanne Morris: 11:40 Greek life?

Mysia Perry: 11:41 Yeah.

S. Joanne Morris: 11:41 Oh, non-existent. Because, there were no sororities during that time. And no Black fraternities. And so I didn't really--I had very, very little interaction with Greek, you know, with the other fraternities on campus. So I know very little about it. No experience with it. And when I left, we still didn't have sororities here.

Mysia Perry: 12:09 Okay.

Ayele d’Almeida: 12:10 Is there any experience you would've been ... would've liked to be a part of?

S. Joanne Morris: 12:17 You know...I don't know. Because I never wanted ... Even after I graduated and I knew I could've joined a grad chapter somewhere. I have a sister and sister-in-law that are you
know, in a sorority. And...but it never, I don't think it really would've mattered to me. I don't know that I would've joined one even if they, if we had them on campus. Yeah.

Mysia Perry: 12:38 Okay. Did the Richmond bubble exist for you while you stayed here?

S. Joanne Morris: 12:43 Explain that to me.

Mysia Perry: 12:44 The Richmond bubble is kinda of the concept that we're really like isolated and separate from the city of Richmond and VCU [Virginia Commonwealth University] and VUU [Virginia Union University].

S. Joanne Morris: 12:52 And I felt safe because of that. See, for me, I was sort of afraid of the city. I'm from a rural, a rural area in Virginia. And didn't do a lot of you know, city ... Didn't have a lot of interaction in the city. And so for me I felt safe. So I knew VCU was there. I knew Union was there. But, I liked knowing that we were sort of away from everything. In our own little bubble, as you say. Away ... Being protected, yeah.

Mysia Perry: 13:23 Okay, all right. You were a member of SOBA [Student Organization for Black Awareness], can you talk about what that meant to you and kind of elaborate on what the kind of mission of the program was of the organization.

S. Joanne Morris: 13:37 Yeah. Well, yes, I was a member. And, you know, it's a small group. But I know the focus was really trying to build, you know, relationships and support. Be mentors and support for each other. Being one of three in my graduating class, three women, and then there were a couple of females in classes ahead of me. But my entire time on campus, it may have been a total of 30 some Blacks, at once. You know, that includes all of the men and the women. So it was a small group for us. And...But we were like family, and we tried to you know be friends, we were more friends. I know the guys used to always tell us few girls that, "Hey, it's too few of you guys so, we'll just look at y'all as sisters." And...So in most cases, you know, we were like their sisters. And they would go off campus for their entertainment. [Morris laughs] But, we would have a little dance, I little SOBA dance, and we would try to dance with them. And have a little fun. But what do you do when it's only a handful of us, right? Yeah.

Mysia Perry: 14:45 Okay. Well can you elaborate a little bit more on your relationship with the men on campus?
S. Joanne Morris: 14:52

Well...I did date one gentleman. One of the football players, for...I dated him for three years, actually. My junior--I mean my sophomore, junior, and senior year I dated one man, that was one of the football players. Otherwise, I really had very little interaction because I was sorta just a one, one man girl. [Morris laughs] You guys asked! So...But yeah, that was good. And the other guys were like friends, you know? They were like friends to me.

Ayele d'Almeida: 15:30

Do you mind elaborating more on like the social spaces that you all had, if you had any?

S. Joanne Morris: 15:36

Well I mean, I know we used to have little events like maybe ... I don't know if it was every weekend. I don't think it was every weekend. But we would try to get together. Maybe it was like, once a month or something. And, just have a little dance, SOBA party type thing. Otherwise, throughout the day, there was very little social connections. I think everybody was sorta like in their own little world. Maybe, going to the games together, you know. Some of us would get together and go to the games. But other than that, we didn't do things like get together and go to a movie or to dinner, or you know any of that stuff. It was just school, work, and a little bit of connection when we could.

Ayele d'Almeida: 16:26

Where did you work?

S. Joanne Morris: 16:28

I worked in a couple of places. I worked at the Business School, at the Law School, and, maybe at the library? I worked every year. And...just inside, paper. Paper type work. I don't remember all the details on it but, it was definitely what I needed to help me fill the gap, you know, of what wasn't covered with the scholarships and grants, so.

Mysia Perry: 16:56

All right, that sounds great. You talked about having your brother be an alum at the school, how you kinda of had a lot of expectations on you. Can you talk about how that felt for you? And also like how other students reacted to you?

S. Joanne Morris: 17:11

Yeah. Well going to the Business School, as I said, the Dean knew my brother because he was one of the, you know he was a, one of the top students, I guess there. Very smart, very very smart. I knew that I was a good student. That I, you know, I was studious. And I felt comfortable that I could be successful. And I was. I did really well. I only had that one class that I struggled with. So, I think for me it was hard, for me, because I wanted to make sure I lived up to his, to his reputation. [Morris laughs] Because he was such a good student. And I wanted to do really well. Just for me, though.
And, I was able to. I mean, it wasn't hard, other than I just struggled in that one class that I still think, I still believe I passed the class. But, anyhow, it's too late for that, right? I learned from it. [Morris laughs]

Mysia Perry: 18:10 That's great. That's great. What effect do you think UR had on you professionally and personally?

S. Joanne Morris: 18:18 Mmm. Well professionally, when I mention that I attended the University of Richmond, I think that did make a difference when I was interviewing, you know, for jobs. I think that University of Richmond has such a fine reputation that, I do believe that it may have had some, some impact, you know. People would always ask, “Oh really? You went to the University of Richmond? Wow.” So, I think it carried some pull by being a--having attended the school, from a professional standpoint. Now when I graduated though, I got a job at one of the insurance companies, State Farm Insurance. And I worked with them for 37 years. So I didn’t really get to see other job opportunities. I stayed right there with that one company my whole career. And I retired just last year, 2017. January of 2017. So, you know, I do think professionally it did have some impact early on getting in the, getting in the door.

S. Joanne Morris: 19:23 And then personally, definitely impacted me. As I said, I grew. During that time of--I felt like I was in a survivor-ship. I mean, I was trying to survive my whole time here. But it taught me how to survive. It taught me how to be independent. And not to be afraid. It taught me that I could really do anything that I wanted to do. If I...Once I left here, I was very confident. I wasn’t afraid to talk to anybody. And I felt like I, you know, was able to withhold my...you know, that I was strong and I was able to be confident and do whatever I needed to accomplish, so. Yeah, the school was good for me from that standpoint.

Mysia Perry: 20:04 All right, that sounds great. Were there any stereotypes that you have to overcome as a Black student?

S. Joanne Morris: 20:13 I don't think so because, again, we were just so focused on studying, I guess. Studying. I was just so focused on study, survival, you know. I didn’t--I don’t know of any real stereotypes that I paid attention to, you know?

Mysia Perry: 20:37 Okay. Do you still keep in touch with your friends from the University of Richmond?
S. Joanne Morris: 20:41 Some of them, yes I do. As a matter of fact, I think you interviewed some of them last week. Greg and Marilyn Mitchell. Yeah, that's some of my best friends from the University of Richmond. And then my brother, and another friend who's like a brother to me. He graduated after my brother from the Business School. There are a few of us, yeah, that we stayed really connected to. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Mysia Perry: 21:05 Sounds great. What are some highlights of your experience here on campus?

S. Joanne Morris: 21:13 Well I always thought that it was absolutely a most beautiful place. Beautiful school. I love...the chapel is beautiful. You know I had, I attended a couple of weddings there. Different friends got married at the chapel. And that's really beautiful. All the wonderful memories I used to go to the chapel on Sundays. And, it was just peaceful. I like the little lake, you know, the atmosphere at the University. It's one that makes you feel sort of special, I think. As I said, it felt safe. Not that any place is totally safe. But I felt safe here. And, it was a good place to grow, you know. If someone was to ask me again, "Would you choose the University of Richmond to attend school?" And I would absolutely choose the ... Knowing what I know, I would choose the University of Richmond, again. I didn't know before and I went through what I went through. Now that I have gone through that, I would still choose the University of Richmond.

Mysia Perry: 22:22 Sounds great. Can you tell me a little bit more about what the experience in the classroom was like, here at UR?

S. Joanne Morris: 22:34 Well. Again, being one of the few in the class, I probably always wanted to feel like I was a good student. So. Not that I'm the type of person that's always raising my hand. But I always wanted to feel like I was getting something that I--and then being able to share something that I was learning. So, for me, I felt like I was involved in class. That I would speak up and ask questions. And, I felt comfortable enough to do that. Had a hard time with afternoon classes. But...[Morris laughs] I get sleepy in the afternoon. Oh my goodness, I struggled. I wanted to have all early, early classes. But I had some really good professors too though, that worked really well with me. Yeah.

Mysia Perry: 23:26 That sounds great. Can you tell us about something that changed while you were on campus?

S. Joanne Morris: 23:34 Something that changed. With me? Or just--
Mysia Perry: 23:39 In general.


S. Joanne Morris: 23:43 I do believe when I first came ... We didn't have co-ed dorms. I think, maybe as I was leaving they started, or built one dorm and made it a co-ed dorm. I may be getting my dates off a little bit. But, I thought that was one thing that I thought was really great about the University too. That we did have separate dorms, for the men and women. And...so that piece, when that changed, that sort of, to me, I’m not--still not in favor of the co-ed dorms. [Morris laughs] So that was a little bit of a change. I would’ve liked to see it stay, men and women. Separate. What else may have changed? That’s all I--I mean, I can’t think of anything else that just stands out.

Mysia Perry: 24:43 Okay. Can you talk a little bit more about some of your expectations when you came to the University of Richmond? How those were fulfilled or not fulfilled when you came here?

S. Joanne Morris: 24:59 Well. I don’t know if I had a lot of expectations other than just feeling like, feeling comfortable, feeling like I was in a community and safe area. And, that I would have people that, you know, I would have some fun with. Because I felt like, "Oh my God, I’ve been in high school I haven’t done anything. I can’t wait to go to college." Right? So I could have a ball. Well, no. I felt like I was, again, in survivor mode. So. It was hard work. Really hard work being, being a student here. And...But I grew, so, yeah.

Ayele d’Almeida: 25:39 Are there any other changes to campus now that you’re kind of iffy about?

S. Joanne Morris: 25:45 Well I’m excited about the football stadium here on campus. Because we had to go all the way down to Cary Street. So, that’s huge. cause I love sports. I love, you know, going to the games. So I think that’s absolutely wonderful. The food service...the food service and everything ... I’m trying to think back on the food ... Oh yeah, you guys have changed that a lot cause your ...is it? I don’t know if it’s called a cafeteria but--

Ayele d’Almeida: 26:23 The dining.

S. Joanne Morris: 26:24 The dining, is so different from when we had the one dining hall. So that to me is really great. Yeah. I can’t think of anything else though, really.
So the co-ed dorms were the only thing that you were like, "No."

Yeah. That's the biggest thing that stands out to me. Like, no. Wish we could have--

Ring dance.

What was that?

Ring dance?

I didn't have that.

Oh.

We didn't have that when I was here. I've heard about it. Yeah, we didn't have that. We missed out on a lot. We need to go back ... they need to bring us back and give us like a month of, you know--

Everything we have.

Yes, everything that you have so we can experience what we missed.

That sounds great. Can you talk about just your experience with other Black women on campus?

Well there was so few of us, to be honest. The three--other two that were in my graduating class, I had very little interaction with them. Because our majors were just so totally different, so. And we were in different dorms. So I hardly ever saw them. A couple of upperclassmen, I became friends with. And one in particular, Marilyn Mitchell, she--her family used to take me in every Sunday. I mean, I would go home with Marilyn and have church, go to church and then dinner every Sunday after church.

She [Marilyn Branch-Mitchell] talked about that.

Yeah she did.

Oh my gosh. I don't know if I would've survived without her mom taking care of us. Oh my gosh, it was great. So they took me in and took care of me while I was here. Yeah.
Mysia Perry: 28:12 Do you think that your experience on campus was kind of influenced because you were a woman, in comparison to the Black men on campus?

S. Joanne Morris: 28:24 You know, I don’t think I had a chance to really pay attention to that. Because most of the Black men were athletes, when I was here. And, I didn’t see how we were being treated like really any different, the women or the men. So I didn’t get to really experience whether being a woman had any different benefit or...not benefit, from the men.

Mysia Perry: 28:58 Okay. Let’s see, what surprises you most about campus today?

S. Joanne Morris: 29:06 That it’s still so beautiful. That it’s still like a campus that is well taken care of, and that it seems to be getting, you know, growing and just looking even nicer, more beautiful than it was when I was here. So much pride, I think, it shows so much pride for the University, to take such good care. Yeah.

Mysia Perry: 29:29 Definitely. What do you think has changed most about the campus now?

S. Joanne Morris: 29:35 What has changed most? Hmm. Well I think it’s just the signs of growth. The, seeing the new dining halls. And just, it’s more colorful. I drive up and I see the big signs and the flags. And it’s just...It seems more like, more present. More--You know that you’re here, you see--It’s the pride. I think it’s all just the pride ... The celebration. It’s like a celebration. Because you feel good about it so, you can look around and see the big U of R sign. Or, one of the dormitories. And, just feel good about it. Yeah.

Ayele d’Almeida: 30:22 Do you have any advice for incoming Black students?

S. Joanne Morris: 30:27 Well. I guess the biggest thing I would have is if you ... I don’t know what kind of program they have now in terms of counseling or mentoring. But that to me is so important. I wish, that’s now...If I could go back and say, that was the one thing I wish we could change, that they really had when I was here. Was some of type of mentoring program or counselor type program. And maybe there was something here that I didn’t know about. Because I didn’t--When I had that bad experience, I didn’t know who to talk to. And so for new students coming in, I would want to know that there is some type of mentoring program, for you to reach out to somebody. Even if it’s someone that’s graduated, even if it’s someone--Just so there’s some connection. Somebody that you can talk to. So you can not be afraid. Because that was
that--Don't be afraid to you know, approach staff or approach your instructors or anybody about something.

S. Joanne Morris: 31:36

Don't be afraid to talk about your concerns. And don't fear retaliation. Because I think that was the thing. Afraid to tell somebody because I thought, well then I'll be in trouble. Because maybe I've gotten someone else in trouble. Or how will this person retaliate if I, you know, if share it? So. That would be the biggest thing. Making sure that the students are safe. Know that they can be safe and have a safe environment that they can grow in and learn in. Yeah.

Mysia Perry: 32:09

Can you talk a little bit more about the relationship between students and administration? Whether that be the Deans or the President. Did you feel, like, comfortable? That they would understand the things that you had to talk about or the things that concerned you?

S. Joanne Morris: 32:22

I didn't feel that they were approachable. But that--I'm not saying that they didn't try to reach out to us, I just wasn't aware or didn't recognize the administration reaching out. And...But I think that, that's probably part of just, you know, me. Maybe I didn't see it. I didn't know what to look for. I came from a high school where we were, you know, actually assigned to a guidance counselor. So I didn't have to look for anybody. There was somebody always checking on me. And because I was assigned to someone, it was safe. I knew I could go to that person for anything. So I don't know, I just I think that I was just in that survival mode and I didn't really recognize if it was there. Yeah.

Mysia Perry: 33:10

You've talked a lot about the survival model that you were in throughout your college experience. Can you elaborate on what, what do you feel like made you go into that kind of survival mode and...?

S. Joanne Morris: 33:22

Well, I think it was just, it was some shock. Because again, I didn't really expect for the, the minority ratio to be as small as it was. And so it was sort of eye opening. And I think I was a little bit afraid that, am I gonna be able to succeed in this environment? Cause I don't see many people that look like me. Can I survive? Is this...you know, do I belong here? Is this a safe place for me to grow? And...you know, will I survive? Will I make it? So for me it was like, I gotta prove that I can make it. So that's why I said I feel like I was in survival mode. I was studying all the time. I was, you know, work--doing work study. And just constantly just trying to make sure I was doing well. I wanted good grades, I wanted to feel like I was being successful. Which is why I think that one thing had
such a negative... stayed with me, because I knew I wanted to do well in school.

S. Joanne Morris: 34:28 I took pride, take pride in studying and, you know, doing my work. And I wanted my family, my parents to be proud of me. And...I wanted to be able to take what I’d learn and, you know, make sure that others saw that I was successful, so. That, just that piece of growing, I think. Just growing, yeah.

Ayele d’Almeida: 34:50 What did attending the University of Richmond mean for your parents?

S. Joanne Morris: 34:54 Oh my goodness. Well, as I said, my parents couldn't afford to send us to school. It's 11 of us kids. My brother had come here on a scholarship as well. And so they were very proud of him. He, you know, did so well, very well in school. But then, you know for me to also attend the school, I'm the fifth child of 11. So...There was a sister who went to college, then my brother, and then another brother...and they went to, to college. And then I was the fifth child. So, for me to come through and go to the University of Richmond and be successful too, they were very proud. They were proud of all of us. Even if we didn't go to school, they were still proud of us.

S. Joanne Morris: 35:40 But, them--neither of them had a high school education. So they always encouraged us to, you know, continue to apply yourself, you can be and do anything in this world that you wanna do, if you set your mind to it. And, you know, integrity was important. Work ethics was important. Discipline was important. So they taught us those things, and. So yeah, they were very, very proud. I remember when I graduated, one of my other siblings was graduating from Ferrum College, the same day. So the family had to sort of split up. Half went to Ferrum and half came to the University of Richmond. But yeah, very proud of all of us.

Mysia Perry: 36:23 Do you think that as a Black woman you kind of had this heightened pressure to do well at the University of Richmond?

S. Joanne Morris: 36:30 Oh yeah, yeah. Especially since I felt like it was so few of us. I didn’t want to be a failure. I didn’t wanna, you know, I wanted to set an example and show that, yeah we can be successful. We can do well. And we're smart. You know? We can learn anything, like anybody else. So. That was important to me.
Mysia Perry: 36:49 Can you tell me maybe your favorite memory at the University of Richmond?

S. Joanne Morris: 36:58 Other than my boyfriend? [All laugh] I won't tell any names. [Morris laughs] My favorite thing at the University of Richmond. I really think it was my getaway. My...the trees. The tree and the outdoors and the little quiet time. You know, when I think about the University of Richmond, I always remember that little space for me. Yeah.

Mysia Perry: 37:34 Okay. Is there anything else that you would really like to tell us?

S. Joanne Morris: 37:39 Well I know there are a lot more people that you probably are gonna be speaking with about the experience, and everything here. I'm just so glad to see that the University is wanting to do this. To, you know, build that history and record. And we do have a lot, you know, a lot of experience to share. I mean, some others will have more to tell than me. But, it's important I think, for the University to know, you know, the role that we played. And, what happened back then. You know? As time has transpired. I hope things have changed, some things have changed. Like I hope there's a mentoring type program where students can feel safe. And it's good to see that the ratio ... the make up of students here, not just African Americans, just all culture, all race, all, all integrated. I think that's really important and I'm glad to see it. Yeah, certainly having Dr. [Ronald A.] Crutcher and, having him here, definitely makes a difference I think. Yeah.

Mysia Perry: 39:03 All right. Well thank you so much for your time. We can turn off the recording.