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**Interview with Orlando Green**  
**Interviewed by Amaka Okechukwu**

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[Start of recorded material at 00:00]

Amaka Okechukwu: Make sure, you -- you know, (inaudible)

Orlando Green: I'm going to talk -- I'm talking to you?

Amaka: Yeah, it'll pick up. It'll pick up.

Orlando: Oh wow.

Amaka: Okay, so --

Orlando: You know what would help me? If I had a piece of paper and a pen, which I -- which I had. (inaudible)

Amaka: Oh, do you want one?

Orlando: Yeah, because I kind of -- when I talk I write.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: I didn't mean to rip your book. I'm sorry.

Amaka: That's all right. Doesn't matter. I'm not tripping over stuff like that. Let me see if I (inaudible).

Orlando: And I have pictures too. I didn't know you wanted pictures, like illustration stuff. I had pictures of people, demonstrations of battles and stuff.

Amaka: Yeah, no that would be -- that would be good to see that. (inaudible) my black pen. Okay, so I'm just going to ask basic identification questions first --

Orlando: Okay.

Amaka: So can you state your name?

Orlando: My name is Orlando Greene.

Amaka: And can you state your age?

Orlando: My age, I'm 39. I'll be 40 this year.

Amaka: And how do you racially identify?

Orlando: Black, but specifically -- that's always like a difficult point. I always tell people I'm black with an Asian mother.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: Yeah, okay, that's how she raised me. She didn't raise me as a half-black, half-Asian child. You're black, but your mother's Asian.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: Right.

Amaka: And how do you identify your gender?

Orlando: Male.

Amaka: And your sexual orientation?

Orlando: Hetero.

Amaka: And your marital status?

Orlando: Married.

Amaka: And do you have any children?

Orlando: Yes, a daughter, yeah.

Amaka: Okay, so can you just describe -- we were kind of talking about this earlier, but describe like where you were born and raised and just kind of describe your neighborhood and just how you --

Orlando: Okay, I particularly grew up Park Slope, Fort Green area. Lived pretty much my entire childhood and early adult life in Park Slope in Brooklyn, single mother, worked off the books. She did a lot of odd jobs. She's a World War II survivor.

Amaka: Where is your mom from?

Orlando: Philippines.

Amaka: Philippines.

Orlando: Philippines. So for me coming up with a single mother, father wasn't in the house, father was already married with another woman who he was separated from. She was like my first influence. (inaudible) my first class influence too because we -- she raised me through the state system, grew up in the state system. Although she herself wasn't eligible, being an immigrant, I was because I was born here. So like that was my reality growing up, you know. You know, you know, as a kid, you know, there's a stigmatization when you're on welfare, right, but at the same time of when there's the days to go to the welfare office, you see the other kids from school. You don't look at each other because you don't want to talk about it when you get to school.

Amaka: Right.

Orlando: So, so that -- those memories I have growing up. I was probably, you know, father probably wasn't around, probably was around weekly when I was infant, and probably stopped being around at a particular point where she was urged -- she was told to sue him for child support. So when that took place, and he had to pretty much just start having his paycheck readily come, taken out of his check for payments for me. That's when he stopped coming around, because of that. So that was the household experience growing up, and that was pretty much the consistent household experience (inaudible). To this day me and mom have a very close relationship. We have periods where -- I didn't understand as a kid, but I understand now -- where I didn't (inaudible) because that was all we had, and those were the decisions that she made. (inaudible) got to eat this. Like, those are things I understand. So that played a role with my direct understanding of poor people's plights because for me, I come from that. I have a sensitivity towards third world immigrants. My mother was raised through that social dynamic. My mother's parents were both killed in World War II. She never met her mother or her father, and she grew up in a third world country with all the stories (inaudible) third world country before she got here in '71. [00:05:00] And she never -- she [wouldn't tell me?] anything (inaudible). So because of her and her experiences I always talk about her first when talking about me. Because of that also I think I have a better sensitivity towards women of color and third world women because of the intimate relationship I have with my mom (inaudible). Not better than a woman to another woman, to understand them, but I think better than some guys would understand. So that's my mom. She always encouraged me to always, you know, study whatever I want to study. I want to study black liberation politics. If I want to blast Public Enemy. She was there with me; you know what I'm saying? She was like, "Oh yeah, that was interesting what they said. Go read that book and tell me what they're talking about, what that meant." Like, she was that type of mom. So I would probably say, jumping ahead to years before college, one of the biggest influences for me was her -- and particularly like the public enemies and the (inaudible) but you mentioned like the name of Chris Rock. I actually went to school with his cousin, (inaudible), and we were like the biggest X Clan fans in high school. Like --

Amaka: Where'd you go to high school?

Orlando: John Jay High School on 7th Avenue in Park Slope, which is not the high school anymore. John Jay has a reputation of being like a really bad school, but I guess when me and (inaudible) went everybody that was a criminal, quote unquote criminal, was (inaudible) whatever. I guess we went during the good period because, you know, I don't remember it being like a bad school when I was there, but it's had that reputation.

Amaka: Right, right.

Orlando: Like, maybe because it was a like a majority black school in the middle of like white Park Slope. I don't know, but that was the stigmatization of it. Then one thing that struck during that senior year, for all of us, was the Rodney King riot in '92. And that was like such a profound, you know, there was always police brutality. There was always police murder. There was always race related murders, but there was something about that one that took place when we was getting a little bit older --

Amaka: Right.

Orlando: We begin to understand things a little bit more. Then it really helped shape us to a degree, so we started looking at things to read. We wanted like the X Clan record started making more sense within that context. It was -- I'm thinking about -- all of a sudden we students started noticing people standing on street corners handing out newspapers, and then the Malcolm X movie was coming out for the first time in 1992, 1992. So there's something like the hip-hop culture reinserted the black power era into the conscience of the youth that the elders weren't telling us.

Amaka: Right.

Orlando: Right, so then we're talking about the Assata. We're talking about Malcolm. We're talking about H Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael, and we wanted to get (inaudible) stories from our own.

Amaka: Why do you think that? Like, why do you -- because I think that is a good point -- why do you think those stories weren't coming?

Orlando: I think it's because of fear and post-traumatic stress. I think -- I think whether they're directly or indirectly involved with that period, just the whole -- the whole thing on -- they were around to see newspaper articles saying the, the whatever, the black 10 were arrested and they're stripped nude, and the police would like -- given them after like a 10 hour shoot out, you know.

Amaka: Right.

Orlando: Like, they remember that in the papers. They may not have known the whole story, but they remembered that, the image, all the images they have. And then also part of it is also, you know, you have -- you have black bourgeois elements in the community that was never down with that, but survived that era to tell their interpretation of story, and that's where it gets kind of messy.

Amaka: Right, yeah.

Orlando: So you listen to their story, and then you have another group of folks who are traumatized by not telling theirs, and so we're stuck with this false history. And so we discover stuff for yourself through research, you know, your young get this backlash. Like, "How come you didn't tell me this? How can you not sharing sharing this?" You know, and then we start, [00:10:00] you know, then you go through a hyper nationalist period when you're really young. It's like (inaudible) other times, you know, like, you don't know what you're talking about, but it's just the reactions not being told the true history, right. So that was important. So while that was going on I was -- in the background there was also the (inaudible) student takeovers. So I'm in high school, but '89 and '91, this in the background, all this takeover City College, or there was another one two years ago. What is that about? But you're not directly in college in high school, so you're like, okay, that's (inaudible) police brutality, you don't even mention. And then the other thing too that was also influential was the anti-apartheid struggle. That was -- that was something that was -- was popular with the youth through hip-hop. And I think, looking back in hindsight, as hip-hop brought back the Panthers and Malcolm, it was the police brutality and anti-apartheid struggle that influenced hip-hop to do that. Like, the communities actually acted organized for the culture to take what (inaudible) doing and flip it back to the youth. And I would think it was like that type of relationship that I don't think we have right now. Like, I think we're doing the reverse, but I think that happened organically. We came to the community, went to the culture, the culture flipped it back to the community. Now it's the culture trying to flip it to the community. The community's like, yo, you know. It's like this -- this -- this --

Amaka: Tension, right.

Orlando: This tension. So when I first got in college that was the background. So I started college --

Amaka: Wait, wait, wait. So let's back up for a minute.

Orlando: Yeah.

Amaka: So can you describe your (inaudible) southern Park Slope area. Can you describe what that was like growing up? It's clearly very different now, but like racially, class-wise, but yeah, just describe how that --

Orlando: Well, Park Slope is different than (inaudible) back then. Park Slope was considered like the multiracial community, very liberal. For me, I fit in because I came from -- from a mixed background, but I fit in, but I didn't fit in. So I still think everybody in Park Slope was like half-Asian, half-white; half-black, half-white; half-Korean, half-white; half-Korean, half-black; and I was half-Asian, half-black. So I was like, you're mixed with -- I'm mixed with. We're mixed differently, but like -- like the -- I felt they were that type because it showed up on talk shows that were mixed, half-black, half-white. And it was like this tension of I don't know who to choose. I don't know who to choose. That was the thing, but in my household it was kind of like that's an easy choice. Like, we were both terrorized by European colonialists. You know, it was like there's nothing to choose, right. So -- so I was like okay, you guys are kind of funny.

Amaka: Like the (inaudible) -- like they say the traffic --

Orlando: Yeah, like you guys are like kind of interesting, you know. You know, but like growing up in that you also get, you know, people like (inaudible) because that's funny with (inaudible). So it was mixed, but people hung out with their own, whoever they identified with, unless there was something that brought you together that was like a sports team, like the cheerleading squad or hip-hop club or something. There was something. Other than that pretty much -- pretty much hung out with who came from your neighborhood even though you went to the same school. You all hung out, whatever, which is similar to now. But Park Slope was pretty much -- the stigma that Park Slope's like, oh, the black folks in Park Slope are rich. (inaudible) black folk outside of Park Slope. Now growing up I didn't see that because all the black folks I knew in Park Slope were handymen bordering sometimes on homelessness, you know, maybe a sprinkling of a teacher here and there, but that doesn't mean you're rich. Like, you're just working class. You're a teacher. So I -- and then one time I got to college, [00:15:00] before I graduated I actually did a comparison of the black folks in Bed Stuy with the black folks in Park Slope. If you just take everybody out it's the same class breakdown. The percentages from, quote unquote, small number of upper class, middle, and then working -- then working poor, like really mirrors each other, except one is in Bed Stuy and one is in Park Slope. Right, so it's like it's pretty interesting because my boys from outside Park Slope it's like, "Oh yeah, man, I'm going to come to Park Slope and get me a rich white girl." I'm like yo, (inaudible) like that." They still talk like that, you know, but it's not like that at all.

Amaka: Okay, so where -- so what schools did you go to?

Orlando: Like starting from high school?

Amaka: No, -- so did you go into college straight out of high school?

Orlando: Yes.

Amaka: Okay, so what college did you go to?

Orlando: I went to Baruch College. I went to Baruch part-time then transferred to City College and transferred.

Amaka: Okay, so can you talk -- can you start to talk about entering college, and what did you -- you know, what was your major, and like what were you involved with when you were in college?

Orlando: Well, when I first started college I didn't know what my major was, right. So I just checked off the box for finance, right. So there was college, and then there was the other stuff I studied. So (inaudible). So then there was business 101, and then there was (inaudible), and then there was Malcolm, and then there was African archeology, and then there was all these other things. So all that will lead you to through the very beginning to be like a (inaudible) student because if you're going to two different schools at the same time there's the class where you're going to school with what the teacher's saying and his business, and then (inaudible) teacher in class, right. So -- so I probably got (inaudible) that, but then when I transferred I probably got like a C or a D for fighting the teacher, and that's (inaudible) right. So that was -- so, so not knowing the history growing up, you know, we find that when we first come to the school as a black student, like, I have all this catching up to do on who the hell I am, right. And, and there's no guidance to that. Like, there's no adult that did what you did. Other adults are probably too old, and they're still in post-traumatic distress, you know. There's no guidance for that. So you go through this period of literally every -- well I did, and some people have the same stories too. You pretty much go through every class you took in college (inaudible) black class or socialist class on your own in the library. Self-teaching ourselves the exact opposite of what the teacher was teaching to the class. (inaudible) That is (inaudible).

Amaka: So does that mean -- is that one of the reasons why you transferred to college, or no, that was just a different --

Orlando: No, I told you the story.

Amaka: Because we know that (inaudible) studies.

Orlando: Yeah, part of it was, and I'll get to it, was harassment on campus from security. The second was I didn't have the greatest grades at Baruch, and I feel pretty much main two reasons. And a third was the student movement that I felt that (inaudible) that was Baruch's on was pretty much becoming down to this one individual with people graduating or dropping out, or whatever kind of reason, and at that point I have to make a decision. I have to take care of my family, myself. Let me transfer out of this place and just finish my BA and get out of here. So that was the story of my BA (inaudible). After being a part time student for almost, maybe eight years, part time student.

Amaka: When did you enter Baruch?

Orlando: I entered Baruch '92. I was there full time the first year, then I was part time the rest. I just had to work. My mom wasn't in the best economic situation, so I really had to work.

Amaka: Yeah.

Orlando: Yeah, so worked full time and a part time, or two part times, and that's pretty much the story for that for the economic piece. And so I entered Baruch, [00:20:00] and I met a lot of -- made a lot of new friends the first couple years. I met a lot of people that were just trying to work out as young black people, what is this? Right, some of us were political. Some of us were into black Israelites. You find all that on campus. Some people were just black but unidentified with anything ideologically, but just called black. I want to do something. Latinos too, you know, and the few (inaudible) white folks, right. You find them. And we became friends, and then our lunchtime discussions started becoming more intense to the point where it was like, let's start a club, you know, where we can do this with a bunch of -- right. Instead of us lounging for like lunch period we can have (inaudible) right. So then -- well we had to do -- we started to do that because there wasn't -- there was a black Student Union, but they were all senior, and they were all older, and they were trying to hang onto their space. Some of us wanted to join a black Student Union, but we felt it left out some of our folks who didn't identify as black, so we were like really friends, you know. And even in politics friendship is like something you take with you. It's not something that comes, and it grows, you know. And so friendship goes with you too sometimes longer than comradeship, like, friends are friends, right. I had a -- I had a friend -- friends that were close to me that were Puerto Rican but they didn't identify as black. They were struggling with that. I wasn't going to leave them behind, you know. So I wanted to struggle with them as their friend. And we had some other friends too that we didn't want to lose, but they were, you know, these were our peoples, you know. And so we -- some of us tried joining black Student Union, but it was like clearly this is another group that -- we can work with them from our space with our folks. So we started -- we thought it was going to be like a club that was going to be something for everybody, but it wasn't everybody, but we focused on people of color, so it was a club for black, Latinos, and Asian. We were focused on black, Latinos, and Asian culture. And then some white folks that were our friends that were still down with that because it was us. I didn't grow up necessarily white identified, but that's just who they were, how they were raised. So they were down with that, and so we called the club Soul Survivors. And I think we took some random thing out of like Eldridge Cleaver's book called soul [Soul on Ice], and we just expanded upon it to apply to all people of color with all people have soul, but you have to get it down to your own cultural core whether you're black, Latino, or Asian or indigenous. Soul comes from whatever your culture speaks to you. (inaudible) a black thing. It was something that everybody can grasp, but it was something that we all had a need to do in the Eurocentric culture, to identify with who we are. And so that was cool, you know. Everything we talked about at lunchtime pretty much engage each other, more like some type of low level political education, social slash pizza parties, you know, once a week. And it was cool, you know. But then, you know, people started talking about, well, we need to start doing community work. But what (inaudible) do? So that's where we kind of branched off because everybody's vision of community work was different. Because one brother was like, let's all join the Nation of Islam. And it was like, okay, all right, so that was a bit strange. But then there was a pull towards that too because Malcolm X was coming out, and in hindsight, I think the Malcolm X movie did more to advertising Islam than Malcolm's politics. And so a lot of people gravitated toward the Nation of Islam, so some of us walked into the Nation just to see what they were about. And so we went to a few meetings some of us. That was just pretty much four hours of them bashing Malcolm X. Never mind the fact that the movie got a lot of people (inaudible) okay that's interesting. And then there was like this drone over the people like, like (inaudible) like this. Like --

Amaka: Hypnotized.

Orlando: Hypnotized, cultish type of, you know [00:25:00] (inaudible). He's in a UFO somewhere. Like, okay, that's cool, all right, you know. But then some of us started reading some stuff on the side, like I was -- me and this one girl, we would -- Assata, at the time Assata's book. And Assata had more to say about socialism than Malcolm's book. Like Malcolm critiqued capitalism like (inaudible) overtly endorsed socialism for different reasons, right. (inaudible) do so, but, but she was explicit (inaudible) her book, and it's like that's interesting. So then I thought of, oh, okay, there's this white guy on the corner from (inaudible) talk -- Trotsky trying to talk about socialism. So, so I went to (inaudible) but she didn't come with me, because she thought the dude was creepy. So yeah, so that's what she said too, like (inaudible), you know, but they could be talking about some truth, you don't ever know, right. So I actually went to -- I never joined, but I went to their study orientations monthly. Only black person in the room, everybody wants to know (inaudible) person, and it looks like they still wear makeup from the '50s and like it was pretty odd, but it was like, I'm a people person. I'm not going to judge them, you know what I'm saying. (inaudible) sound correct sounds correct. What pushed me off, and I never came back to return her call was when the person assigned to me, I asked them a question. Well, you're always talking about the working class. What about the black working proletariat? Because I'm always (inaudible). What role do they play? And he told me (inaudible) "Well, the role for the black proletariat is when the revolution starts we need soldiers." And I was like, oh, that's interesting. So in my mind, oh, okay, we're already dying for you (inaudible) now you want me to die for your socialist shit, okay. Never returned the call after that. To me that was like ultimate disrespect. And I was surprised that he said that because I'm unsure -- there must have been something that -- somebody must have told him, advised him something he's going to say to us, and he didn't lied to us but he wasn't supposed to tell us that, but I'm happy he told us that. So at that -- by that point I was already reading a lot of black marxism. And particularly Amiri Baraka had some stuff on black third world (inaudible) theory, and there was some stuff also from (inaudible). He had a very good people that came up on (inaudible) that gave a very good monthly to quarterly critique of what's going on with us. And so I thought that was a good foundation. And then one day there was a magazine called Emerge Magazine, like that's out of print now.

Amaka: Yeah, I remember, yeah.

Orlando: You remember. So I was going through the back of this, and I saw Black Panther paraphernalia being sold. Folks would buy this stuff. Oh, that's cool, whatever. And (inaudible) I decide to call him, and I left a message. "Hey (inaudible) blah, blah, blah. I'm interested in the catalogue, blah, blah, blah." I get a phone call back from a (inaudible) named (inaudible). And he asked me, "Why did you call?" You know like, what are you interested in and so forth? You know, I'm interested in, you know, camping materials, books, materials I can't really find in a library. I'm interested in (inaudible). I'm looking for stuff to help me with organizing. He said, "Well, we're thinking of starting an organization." So I'm like, okay, that's cool. Well, put me down, you know, if there's an orientation, just let me know, blah, blah, blah. I never meet him. He passes away. Yeah, I never meet him. I became friends with her -- actually his little becomes one of my mentors, but I'll get to that. So --

Amaka: Kai?

Orlando: (inaudible)

Amaka: Yeah, okay, I know her.

Orlando: Yeah, right, right. I was like, girl, okay.

Orlando: So I get a phone call months later, months later, from (inaudible) Daniel, who now is with the Zulu Nation, and, and he calls me up to say -- he tells me, "Hey, you were in contact with us, with (inaudible). We are right now the New York Black Panther Youth Service." They've been around since 1991. They're calling [00:30:00] in '93. "Pretty soon we might have orientations for the organization on location New York, New Jersey in Newark -- Harlem and Newark. So we'll be starting this (inaudible) too." I'm like, well, that's very interesting. So I come for orientation (inaudible). I get all these (inaudible) at the table. And we all were assigned to original (inaudible). So he was, he was like my first introduction to actual like left wing organization. Before that had happened I was trying to (inaudible). It was something that was in the book, but not -- real but not real, right?

Amaka: Right.

Orlando: And so I'm in there. I'm in that room. It's like weekly, bi-monthly meetings, a lot of talk on (inaudible). We had a political education agenda, materials, written materials, discussion. We had some community feeding projects. The common thing in that room, though, was that three or four (inaudible) five were all going to (inaudible). And so a lot of stuff I'm learning was taken back to our circles without pressure to join. It's just something for us to -- we're all building something somewhere. And then, you know, then we start doing events with like the December 12 Movement. Malcolm X grassroots movement was just getting off the ground for the first time. Actually, it's funny. So fade to the elders. The ones that lived in Brooklyn started doing the same thing (inaudible) to becoming (inaudible), but the ones in Harlem would do the same thing with their group to become Black Panther Collective. So we're like part of the same tree --

Amaka: Connected, right.

Orlando: Right, right, connected. Then yeah, in hindsight we were very much connected, together but not together. There were like slight different political lines. Some, some ex-Panthers went New African route in Brooklyn, and the one in Harlem did not.

Amaka: Yeah, yeah.

Orlando: Yeah, so that's -- yeah, in hindsight it's interesting. So --

Amaka: So you were in contact with all those folks in Brooklyn that were like -- were part of the same collective as you, were still part of the same conversation with (inaudible) -- the early image (inaudible) --

Orlando: Oh yeah, yeah.

Amaka: I used to be in MXG, so --

Orlando: You in MXG?

Amaka: Yeah, I used to be, so yeah.

Orlando: Yeah, huh, not in connection with events, a close connection later on because of (inaudible) struggle, closer connection. Yeah, very, very close, so, so, so some Black Panther (inaudible) folks, myself included, were (inaudible). Some (inaudible) people were in (inaudible) too, but they were Baruch college. So I don't know if you know Erica Ford.

Amaka: Erica Ford? I know of her.

Orlando: You know of her?

Amaka: Yeah.

Orlando: Yeah, so Erica Ford was, and she probably still is, but I think she's been leaning to more mainstream now. But one of the hardest black soldiers on the street level, intimidating, like this, you know, like she was -- I thought she was one of like the folks that if there was going to be like -- but to me she was (inaudible) going to be (inaudible) to be [believing?]. But --

Amaka: You said who was she -- who was she -- what organization was she part of for --

Orlando: The December 12 Movement and by extension Black Student Union at Baruch College.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: Okay, so -- and at that time period, that was it for -- except for the black student union at Hunter that was it for like black organizing unions. Panther (inaudible) started Hunter BSA which was part of United (inaudible), and then Erica was probably old enough too to also (inaudible), by extension D-12, so that was [00:35:00] pretty much

it. Yeah, so somebody would write a -- fall of '94 there was a kind of -- there was talks of tuition getting increased in CUNY for about \$1,000, which (inaudible) university a thousand bucks, right. And I think that mobilized people more than anything anyone ever said about black leadership politics or, or anything about identifying whatever. That was more of a scenario that was real that galvanized people. And the people that were already trying to organize people, people naturally gravitated to, to lead it. So it was almost like -- but I think that was the same with every campus, right place at the right time. So, so our group, we had to build this multiracial student mobilization around that. So it was this -- firstly it was (inaudible) for people to start seeing (inaudible). So we had to get the actual articles, get the actual policy innovation, make it simple, get it out there, and then you also have staff, you also have staff who's job affected too.

Amaka: Yeah.

Orlando: Right, so I was the (inaudible), and the city counselors actually put aside an office for us, office home was actually organized on campus and city-wide.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: Right.

Amaka: So this is not -- is this -- is this Soul Survive, or this is more people at this point?

Orlando: This is Soul Survivors right now being the hub for this whole thing, which created tension with the Soul Survivors because we had the original crew. We had these new people coming in just wanted to deal with budget cuts, and then they had this original crew that just wanted to deal with identity and budget cuts but not -- it was, it was just tension.

Amaka: And would you say like at this time that Baruch is -- there's a lot of (inaudible) happening, or is it just kind of a feud where -- okay, so it was just a feud.

Orlando: I think the -- I think if we went -- before that was political. It was political individuals. I think before it had to do -- like (inaudible). When I went through and transferred out, but -- and later on other individuals ran into political circles like, "Hey, I see you in the hall way all the time." Like we just had individuals that were in political circles that weren't organizing. They were just going to school.

Amaka: Right, right, right.

Orlando: And then we started coalescing, and by the time -- the spring, the fall, the fall, no the spring '95, that was when my pseudo club was in a battle to establish a black Student Union. We realized Black History Month hasn't organized at all, not just we got somebody from the school to (inaudible). We needed to use it to galvanize students into (inaudible) demonstrations (inaudible) still keep Black History Month to integrate black history into, you know, previous historical unions. (inaudible) to actually use that for something real in the now. And so that was a meeting, a closed-door meeting. People started yelling at each other. You know, "You don't belong here." You know, yeah. Some, some, some people in that old black Student Union were good people. Some people were just fine with, I'm in college. I want to get my degree. Then I got my [inaudible]. They were fine with that.

Amaka: And that was black -- BSU people?

Orlando: That was a small number, but significant in terms of being part of the (inaudible) of that time. But I wouldn't say the rank and file membership thought that. No, but I think parts of their leadership did. Yeah, so, so even -- yeah, so even parts of that leadership survived later on [00:40:00] then became staff, so that (inaudible) campus to deal with too, that black -- the intentional black bougie element that was trying to destroy black working class and make it (inaudible) by attacking black leadership. Like (inaudible) in this school. Like, really? This is ugly. So, so one of our events was, was we invited (inaudible) to speak. And that was a struggle in itself because BSU didn't want that. So, but, but it was voted, and well, (inaudible) establish BSU on campus was actually a hub for all the black student clubs on campus. So it was, it was leadership from the Caribbean clubs, the Continental African clubs. There was no African American club. That was -- so when the black (inaudible) was organized it

was something that they legitimately fought for years ago because there wasn't money so (inaudible) about Black History Month. And they legitimately fought for that. They got that. But at the same time it got branded. "Oh, you're the black leadership on campus." So all the white administrators would shift a lot of resources to that. And a lot of -- (inaudible) some people, black (inaudible) to them, let them shine, and they would have the Black History Month events annually, and they would shine. They'd get up there on the pedestal, The white Panthers, president would applaud, and they'd feel nice about themselves.

Amaka: Yeah, yeah.

Orlando: Right, and they did that for years. They did that for about four years before we came along. And then passed that on each semester to (inaudible), so. So we were actually getting (inaudible) to go (inaudible). I think we had probably a better shot at the (inaudible) clubs because they were recently (inaudible) coming from a space that probably had more (inaudible) politics than second generation (inaudible) and, and, and even the, even the few African Americans on campus, the group was mostly, I think, from black population was mostly west indian. And so even that would be for the -- because we had to redefine what black power meant, right, because the definitions of black power left out African immigrants, African diaspora. It was pretty much African American centered stuck in 1960-whatever, and so we had to redefine what that meant for us, and we did that in our circles. So, so Soul Survivors was getting a lot of buzz, actually. Next thing you know a lot of comments were released (inaudible) to try to recruit us for different things. And we really didn't do anything. We were just a club that was talking about stuff. Like, we weren't really actively engaged in stuff. People would come to us and -- I guess because it was a bunch of stuff kind of -- a struggle going on, and everyone just points to us, so that's where everybody went. So one key group that came in and then left their group to join us is one brother John Kim. Another brother -- I forgot the his name right now -- who was actually in our club first, (inaudible) part of this group called the Progressive Labor Party, PLP. And they were in the (inaudible). We were -- we had issues with their organization because it was just becoming very Eurocentric. Like John was the like the most Afrocentric Asian I ever met, you know, like he was always carrying around books on John Henrik Clarke and always carrying books on (inaudible) like (inaudible) and stuff. He was like, you know (inaudible) communism, you know. It's, it's -- it negated and lied to us about leaving our -- (inaudible) African (inaudible), right, and so he was all into that. He was like, "Oh, you fit in with us, come on." So, so he was in the -- he was in the -- a block away from us, actually, the school of visual arts.

Amaka: Oh, okay.

Orlando: Right, 23rd and 2nd Ave, something like that. So he would go to class, leave, come to group, (inaudible) his thing with us, and him and his boy, this (inaudible) join us at group, and they wanted (inaudible) and started taking some folks with them. [00:45:00] And then I was like, you know, we need to start -- we need to explore this beyond too, beyond Baruch. And they become (inaudible) group, so we started group, and I got a name. (inaudible) Student Power Movement, SPM. In SPM all those -- everybody was the people from our student organization, and John drafted a platform we all voted on. He made sure, whatever, yeah, that works, and did the art work, he had the phone number from the office, and, and, and so, so it wasn't just group against -- it wasn't the Soul Survivors or group against budget cuts. Now we were a student environment, and we actually bought (inaudible). So we had (inaudible), so once you had an actual movement, I learned for the first time the movement brings in resources. And so people checked in and (inaudible). We had student common (inaudible). And we just gave it to everybody. We just had like bags of stuff (inaudible) there. They said, you know what, every student in the school (inaudible). And then we had this one brother who was a manager at Kinko's. That was a --

Amaka: That's convenient.

Orlando: That was a wrap. At that point it was a wrap. Everyone was a wrap. He was like, "Oh yeah, here are these Kinko's cards. Here's 10 of them. Each one has \$100 on it." Go to any Kinko's you want, make as many copies as you want, and if you want posters let me know."

Amaka: That's what's up.

Orlando: That's what's up. That's what's up. He probably didn't know where we were getting our money from. We had no money. We were broke. We had no money for lunch, but we had buttons, and we had Kinko's card. But so, so that was, that was fun. So we had this mass of stuff. We just came out of nowhere, and then next thing you know

at the (inaudible), the (inaudible) was actually interesting. My boy Rory, who was the president of the West Indian club and coming into the SPM thing with us and building it with us, at that event -- actually, did an event that was pretty interesting because I didn't have -- know what type of bus we were getting because from even the (inaudible) of us, and there was actually a series of events where (inaudible), and he was at the time holding these for-black-male-only meetings.

Amaka: Yeah.

Orlando:Right, and so there was this white professor at Baruch. (inaudible) host.

Amaka: Oh okay.

Orlando:So she was actually attacking those (inaudible) events, and pretty much going to those (inaudible) I almost forgot about this, and pretty much using her lack -- her lack of access to those meetings as a white to become like front page, second page stories in the New York Post as, you know, where (inaudible) student (inaudible) events that the city owns. (inaudible) So here she is. She came to the Baruch event, front row with a recorder. I said, how could you for real say anything too bad -- whatever. But then one of the Panther (inaudible) had a thing where like we don't like to be bootlegged, like, at the same time. Like, okay, sure, you know. Nobody wants to be -- the speakers there don't want to be recorded, so I announced that from stage, whatever. She's still recording it. (inaudible). Rory is going to call security, just pretty much just jumps Rory's ass, snatches her recorder, and runs out the side door to the street. Mind you, this is after we've spoken several times (inaudible) Soul Survivors COINTELPRO, and (inaudible). So we were just hyped up about it, and this was just a white woman with a recorder. We thought, this is bullshit, you know? Like, but we were hyped up, you know. We were like 19, 20 years old just hyped up, right, and she had a recorder, and she jumps down. He runs out the door to the street, you know. She's been completely out of it, becomes another story in the paper the next day, the next weekend or whatever, (inaudible) another story, and nothing happens to Rory, and no charges to Rory for stealing property, gives it back to her. But that event also brought a lot of other CUNY activists from other campuses, so that's when I met someone from Hunter college for the first time. [00:50:00]

Amaka: So who were some of those people that you started meeting at that time?

Orlando:Yeah, so we went with Lenina Nadal. So we met with Lenina, and it was like, "Oh, hi Lenina." She's from a Puerto Rican family. Her parents were involved in the movement. It was like, "Oh, Lenina, your parents named you after John Lennon." "No, after Lenin the Bolshevik." We're like, oh, okay, all right. (inaudible). Right, right, right, so, so, so we met her, and I think that night I met (inaudible) for the first time.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando:I'm not sure, but I think I met her. I met in (inaudible) before, but I actually met her then, that night, and another girl that he was working with. I think they were NYU students at the time. They were NYU students at the time. And then -- because then people were looking at us like, oh, they got buttons. They got flyers. They got, you know, they got money. We don't have money, but you know, so by coincidence (inaudible) and -- how you doing?

M1: (inaudible)

Orlando:(inaudible)

M1: (inaudible)

Orlando:So, so, (inaudible) and another brother, Rich, him and -- yeah, it was (inaudible) the two of them started another group, I think with a similar name, and they came from another group called black NIA Force based in Jersey.

Amaka: Ras Baraka

Orlando:Yeah, yeah, so then the two of them merged with us.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: So now they were part of student (inaudible). And at the same time (inaudible) had to do membership in MXG, right. So, so, when -- so when that happens now (inaudible) in. (inaudible) like older than us. (inaudible) like almost 10 years older than us, right. So he has 10 years on us. He's older. He's very well politically versed. He is an aspiring lawyer, good mentor. So him, John, you know, it was a shocking group, and so then, so then they started having -- we started having meetings with the CUNY Coalition during the budget cuts. CUNY Coalition was pretty much made up of the activists and students that were around for like '89 and '91 student strikes. So it was '95. We walked into that meeting young black people of color, you know, walking in, and they're all like, "Where did you all come from?"

Amaka: How did would -- yeah, how would you describe the CUNY Coalition meetings? Like, I heard that they were like, like, just chaotic. I heard they were -- yeah, how would you describe those meetings? What were like the demographic of those meetings?

Orlando: Yeah, in those meetings only white males talked, yeah. White males talk, and some women of color might have said some stuff, but then it was pretty much down to what the white males focused -- decided what we should vote on. Very white male led. I wouldn't say that the white males were bad people per say, but they were just -- there was something about being a white male in America where there's this confidence where you can walk into a room with anybody, and people will listen to you, right. And, and I think people just felt that and got used to that, and that's just how it worked out. And the only other black person in that room, when we walked in, (inaudible) too much, but just wanted to know when the rally was, so she could just take it back to her (inaudible) by the same time. I don't think she really felt bad like you ought to leave and stuff. (inaudible) she just wanted to know what date, stuff like that.

Amaka: Right.

Orlando: So then -- so, so here I am, 20 years old. It's February or March, and I'm (inaudible) meetings, which is new to me, but not new to (inaudible) and not new to John, and they were doing all this (inaudible) their communist groups and different black nationalist organizations. So I had the luxury of that. So I had the luxury of those [00:55:00] two while (inaudible) students on the campus that were actually on -- (inaudible) leadership. I had those mentors, older student activists (inaudible) campus to go back onto. So I had this, this committee of people with experience, my own board of directors, right. So that was, that was good for me to, to learn from. So, so going to those meetings, those meetings of people (inaudible) glad to see us -- first of all group was never (inaudible), like, like at most they say Baruch '89 -- or '90, '91 we had to take over. That lasted for a couple of hours. And I learned this from when I was in school here for when -- when going to the paper archives and you find a whole group of information going back to when (inaudible) started, and that's (inaudible) for everything in terms of group activism. And I think that was building takeover in '91, so it gave me the context of before I got to group in '92, of what I walked into but didn't know, but security knew, campus security knew, right. So I didn't know in '91 that campus security was dealing with Baruch students chanting at the 23rd Street building, and the NYPD had to come in through the sewers.

Amaka: Oh wow.

Orlando: To, to, to take their space. So another part of the context is in '89 and '91 there were campus takeovers. In '89 and '91 there were predominantly black and Latino or sympathetic campus presidents. In many of those takeovers the campus presidents did not allow the NYPD to come on campus, and the campus security at the time was not trained as police officers as they are now. They pretty much just held doors, looked for IDs, (inaudible). Something happened they just went on. They wouldn't do anything, right. And that's what campus security was like when I was there in the beginning of '92. So that's going to set the stage for something else I'm going to get to later. So eventually we had one of our first demonstrations that we attended in the end of February at upstate New York organized by NYPIRG. That was fun. I didn't say anything (inaudible). That was fun because maybe (inaudible) may be my sick sense of humor it's fun, but it was fun in the sense that NYPIRG organized a lot of -- we have our -- we have like four or five, six busses going up to -- up to Albany. We got our student government then to get busses for us, totally (inaudible). But it was pretty much (inaudible) in their resumes. If people wanted to deal with campuses they came to actually (inaudible) I don't know why we never ran for office, but we never did, never

ran for student government, just didn't want it bad. We didn't want to deal with the stuff that we didn't care about. We cared about the activist stuff. So, so that's where I met some other (inaudible) students because when I heard there may be -- Albany being set up like this really -- a lot of people felt that lobby day was really disempowering. Like we were organized to go up to speak to your elected official or something like that, a senate, and you were pretty much begging them not to raise tuition or cut services. And it's kind of like, you know, these black people of color going up to this white man in New York State to beg him. Like, it was very disheartening. Like, why am I doing this? Like, this is kind of like (inaudible). Why am I lobbying to this (inaudible). Like this -- so we had our little after burst. We all had our procession around the state capitol in Albany, and then some of us in Soul Survivors and some other students broke off from the procession with a couple hundred students and started taking [01:00:00] over buildings in Albany.

Amaka: Remember who some of those students were?

Orlando: Yeah, one of them was Christopher Gunderson. I met him for the first time when either a cop was trying to pull him away from a building, or he was trying to -- either we were trying to -- either he was trying to break through some kind of blockade to get inside the building. And he got inside, and we got a couple hundred people inside like, "Hey, what's your name?" And that's how we met. He went to Hunter, and he has, I think, a book coming out (inaudible).

Amaka: I'm talking to him on Monday.

Orlando: Good.

Amaka: Yeah.

Orlando: Good. That's my first introduction to him, and he was part of the '89, '91 stuff. And, and then -- good guy. I think he's probably one of the folks that, when I talk about when this was the same white people in the room, same white males in the room, he was one of the folks that people just let talk, right. But he (inaudible). I remember that. So that's -- so that was, that was interesting. And then we came back to the, to the, to the office to school afterwards until we reported back to the rest of the students (inaudible), and they all loved that story, you know. And it was almost like Malcolm X's critique of the civil rights march -- March on Washington. Like, it was a parade, you know, and they had this bougie NYPIRG and just wanted to (inaudible) this bloody kind of parade. You guys want to rebel, you know. So that's what that was. That's how that felt. And that's how, actually, that's how we termed it. We flipped it. We interpreted it as that. So it was other kinds of demonstrations and then it got -- and they were all getting larger and larger. Like, one was like 5,000, 6,000, 10,000, and then 20. Like the really big one I think on March -- I think what I did was --

Amaka: The city hall one?

Orlando: City hall one, it -- like, if you go to city hall -- have you seen the gate around city hall? That didn't exist back then, but I think that was because of us. There were about 20,000 people out there. Well, it could have had more than 20,000, but it's always like there's the actual count, and that's the political count. And sometimes I'm like, well, you know Black folks if you're three-fifths of a man, so they need a real count. They said if you apply the three-fifths formula that's the real count, right. And they need three-fifths of the 20,000 number. But that was (inaudible) a ground permit without a march permit, but that was a good rally and a bad rally at the same time. Fuck it, so the good rally was it brought out all these, all the black folks out. Black, Latino, Asians, (inaudible) choose one spot and protest for our communities, you know, because open admissions was deferred action (inaudible), and it wasn't fought for by traditional civil rights black people. It was fought for by some ex-Panthers and young (inaudible) who happened to be in here at the time. (inaudible) don't talk with [Robin Wire?]

Amaka: Robin Wire?

Orlando: Yeah.

Amaka: Yeah, he's on my list. I haven't been in contact with him, but you know, everyone mentions him as, you know, as a movement lawyer, you know, so yeah.

Orlando: Yeah. (inaudible) but he could tell you. This is how (inaudible) was integrated. This is his story, and then you can get it from him. There was a protest that led to a white mob of students that were already enrolled at cuny that were against open admissions as well. And, and there was a white mob that was chasing eight black students, two women, six brothers. To get away those brothers had to climb up a fence, and there were two sisters who refused to climb that fence. They said "We're doing this for our people in our communities. [01:05:00] We're going to stay here and fight." Those brothers climbed over the fence and fought with their sisters, and they beat back that crowd. And that's a story that I always tell people about how CUNY was integrated. That's how CUNY was integrated. That did that. It wasn't no pretty marches or any of that stuff, and that's still the legacy I think that every black CUNY student should know. You're not here because you're smart. You're not here because you look good, you're smart, you're intelligent. You're not -- you don't -- you're not even -- even if you play basketball you're in college because, you know, you play basketball, you got a scholarship. You're not here because of that. You're here because somebody bled for you to be here. And you have to pay that debt, brother, you know, because it's only right to give back and not just receive, you know. But Ron can tell you those stories because he was -- he was there too when he was part of the Columbia University takeover against the Vietnam War at the time. Actually, it was one, one and two. Pam, she was there at the time. She was part of the takeover, yeah. She was ex-Panther. I know her daughter. (inaudible) SUNY student, CUNY and SUNY students rally city hall. So one of the most beautiful things, I don't have a picture of it, but somebody might, you took down the US flag and New York flag.

Amaka: Yeah, I've heard this story.

Orlando: And they put up the black and Puerto Rican flag, the original Puerto Rican flag, but not the one that's current right now, but that was used like (inaudible). You know, like, wow. But, but then, but then the issue that we all had to learn from them, from them was that sometimes you can be too radical from where the people are ready for. So people were calling for a march to Wall Street from the Valley with that occurring. And that, that was the case where, I think, our rhetoric outstripped our capabilities. Yes, we did have 20,000 people out there, but I think we only had (inaudible) on stage down to do it. And after 20,000 organized to do so -- like, we just didn't have the structure in place to bring 20,000 people without a permit because they didn't (inaudible). As soon as those (inaudible) "We want to take Wall Street." Power went off, nobody could -- student leadership on stage, and no way to communicate with 20,000 people, and we just -- you know, people getting arrested, you know. It was just ugly. And I, I think for the next four years after that it was this thing where -- I know -- I'm not sure I'm going to defend your rally. I don't want to get arrested. So it became that kind of stigma around -- that we allowed to happen. So you almost had to undo that with the next bit on your plate. So CUNY student movement would never approach those numbers again after '95. That was always the stigma. But people will, will come to the event, but there was this thing about coming to a rally. So, so that was, that was the challenge back then. I didn't get arrested that day, but I got arrested -- my first arrest happened on April 25, April 25 with Chris. So, so we were asked when we joined a, a, mass arrest to shut down the city. So I was part of the group that got arrested and shut down the Brooklyn (inaudible) tunnel while some other folks were doing the same at the other bridges and tunnels around. They had like a (inaudible).

Amaka: Which rally was this? This was -- or which one?

Orlando: So that's funny. So April 25 there was a demonstration called at Wall Street, but all the police were there. That's when a (inaudible) actually took place to shut down the city.

Amaka: So this wasn't the Diallo?

Orlando: No, no this is '95 still.

Amaka: Oh, we're still in '95.

Orlando: This is April '95.

Amaka: So this was protesting -- was this still protesting the budget cuts, or was there some -- okay.

Orlando: They're protesting the budget cuts, but integrating with the other [01:10:00] (inaudible) at the same time on health care and everything else (inaudible).

Amaka: Yeah, okay.

Orlando: Yeah. That was probably the first time I ran into anything in regards to Al Sharpton.

Amaka: Oh, was this the one that they tried to call after the big one at city hall?

Orlando: Yeah -- no.

Amaka: Or no?

Orlando: No, no, no that was a different one. That was a different one. That was a different one. There, there --

Amaka: I remember people talking about after the big city hall --

Orlando: After the big city hall there was one by the twin towers.

Amaka: -- Al Sharpton tried to like -- I heard that Al Sharpton tried to like jump on the bandwagon and do a, a march with a permit a few weeks later.

Orlando: Yeah, and then there was another one where he was invited to be a part of with labor and students, and unless he was headlining it he didn't want any part.

Amaka: Yeah.

Orlando: Yeah, so I'm glad you heard that because a lot of people are like "He wouldn't do that," you know. "He's" you know. Yes he would, and he's done that. Yeah, yeah, so -- yeah, so, so, so it was a series of rallies at Wall Street, at the twin towers, all having big, significant numbers, and again, towards the end of the semester, and so we started to use mass arresting, and the semester ends. But I think before the semester ends, I think went a semester (inaudible), but at some point between the end of the semester and the summer Ron McGuire -- it was -- I think it was the City College of -- the City (inaudible). The student government of BMCC had a lawsuit against the school because I think they suspended for leading the students to the protest. And at the time one of the brothers who, like every brother, was actually in student government at the time too, so he was part of the lawsuit. And they won, and in that case they -- [Ron?] subpoenaed also, through the freedom of information act, this -- almost like this CUNY COINTELPRO, list of students that got arrested and these letters of correspondence between campus presidents and NYPD and the chancellor of CUNY on, who are these students? And the only (inaudible) this thing very similar to what Nixon was doing to reporters that were writing about him. Like, how are their taxes? How are their grades? Right and so there's like this 400-page document. I mean, I can stand (inaudible) email that to you.

Amaka: Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Orlando: Yeah.

Amaka: Any documents you have I'd like to see.

Orlando: Oh cool, cool. So, so then -- so student power movement was developing, and then another group splinters off. It's almost as the semester ends the student activism ends, but the CUNY Coalition was like that. But student (inaudible) taking a life is all -- we can't socialize. We're still active. And another group with some new white students had got some (inaudible) called STAND, standing against -- no, student together against non-discriminatory education. And some of them were -- some of them (inaudible) got arrested on April 25 in different locations.

Amaka: Whose campus was STAND coming out of, or was it multiple campuses?

Orlando: Multiple campuses, One from City, the rest of them I actually don't know if they went to a CUNY school, but they were a part of something, maybe New School. I'm never sure, but at least one city college student. And so pretty much it was the summer of '95 where we started working together on at least a couple of protests, just us, to, you know, still put some kind of pressure on CUNY and City, but they were small demonstrations, you know, something like 20, 30, 40 people, you know. There was a high school student rally that high school students put out in support of CUNY, and we supported them, but that was small. And I, I think (inaudible) was at that big CUNY Coalition. Student Power Movement played a role in capturing the more advanced student (inaudible) circle, and [01:15:00] STAND did the same thing with the white men. And it was almost like (inaudible) pushing yourself forward. And Student Power Movement integrated itself into police brutality struggle, (inaudible) prison work around with (inaudible). Yeah, there was a lot of (inaudible). Like, we went to clubs. Like, we would, we would club hop with (inaudible). Hit the city, (inaudible) next week, home to Philly and just club hop. And you know, we were around 19, 20, 21, like, so what we do? We're not going to change what we do. We're just going to integrate it more into what we're doing, yeah. And then -- and STAND was doing the same thing in circles, you know, but less so, with presumably more so with the educations, but we were just trying to integrate it more through a larger people of color struggle in New York City at the time, so more relationship with MXG (inaudible), more of a relationship with (inaudible) struggle. Like, there was an existing national congress of puerto rican rights Richie Perez supported (inaudible). It was also part of (inaudible) passed away, almost 10 years ago?

Amaka: Yeah.

Orlando: Yeah, and it's like through that also we're connecting and reconnecting with (inaudible) that were Puerto Rican. In fact, one of the things that popped up, I think, was a year later this citywide (inaudible) and (inaudible) was a (inaudible). They want them (inaudible), and the direct response to that was for people of color. And they were like conferences that would be, you know, trainings, right. So tuition went up, I think, \$700 (inaudible), but we preserved -- SEEK Program (inaudible) at that time. So going into the fall semester we had more information on, on the CUNY (inaudible) papers. So instead of publishing it they showed that to the student body, which in hindsight, you know, I think it like overemphasized (inaudible) too much. (inaudible) people going around getting arrested, and now if you get involved with us (inaudible) stigmatized, might go to jail. Like, whatever that -- right. So in hindsight we get like (inaudible) on that (inaudible) movement, but (inaudible) taking away from what people need to be doing versus being worried about what might happen to you.

Amaka: Right, right, right.

Orlando: But you know, so it becomes this thing like, you know, you want to join a struggle, like, people are already struggling on the food and trying to get us food and all that. That's another struggle back then. More struggle, more struggle, always telling me to struggle, you know. Why can't we just go on an adventure? We, we didn't like the whole (inaudible) packaging. You know like, (inaudible) people are coming like "This, this this (inaudible). I like this. (inaudible) adventure."

Amaka: That's fair enough

Orlando: You know, but so there was another -- so we spent the semester doing damage control over the previous semester over who got arrested? What does this mean? Then, then we tracked these new separate students who weren't there but just got to school but heard through rumor, "Oh, you all the radical group that just wanted to get arrested. I'll join you all." Now they want to join for the wrong reason now, right. So then we had to deal with whole political education process, and they were like, "I don't want to read." So then it was like, okay, we'll bring in videos then. So, you know, so we did a film series for people that didn't have time to read, which is a good thing because -- good and bad. It was good, but they should be going -- you can't just do that because you have to be a student first, you know. So at least we got videos and documentaries for people to pass the time to get in the right education. So then by the -- so then we wanted to be more proactive and reactive. So the conversation started with STAND and SPM. (inaudible) to being reactive [01:20:00] like we were in '95 and '89 and '91. So we just talk now in the fall about expected cuts in the spring that's coming in '96 because we know it'll happen. And so we started circling and started feeling around different campuses. Some of the SPM members were in Hunter, and they had a friendly student government towards what they were trying to do. But I think they were trying to repackage themselves into this new thing too (inaudible). And what happened was we called this huge meeting, and Dave (inaudible) gave her the name. David (inaudible) came to my city house. We were called the new CUNY Coalition

(inaudible) nationalism. And it was like, yeah, let's do it, right. We want to repackage the coalition, make it more proactive. We're going to get students out. I had -- when they start announcing what they cut and just get the ball rolling. So the new members (inaudible), some old guard didn't like it. I remember one meeting where -- actually initially at Hunter, where (inaudible) was sharing the meeting room, (inaudible) like one of the best charity (inaudible), chair meetings (inaudible). But so I think it was like 20, must have been 40 or something like that. I don't know. It was probably about probably 28. It was probably 28 at the time. And, and it was just this tension that led to a point in the meeting where some dude just got up and started charging (inaudible), and it was like almost like this fist fight that never happened.

Amaka: What?

Orlando: Yeah, it was -- I was just like, yo -- yeah.

Amaka: You remember who it was?

Orlando: I don't remember who it was. I don't think I ever say that person again.

Amaka: Right, okay, yeah.

Orlando: Right, I don't think I saw that person again. And so that's how the discussion with SLAM? as a CUNY -- as a new CUNY Coalition started. We're just distinct from SLAM as an organization while SLAM is a student coalition. And so we all branded SLAM on different campuses like CUNY Coalition, and then there was another budget cut struggle to keep my -- I forget what the tuition raise was, but at this point (inaudible) --

Amaka: Yeah, like, yeah, just keeps getting raised.

Orlando: Yeah, it's just going up again. Let's just do this, right. So then, so then the major thing happened was that under that SLAM slate Hunter College was able to capture their student government under that title. And then all of a sudden we have a student government at Hunter called SLAM that was all of a sudden like this (inaudible). Now we got the biggest budget to do whatever the hell we wanted. And it was crazy, like, oh yeah, we'll go to Hunter, and we'll get like ten busses for Mumia. Like, it was just crazy like that. Like imagine if we took over city hall and just had that budget for like (inaudible) to work, and we did that through the general elections. Like, that was crazy. I think one thing we missed at the time was that we never translated that into actual elections, city or local, you know. But I think we were, we were pretty much into the third world politics starting to bring that local to our reality from the past to the present. And it was -- except for the Panthers there really wasn't -- and what we were reading. There were a lot we were ignoring too, but in what we were reading it wasn't, you know, electoral strategy.

Amaka: Yeah, but you know in Oakland they did run for mayor, city, you know, but that was like later on.

Orlando: [Randle Wilson?] I think was his name.

Amaka: Yeah.

Orlando: Something Wilson.

Amaka: But like Elaine Brown and like -- forgot who else, someone else ran. Anyway, yeah, that's something that happened later on.

Orlando: (inaudible) later on.

Amaka: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Orlando: Right.

Amaka: But they -- I don't know if there's a (inaudible) on it though. They did have like a, you know --

Orlando: So there wasn't that much we could do, and then we had like these -- my pamphlet on this were on the other side of the split. Like, they were the east coast split, and they were (inaudible).

Amaka: Yeah, no, I know. I've been to -- I've been to stuff in every grade. He was the original.

Orlando: Whatever, whatever.

Amaka: I don't even know what they're -- yeah, okay.

Orlando: Yeah, they're still -- but I think it's better now because I think they're more with that past leadership than with the current rank and file. [01:25:00] That's what I think, you know. So, so, like for me personally, I'm like in this SLAM [TM?] space, and it has significant -- a lot more activity than the Black Panther group than in any other space that (inaudible). So it was like, oh, okay, this is interesting. We're still having meetings here, and some of the youth for the Black Panthers (inaudible) naturally gravitated towards (inaudible) student struggle because that's where that team was. And it was hard for the Black Panther collective to sustain themselves with memberships because the elders (inaudible).

Amaka: Right, right, right.

Orlando: You know, and just the fact that, you know --

Amaka: So if SLAM is a coalition, you know, the, you know, rebranded, I guess, CUNY Coalition, SLAM is supposed to have, I guess, different chapters in different schools. What schools do you remember having those SLAM chapters? Not every CUNY had a SLAM chapter. Not every CUNY had like an active -- so what schools do you remember?

Orlando: A four-year college.

Amaka: All the four-year colleges?

Orlando: The four-year colleges. In 1996 it was the four-year colleges. There was this disconnect. It was all the way conversation on the trains on the way home. Why isn't there more (inaudible) more black folks? And those folks are at Medgar Evers or at York. (inaudible) It's a four-year school, but (inaudible), but like -- but Erica wasn't even messing with that, you know. Hostos weren't really (inaudible) at that time. I think later on they kind of connected with us when we had issues and people reached out to them, but at that time that wasn't going on. They were still doing their thing against budget cuts, but they weren't really part of SLAM (inaudible) at the time. I don't know why they -- well, but that was, that was always someone that -- who was -- had to deal with, okay, so I'm just black. I'm one of the only black (inaudible), right. There's very few, very few.

Amaka: Yeah, I've been trying to find folk just for -- there's very few.

Orlando: Very few, one hand I could count, very few. And even on that particular point it was, in the, in the Student Power Movement all the way up to start SLAM started the split, and the issue was Student Power Movement were going to graduate soon. It was a transient -- being a student group was really transient. You're not going to be there forever. You can try, but eventually people are going to start thinking about student activism (inaudible) and some people at student crime were more career-(inaudible). This is one year after '95. (inaudible) going to invest more time, less from CUNY, into (inaudible).

Amaka: Right, right.

Orlando: Yeah, and yeah, so --

Amaka: So Student Power Movement was more black than Brown. SLAM was --

Orlando: Black and Brown and one Asian, 1.5 (inaudible).

Amaka: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and then SLAM was more --

Orlando: Latino.

Amaka: Yeah, like people were multinational like, yeah, and there was more white folks too.

Orlando: Yeah, that was very, yeah. The black folks that were part of SLAM and SPM were clear that they needed to get out of that (inaudible), integrate more into a community level.

Amaka: So who were some of those people that you were --

Orlando: Rory (inaudible), (inaudible) was more international, Richard Austin, and [Kendra Stewart?] was an intern at the time, and so there was talk of what we had (inaudible). So there was a split, so then there was like the Latinos in SPM too that were also part of SLAM that weren't from (inaudible). They joined us from (inaudible), and so (inaudible). They were all in SPM together. And they all (inaudible). So we're getting this tension like, what are we going to [01:30:00] become? Like, we're the student group. Now we just created another student group, right, so what are we, or what do we need to be? And so out of convenience, you know, some of the Latinas (inaudible) a new significant role in the culture student (inaudible), and that's what they did. They left SPM. And SPM would become more of a black organization, and so even some discussion took place. SPM -- so for now wasn't MXG, and he know (inaudible) SPM (inaudible), dwindling membership. And (inaudible) at the time was (inaudible) and because he could live with that and the way things were going (inaudible) at that time. He was my mentor because he was an older brother, but I think also (inaudible). He would do like -- he would prepare for the -- well, that maxim's good, prepare for the worst, right. We need to merge (inaudible) both side, right. Didn't happen because the merge was on one side. It would have been SPM collapsing into (inaudible) because MXG was part of (inaudible), and that wasn't going to happen (inaudible) for wherever we were, and we didn't agree with the five state (inaudible).

Amaka: Right, right.

Orlando: I think some of us would more agree with the Panther take on that. Let black folks democratically vote under the (inaudible) what they want, and that could be a vote, an option, but we're not going to say that's what we're going to do. So, so that doesn't happen. Both members try to do (inaudible). MXG and SPM and Zulu Nation actually started a community-feeding program with (inaudible).

Amaka: Oh, okay.

Orlando: Yeah, so we ran for six years --

Amaka: What years were those?

Orlando: Ninety-six -- either ninety-five or ninety-six to '01, roughly, yeah. I think it started off with the startup grant, but then it just became everybody (inaudible). And then SPM was being (inaudible), so some of the (inaudible) people who were not of African descent but actually, you know, they were comrades. We loved them. I asked them -- I mean, I still connected with them on the SLAM space, but they were just no longer in the SPM space. So now SPM became FIST, Forever in Struggle Together, which was now an African descent organization focusing on central (inaudible). So that's how that evolved. All this happening while --

Amaka: So FIST wasn't student, student-centric, or was it? No, okay, it was like their transition into --

Orlando: Whatever -- whoever we can take with us off campus into, as we become working class people, to become (inaudible). So I was -- so I tapered off of the Panther collective still maintain task. I just couldn't use (inaudible) capacity being to an organization while still trying to go to school and working at the same time. So then I maintain my membership in SLAM at Baruch through Soul Survivors. There's no more (inaudible) FIST to funnel the student work, and still not doing anything with FIST, which used to be SPM, to feed people into community programs and to also (inaudible). So we didn't just split then. That was once, the one thing that it was like this duel thing, while trying to maintain -- sometimes (inaudible) campus in the same room. So, so for SLAM, I'm still active

in SLAM. There are still people on campus [01:35:00] who are not at Baruch, who are at Baruch but (inaudible) that left but are still there but (inaudible) else, still trying to organize around budget cuts. So --

Amaka: So this -- has open admissions ended yet with your --

Orlando: No, no

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: This is like '96, '96. So '96 going into '97, you know, it's pretty much CUNY-wide rallies being called because it's significantly smaller than '95, so we in SLAM was asking question about (inaudible) you know. There was less student turnout so that everything, you know, was -- but SLAM does a lot of work on political prisoner work. We do a lot of work on researching. We do a lot of work on police brutality, so I think FIST and -- or SPM slash FIST depending on what it was called at the time. With SLAM and MXG, with the annual (inaudible), you know [racial justice league?] was like all of us coming together against racial violence and police brutality. And it was always (inaudible) the trigger or something, and one of the biggest mentors we all had was Richard Perez, who pretty much was like the Malcolm X of the Puerto Rican community, more contemporary. But he was almost -- he was pretty much the same like, you know, raw with his rhetoric. It's cool. We had the rhetoric too, but you don't take over city hall. You vote (inaudible). And that was very practical, and some of us in SPM, FIST, SLAM, dual memberships all of us, were actually going by him during the summers, and although our organizations didn't really do civic engagement, the student engagement came from working from him. So, so we (inaudible) from Harlem (inaudible) back when Charles Baron was not even an elected official yet.

Amaka: Oh okay.

Orlando: Yeah, but working for Richard.

Amaka: What was, what was the -- what was the work? Like, what did he employ you guys to do?

Orlando: Oh, just registering voters.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: And also -

Amaka: He wasn't elected though. It was just, he had his own registration?

Orlando: Yeah, yeah, Charles?

Amaka: No, no, no, no, Richie.

Orlando: The National Congress of Puerto Rico has it's (inaudible), but he was the political director for the community service society.

Amaka: Oh okay.

Orlando: On 23rd Street, so that was kind of like the hub of that same voice, right, like employee (inaudible) the community programs there, and afterwards the fight began. We did the community work. There were secret meetings. I'd have to find them. Coalitions would start using their spaces, but 9:00 to 5:00 the community service society, like, non-profit support work and services.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: Yeah. And then -- but, but it was a lot of -- like there's a lot of education that took place after. You know, not at the SLAM meetings and at the SPM meeting, (inaudible) civic engagement with the (inaudible) got us into a lot of spaces where (inaudible) would talk (inaudible), and that helped me later with another formation called the

(inaudible). We didn't even mention it, which -- which pretty much was about civic engagement, pretty much. But SLAM started also getting more involved like with prison industrial complex because one of the mentors from the Panther collective got hired as a SLAM office manager.

Amaka: Uh-huh, so that's Kai

Orlando:Kai. So her and her partner at the time Ashante Alston pretty much became like the de facto SLAM political mother and father, right. So, so it's funny that me and Kai and Ashante, I don't go back as far as they go, but we went back far enough for -- (inaudible). We went back to '93 Black Panther collective in Harlem before any SPM, SLAM, CUNY Coalition, and it's -- so I thought there was like this, you know, this relationship like, I was like -- oh, and then he also brought this thing that -- actually it's funny. They got kicked out the Black Panther Collective.

Amaka: Kai and Ashante?

Orlando:Yeah, because, because their experiences after the Panther party got them into anti-authoritarian (inaudible) politics, which also Kai, [01:40:00] as a woman's feminist had a lot of critiques on the brothers in the Panthers with just -- with all kind of crazy ways. Then when she left, her and Ashante were expelled. (inaudible) And that made her a perfect fit for SLAM because everything they were talking about was like -- oh, I forgot another organization. SLAM '96, SLAM started by SPM, STAND, and then a white (inaudible) organization (inaudible).

Amaka: (inaudible), yeah.

Orlando:And Christopher Gunderson was a part of (inaudible), and I would paint them, all those SPM and STAND got slam up off the ground. I was thinking there's a bridge between before they took over student government. (inaudible) played a significant role in -- with this parented as a group with was around longer than STAND and SPM, and then (inaudible), political education, (inaudible) goals like (inaudible), you know. So another (inaudible). I forgot about them, but just thinking of Kai and Ashante and all that, oh yeah --

Amaka: The -- yeah, uh-huh.

Orlando:So Kai and Ashante were anti-authoritarian and anarchist, gave us more experiences, and this was SLAM but also with FIST and MXG, this critique of the traditional black (inaudible) authoritarian and sexist, and, and that, I think, was very (inaudible) to shaping SLAM. Like, SLAM, to me was the -- out of any other group on (inaudible) to the political side, it is the most progressive, SLAM, because it placed (inaudible) as the subject, and I always thought that the best group to be in was the group with the most radical women, and SLAM had that over the other groups. Like, so SLAM had women getting arrested twice in one day, right. Like, the women who led SLAM, and (inaudible) and the brothers felt that, which was part of the politics at the time.

Amaka: Who -- would you describe some of the women in leadership in SLAM?

Orlando:Capable, I would say they're very capable, confident. I think some of them had a very good support system to help them. I think some of them may have more support outside of SLAM because I think SLAM also had this thing that I -- some of us didn't -- like I didn't have -- like I didn't have the whole (inaudible), you know, so, you know, maybe my daughter will. I don't know. But I didn't have that, and some of us in FIST didn't have that either. So it's almost like this thing where it's like where it's like it was like the (inaudible). Like we actually knew each other going back to the (inaudible).

Amaka: So who were those people?

Orlando:(inaudible), I think to a degree also (inaudible) Rachel Laforest Kazembe. I know some other people that I haven't seen in a long time that was a part of that too, Nina. (inaudible) was not, but she was very (inaudible) administrative leave. Liam, who was the manager of this group called Earth (inaudible). There was a few.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: There was a few. So that was it -- all social -- but I don't think anybody internalized anything, but it just was something where if you get reinforcement at home -- while some of us are struggling with our own parents, asking why we're involved with this thing (inaudible) of us who have parents encouraging. And it just so happens that group had that at home, grew up with it, you know, saw [01:45:00] mommy and daddy (inaudible) programmed to be this, right. So --

Amaka: How would you describe SLAM's look? Like, was SLAM at Hunter? How would you describe them socially?

Orlando: Socially?

Amaka: Yeah, like, you know, were you organized (inaudible) are your friends, you hang out with them, you all kick it, all that type of stuff? How would you describe them in regards to --

Orlando: It was political and personal, so, so SLAM only had two student governments, and it pretty much (inaudible) campuses (inaudible) earlier, but pretty much it went, you know, to Hunter. Hunter's culture was very social. People were friends. It was not just I'm going to this rally. I'm hanging out with my friends. And some people were hanging around for that. But then again, that's how it was at (inaudible), like, people just naturally gravitate. This is where the cool kids are. That's where I'm going to be. (inaudible) women to (inaudible) women that were empowering to other women, and women who needed that empowerment gravitated towards them. They stuck around as part of (inaudible). There were also brothers who liked girls who naturally gravitated towards that circle because that's where the girls were. And then the girls who liked other girls gravitated there too. So it was politics, but it was a party.

Amaka: Yeah.

Orlando: You know, and we're talking about, you know, 18 to their late twenties, so it could be anything from -- so, so I mean, it's kind of funny. Sometimes I watch "Real World," and so I watch "Real World," well, you know, it's like, (inaudible).

Amaka: Oh Lord, so that didn't produce any drama? You know, sometimes when you have those faces and your friends and folks are dating and you know talking, that didn't create any tension or nothing?

Orlando: Nothing because I think the politics kind of like instilled in us this being on criticism and self-criticism, so even though people broke up, they had their thing based on the politics. (inaudible) politic tools transferring into personal tools, so it wasn't so bad. There were some cases where it was bad, but I don't know. It wasn't too bad. I mean, one brother was like a womanizer, and then he was just going out (inaudible), you know, bad but not too bad because it wasn't like -- like, he still stuck around (inaudible). They broke up, but the place is still organized and still were friends. So for me at Baruch it was like, wow, this is this culture of Hunter, and hey, (inaudible) business school. So I found myself gravitating more and more towards hanging out with Hunter and (inaudible) people at Baruch went to Hunter to see if they could bring some of that back to Baruch, the Baruch part conservative business school. You could get students on some, some black nationalist, you know, like particularly to socialism where they came from a socialist country where their grandmother's (inaudible), so, you know, it's kind of like hard to have these conversations, right.

Amaka: Yeah, yeah, that's rough.

Orlando: You know, but you get them on, oh, let's have some (inaudible). You could do that, right. You can integrate that into -- but then that was competitive too, at the same time. You get them into the CUNY stuff, and they know -- and students are organized around that or mobilizing around that will just come to a party slash rally, right, but then FIST is interested at the same time, recruiting the same students into community work. (inaudible) that little space that was (inaudible) with the same people we had in common. But it never got -- people just gravitated towards what they wanted to go to. It was just that, so Baruch got students coming out to CUNY Coalition stuff, yeah.

Amaka: All right.

Orlando: What did pop up -- one of the best things that popped up was SLAM going to the Critical Resistance Conference in '98. They met up with STORM for the first time. That was great, and I wasn't even going to meet up with [01:50:00] (inaudible), but those who met up with some people in New York, and he just didn't have time, and he --

Amaka: Do you remember any of the people in STORM that you guys met up with?

Orlando: Harmony, (inaudible), I don't remember meeting him at that time. I met him later on, and some other individual. I forgot. I can't remember his name right now, but he's not, but he's not (inaudible). And there was this -- at some point there was a discussion with some type of national merger or --

Amaka: Jed?

Orlando: Not Jed, but Jed was at the meetings too, yeah, but there was a discussion on some kind of national merger or national relationship between STORM and SLAM. I think it happened through the police brutality project. But we pretty much came up the same way, and pretty much, if you look at the -- there's something -- they kind of had some of the same issues we had at the same time. (inaudible), yeah, that's an example of us coming out there, explaining who we are as part of (inaudible), black nationalists, feminists, socialism and everything, so as (inaudible) or whatever we are we're going to work it out together, right. We're in the same room; we're not split off into those five different identities (inaudible). And I think that's one of the most -- that's one of the bigger -- I wish (inaudible) again. But immediately afterward we were attacked. (inaudible) that held left years ago (inaudible) about us, seeing that we were (inaudible).

Amaka: So (inaudible)?

Orlando: Sparks?

Amaka: Oh, Sparks did, okay, saying that who was like - the critical resistance --

Orlando: SLAM.

Amaka: Oh SLAM, okay.

Orlando: We got out there. We're young people of color, black, Latino, you know, popular and networking, you know. We had at least somebody in every room talking about what we do (inaudible). And then they come out saying, "Oh, their group's" -- this was in the paper. It was actually -- they saw us (inaudible), type some shit up. "Who's the group from New York?" (inaudible) Really, it's like that, for real? So then it was like, oh, we got to talk. So we went to their office, (inaudible). I think they just wanted to talk. Some of us were a little more hotheaded, and we trashed their office.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: Yeah, like, we trashed their office, you know. It felt good, but in hindsight like, maybe that wasn't the best thing to do, but at the same time it happened. Shit happens, sorry.

Amaka: Yeah, yeah,

Orlando: You know, so we trashed their Berkeley office with them in it. So --

Amaka: Their Berkeley office?

Orlando: Yeah.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: Yeah, so it was their Berkley office. So, you know, (inaudible) whatever, find the papers, took it. (inaudible) all that, and then at the end hold hands (inaudible) god forgive us or some mafia shit, you know. They have that line from the movie. It was like The Godfather, I pray to God for a bike, but instead I stole it and asked forgiveness later. I know it don't work that way. I know god isn't going to give me a bike. So that's what we did. It was a bonding experience. It was led by the sisters, you know. It took one sister to start the ruckus, but (inaudible) come in like, yeah, let's do it.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: We were like, yeah, okay, okay, (inaudible), and they had a stigma about us or whatever. And they might have written something about us. I think there might have been a meeting with the New York rep with that group with some SLAM people. I didn't -- I personally paid no mind to it, but whatever. What are you going to do? You know, (inaudible) focus on everything. So, so maybe some of the folks who (inaudible). But I wasn't going to be a part of that meeting considering what some homeboy told to me, somebody talking about (inaudible), shit like that.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: Yeah.

Amaka: So at this point, which -- I mean, are all the SLAM chapters that -- they were really active at this point?

Orlando: Hunter and [SUNY?], Hunter and City, and there was always the same question of, where are the white folks? [01:55:00] Specifically -- in general our white folks in (inaudible) specific like -- like it just wasn't -- there weren't any (inaudible). I don't know why. There's different reasons, (inaudible), prison industrial complex, economic responsibility. Maybe it was like a space for some black males who just thought it odd that it was a multiracial, [multi-tendency?], and had homosexuals and (inaudible) transgender people and feminists (inaudible). You know, I think that (inaudible), you know, especially coming out of a community where you have (inaudible) influence, so that just (inaudible). We knew how to deal with that, so that's '98. We're moving to '99, so from the end of '96 to '99 we start seeing militarization on campus, but we called it that, but it was like a low militarization, but now the campus security that we -- what we came up with now were trained police officers. They can carry guns. And so then the questions like, now you can get shot at while you're on campus or whatever. And then they had access to dorms now, and now at Soul Survivor parties and (inaudible) parties they were now coming Friday nights with the under covers (inaudible) them, right, to our parties now. And it was like, wow, you know, and that plays a toll on people. It's like, if you're with them you're in trouble, and it's like those are the type of things that Baruch was like that, you know. And then you just had some odd stuff like, you know, but (inaudible) comrades (inaudible) and at Baruch would also (inaudible), you know. She was getting approached by security, you know. You're GPA is this. And (inaudible) too long it'll be like this, you know. (inaudible) like that type of shit, you know. And then like one point (inaudible) Baruch was a public campus, so in '98 I wasn't enrolled in school. I was still on campus in the newspaper and organizing Black History Month. So first month into the semester I was in the school paper, editor of the paper, and I liked -- it was Black History Month. Let's make the first issue of the school paper into like (inaudible) black (inaudible) paper, right. So we didn't (inaudible) black paper cartoons, like we took campus and (inaudible) cartoons and redid them and just changed them into faces and stuff around and made them contemporary, and one of the brothers that was on my team at the time, the editor -- became the editor for the (inaudible) (inaudible). And so going into that month, that week we were organizing Black History Month (inaudible), and we showed a documentary on Panthers, and then immediately after that when we got to the student office, you know, security stops me and say "You're not enrolled." But in a public university I can have access because I have business on campus. "You're not allowed on campus." "I'm not allowed on campus? What happened? (inaudible)" "You're not allowed on campus. We're to arrest you for trespassing." Oh, you're like that, all right. So, you know, I remember my girlfriend at the time was like, yo, just get my stuff, and go off. It's like; I can't believe this stuff is going on. So and then that was odd too, you know, first you're dealing with '95 arrests (inaudible). Now one of the more public campus leaders is now threatened to be arrested for trespassing. They put my photo on the entrance, by every group entrance.

Amaka: Wow.

Orlando: They're going around campus. So at that point anybody with dreads or an afro that looked similar to me, "What you all doing?" [02:00:00]

Amaka: Wow.

Orlando: And (inaudible). I go, what the hell? Like, and that time Baruch wasn't even active as Hunter.

Amaka: Hunter or CUNY, right.

Orlando: Yeah, (inaudible), so, so now it's like this, this contentious thing where there's this harassment, you know, for showing up on campus, and I'm to be arrested for trespassing, you know. And so now that I'm disconnected from campus (inaudible) where, where (inaudible) try to do the best that they could and maintain their social life, so then that starts rolling down, and then, and then I was like, huh, now it's like I'm (inaudible). I have this extra time. So I go down and start talking to folks like, what's the best thing I can do with my time now because I don't have this many hours any more to be on Baruch's campus. And I don't know how much I can help them outside of, you know, the care around the corner, you know, and going over to that. I'm thinking maybe you guys should start leading stuff on your own and at least use it as a test run period where you guys can just (inaudible). So then I use the time period. We actually were thinking of -- we actually -- I met with some other students, and I was -- I (inaudible) at City College, their student government, and then I was thinking, all right, we're going to start with citywide student power. So I have this free time on my hands. I'm working part time. I'm going to use my hours on Monday 9:00 to 5:00 going to every (inaudible) campus (inaudible) and start (inaudible). And we took the lead from STORM. They had a soul school.

Amaka: They had a what?

Orlando: Soul school, students organizing ... liberation.

Amaka: Yeah, yeah.

Orlando: We were trying to have soul (inaudible), and we have so much jobs to do (inaudible) with Erica to do a (inaudible) event. And it's like a second transition because like we were like (inaudible), and that happened during the time period like '98, we were going through that (inaudible), but now there's another (inaudible) four-year student body's changed. And it's (inaudible), except for me though, I'm part time, right, so I'm here the whole time. And so we have (inaudible) Baruch in support, but not really active anymore. Like they came but they didn't really organize anything. But (inaudible) city group, and that was pretty small to get those students back, so SUNY, (inaudible), so black soul, whatever that group's called. VSU Soul, that's what they themselves. (inaudible) yeah, and then transition into Million Youth March organizing.

Amaka: Okay, yeah.

Orlando: So it translated to that too. So then while that's going on I organized a student government (inaudible) at Baruch. I'm not even allowed on their campus, but I'm thinking we can do at Baruch what is going on at Hunter. Let's take what we have left and just do it, right, so I came into run, but I start writing articles and speeches, right. So then I have the articles written highlighting the candidates, and (inaudible) slips them all in, and we start learning student surveys outside the school at the same time. And we win the election by a landslide. Like almost like 70-30. Like --

Amaka: So is it a full slate or is it just --

Orlando: We had -- at the time it was student government (inaudible) very much (inaudible) career oriented students coming out of the Jewish student organization, coming out of the Asian club, very active students, but pretty much career oriented. [02:05:00] And so one of them actually returned to the Brown and black vote, and it was a full slate -- no, it was partial. People working in part of the counsel, yeah, and then later recruited more from the Caribbean (inaudible) student clubs to fill them in, and I wasn't around for that. I was around to get (inaudible). I wasn't around for that, but we did a great job in terms of flipping it back to black and Brown. And then we tried to maintain that social, I guess, (inaudible) for a couple years. So then it got to that point where it was like I'm

working full time now. I waited for some ex-panthers because I actually had (inaudible) for college. I was working with Ashante and his program for women on welfare, welfare -- oh, welfare (inaudible) were transitioning to full time employment, so we could -- job skills. And then brothers getting out of prison were doing a provisional driver's license and work skills, so trying to get them to employment (inaudible). So that program lost grant funding, and it got to the point where it was like, I have to get back to school and graduate for my family. And all of a sudden Baruch just wasn't that space for me. Like, I didn't have -- the personal backup I wanted at Baruch. Like politically, the political activities were distracting from (inaudible). So in the end then I was involved in that. (inaudible), like why am I --

Amaka: They were on you, yeah.

Orlando: They were on me, and I'm (inaudible). It's like, what am I doing this for? So I just, you know, clean slate, went to City College, no activity. Why try? And then just graduated (inaudible), and then some of us from the black student soul group would (inaudible) but then the war -- but then 9/11 happened 2000 -- but then the potential war in Iraq, which did happen. (inaudible) At that point SLAM was like (inaudible). Like, SLAM was like third generation college student took over, and this is a new generation, and they're still trying to get off the ground. FIST was --

Amaka: This is still SLAM mostly on Hunter because the one in City College had --

Orlando: More like a graduate student SLAM.

Amaka: Right.

Orlando: And then SLAM at Hunter was, yes, third generation SLAM, not like the previous two generations before it. This is a generation four years instead of 25. It was probably less engaged.

Amaka: Yeah, how would you describe the different generations of SLAM?

Orlando: First generation was experienced.

Amaka: Overall they're red diaper babies?

Orlando: (inaudible) red diaper babies coming in with some type of experience they already brought in, but there was something that they had, bring it into it. Second generation was a merge of a new and that old meeting, and then third was this new group that didn't have any older groups really evolve with them. And I think they could have still have kept on winning student government, but I think something happened around mid-2003 where the demographics started changing. And then the campus president or campus (inaudible) honor group and ran that honor group this way and even changed the election to where it was computerized and actually gave people laptops to vote for the honor group. And it's like people are trying (inaudible) and win that way. And then SLAM tried to recover, but it's never recovered as a campus group, and then that was just (inaudible). That's (inaudible) from '96 -- the (inaudible) in '96 to '90 -- to 2002. It's the same period the Panthers had run from like '65 to '71 before this group. I mean, I don't think our groups last too long against the window. I think we -- a lot of people were (inaudible) with some other folks (inaudible) influence on [02:10:00] the Occupy movement.

Amaka: Right and Dave was in there too.

Orlando: (inaudible)

Amaka: So can you speak to, I guess, after you graduate, like you say, you were involved in the convention. Can you talk about your participation in the convention and yeah?

Orlando: Yeah, so, so against the war I had a reachable (inaudible) more like (inaudible). Leadership became (inaudible), right. So from the black people against the war are brought in. Maybe there was like a couple months period where John Kim was talking about this thing that this brother from MXG was starting called (inaudible). And John --

Amaka: Who from MXG?

Orlando: Bonnie Wilson?

Amaka: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Orlando: And then John was like messing around (inaudible) Asian focus (inaudible), and since you're .5 Asian (inaudible). I'm down, man, whatever. So then we call the Asian caucus, but then the numbers didn't come out, so then this became the New York group organizing (inaudible) which was -- which just attracted a range of black nationalists and Latinos and everybody else. So from that political point in the very beginning I played more of a (inaudible) role (inaudible). We brought in a lot of people. He thought our strength was not recruiting people into (inaudible), but our strength was in recruiting already existing organizations and just making them a part of it and (inaudible). And I think part of the buy in was people still did their work in the organization, but I played more of a [coronation?] role where they didn't have to leave their group or spend hours away doing separate work. But I would play the (inaudible) role (inaudible), organizing meetings, minutes. Then (inaudible) until we go over to this convention. It was beautiful. There's 6,000 people coming out, 22, 24, states.

Amaka: Is this one, what, Jersey, which one is this?

Orlando: New Jersey, we meet people that were a part of a historic (inaudible). SLAM offshoot, (inaudible) offshoot, (inaudible), right.

Amaka: You were the (inaudible) option.

Orlando: But Terry Marshall was like a STORM Bay area offshoot. Liz Darius was like a STORM offshoot. A STORM offshoot it says that they were connected to the Soul (inaudible). That was still functioning. That was started by STORM. I don't think they had a direct relationship to the actual STORM organization disbanded by that time. And then, then we eventually had a split -- this was the start, and the split was -- it was two splits along the lines of community activists versus those in academia, and the other split was based off of who wanted to work with Russell Simmons, right, right, something stupid, right. I know like because like Bush is a bigger image than Russell Simmons at the time. Russell Simmons (inaudible), yeah, so. So that was the leadership at the time, while we were in (inaudible). So they (inaudible) to the [hip-hop?] convention, and the national hip-hop political association that existed at the same time. When that was happening we noticed another organization, the historic voters (inaudible) young voters inserting themselves into the hip-hop convention's local chapters. And with the hip-hop convention leadership split, that was when they took advantage, you know. Their membership grew. They're supposed to be a partnership because the hip-hop convention was really the old young, black, nationalist, Puerto Rican youth organizing a convention for each other. But they through hip-hop in [02:15:00] instead of black nationalist youth, you get more people. And then the (inaudible) voters was like (inaudible). So it was kind of like fighting and (inaudible) going into the same funders, one after the other, pretty much asking for the same thing, except (inaudible) billed themselves as, you know, (inaudible). It was almost like a partnership, but it didn't work out that way, so, so hip-hop convention split. New York stays neutral to both parties. We didn't want to play that game, so we (inaudible) to both of you all or none of you all, but we still the main (inaudible). And then the league has been turning to other groups except for us, actually, (inaudible) too. And then (inaudible) whether it's away until there was a meeting a year later where they started inviting groups. By that time the league was in everything. Then they got money, and they were pulling people in to work, so they weren't too (inaudible). They had a member in the (inaudible), but they didn't control (inaudible).

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando: And so we heard about the meeting by accident, and we heard about it by accident because the member in our group, his (inaudible) told somebody on the train, (inaudible) that meeting that they were going to the hip-hop convention national conference retreat. I was like, oh, that's interesting that you bring it up. And then the question of, well, (inaudible) in New York? Right, oh, they told me I should go. Oh yeah, so you're representing the area because somebody told you from outside of New York that (inaudible) in New York. New York is in New York. Mind you we have democratically elected leadership in the coalition. All of a sudden now you represent (inaudible).

So then I call Rosa, who was one of the founders of the (inaudible) at Baruch. "You know what happened?" She was real angry because by that time the, the (inaudible) were not talking in a year over that spring, and so -- but she was (inaudible). And then I call (inaudible), and then -- no, then it gets back to him. And (inaudible) calls me, right. "Hey, man, there's a meeting now. You should come." "Okay, let me get back to my group on who they think should go. We'll send somebody." So I get elected to go. And then it's this big national meeting, and I think we were probably one of the only independent, local organizers (inaudible) from '06, '04 -- '04, and everybody was like some kind of (inaudible).

Amaka: So what meeting -- is this Vegas? What meeting is this?

Orlando: No, this is not Vegas. This is Atlanta, Georgia, Atlanta, Georgia. And so then we break down into caucuses. This is like three days. The reformation of the national hip-hop group (inaudible). And then, and then in one of the (inaudible) the sister that was part of the league (inaudible) league, I was told that she was the New York rep, was (inaudible) to our policies. And then I was actually urged by the (inaudible) "Orlando, we elected you to be our rep. You need to say at the meeting that you're the only New York rep, and don't let other groups take advantage of us." So I stated it. She got upset. Some other people in the room were upset that I said that, you know. And all of a sudden, you know, I think people got there to this league versus black nationalism, but so, so, so me and her are friends, by the way, you know. But at that point the friendship ended. (inaudible) She apologized. She didn't realize she was being used by the organization to play that type of role, you know. But so that brought notice to like the (inaudible) national black (inaudible), you know, for (inaudible). And I think convention (inaudible) like bringing more support through (inaudible) convention that were away from the league. So this ongoing dialogue of being independent from the league when the convention started, [02:20:00] we started that until it became this thing where you hold six conventions in Chicago. We have a meeting with the league that had -- pretty much saying, you guys have to back off. This is our thing. We're independent of you. If you guys want to deal with us don't go around us through your members and our different [LOCs?]. Go to our (inaudible). If you can't reach him go to Angela because -- that we became (inaudible). They knew. It was fine. "Oh yeah, sure, nobody's doing anything bad here. Yeah, sure, right." So, so then that was that. So while that was going on I had this dual role of (inaudible) local -- organize the community. So now I'm part of this new national (inaudible), and I get elected as the national treasurer, and I beat out this new person, you know. She didn't get the role, and she left the organization, and then the funny thing was New York was the main group that maintained its, it's organization after we became -- nobody else did. Everybody else had to reorganize their (inaudible), you know. We even had members in -- and we had somebody from another LOC chair admit to me that he took that role from somebody else who started a chapter in the state, but just because he felt like he could do that. Like, really, wow, like this façade of like, we're this national organization, and everybody's democratically elected, but only LOC is actually real, not tied to the local chapter of (inaudible). And everybody else was trying to respond still. So that was like our weak (inaudible) New York. We had an actual LOC that never stopped organizing first. And we had people with who were going as experience. And then so the (inaudible) convention came, you know, it was mid-four year, middle -- you know, not presidential election, small turn out, but still successful by standards, you know, 2,500 people came out. I think about, maybe the '06 convention to the '06 (inaudible) we nationally raised to about a quarter of a million voters. I think that we -- our contribution was that we eventually (inaudible) to a lot of voters and we gave them for campaign (inaudible) support with the Obama campaign. I think we were one of the groups that played that role. And one of our political education classes in (inaudible) was that we noticed that the funders of the democratic party were (inaudible) away from any type of party that formed any of these progressive (inaudible) spaces. So we turned the found money, we saw that contribution and were like, listen, there's opportunity in, you know, if we don't insert ourselves into a (inaudible) convention or whatever's going to (inaudible), things are going to -- the money's going to go to somebody, (inaudible) people. It'll be on stupid (inaudible) thing. So, you know, some of us with the (inaudible) SLAM and other spaces that we ought to assert ourselves as an intervention to make sure (inaudible) come back. And so what's the point of anybody even joining? And let's make sure that that doesn't happen, but at the same time it's competing against the league, we don't have that radical analysis like the -- there's a, there's a, there's a strong analysis but not necessarily that --

Amaka: Progressive.

Orlando: Right, right, it's not -- yeah. I think the individuals have it, but just not the (inaudible), you know. So, so that was -- that was the context of why we asserted ourselves. And then the (inaudible) convention, and then going into '08, (inaudible) was like, you know what, we don't know when (inaudible) going right now, so some of us

(inaudible), so we -- so we started (inaudible) -- we started working with two other goals. There was the tsunami storm where there was the tsunami disaster in Indonesia, and so, and so we inserted ourselves into that movement at the time by actually joining the group that was supposed to be (inaudible), Asian with (inaudible) and some other folks [02:25:00] and Rosa. So we had this campaign (inaudible) to fire people or whatever. We did do work around (inaudible). Like, we do work where we join the coalition, provide support services, and coordinate the support (inaudible) that used that were in New York and were pretty much living month to month potentially losing their benefits. And we did work with the revitalization of the (inaudible). So we inserted ourselves into cluster of all those local things. And then we're thinking of on another organization because (inaudible) convention (inaudible), and so we started what we called Hip Hop Sustains. And we did the world's first solar powered hip-hop concert at the UN social forum in '07 in LA. And so, you know, it's pretty much music, hip-hop (inaudible) educated on economic and environmental sustainability. That then materialized as a business, but I still, still actually discuss it now to reassert that. But after the experiences at the convention, going to Albany we had some issues with funding. And the issues -- one of the issues with funding was that one (inaudible) -- one set of funders supporter Hillary Clinton, and one of the supported Obama going into the convention. And we couldn't make a decision going into our convention who was going to fund us or not because (inaudible) a whole bunch of black kids, and we're not kids anymore. And we would look like we're going to support Hillary (inaudible), right. So I remember one weekend by myself I submitted 24 applications to this one funder to transmission the hip-hop convention from a 501(c)(3) to a 501(c)(4) where we could become something to a support political candidates. By the way, that funded pulled, the (inaudible) the funding station said, we're kind of shifting our funding focus to women in voting.

Amaka: Oh.

Orlando: Yeah, so that (inaudible) because we were actually thinking of the hip-hop convention 501(c)(3) going into three other -- two other components, an economic one and a (c)(4) (inaudible). And both of those things never happened. And then the convention started having -- well, that's the, that's the external. Internal contradictions with the convention was that it was a final way of (inaudible) and (inaudible). And there was an issue with ethics, board of ethics, more ethics than political, but then ethics is political too. So without naming names, we started seeing individuals putting themselves on -- like putting a picture of themselves on a banner of the convention on the website.

Amaka: Self-promotion.

Orlando: Self-promotion, there was a person that was voted -- we had two chairs, but we had an internal chair and an external chair. The external chair was supposed to deal with external organizations, and that became the chairman of the organization. And now was working behind the scenes with replacing local organizing committees that didn't vote [fiscally?] 100 percent, with recruitment of people in inner cities before being overrun in that community. With the New York and New Jersey east coast team, and which -- why we did not attend the 2008 convention or endorse it is that he was going to hold a national election in Vegas with his people here to replace me. And so that with antagonisms facilitated by [02:30:00] a party of his in another state where it created contention between student committee and then things organizing community to the point it got ugly, to the point where it was like New York, pretty much New Jersey, pretty much pulled out from going to work for that 2000 convention. But that's why the 2000 convention was very close, you know. It was almost like, why go to that convention to have this happen? And people put in work for that convention for you to set us up for that (inaudible). So it was like a Kung Fu thing. It was a Kung Fu thing where it was like I'm not going to fight you. I'm just going to move out of the way while you punch yourself.

Amaka: Yeah, yeah.

Orlando: And that was the Kung Fu move, so that's what happened. Why deal with that?

Amaka: Have you done -- I mean, have you been involved in political work since the convention at all?

Orlando Green: (inaudible) convention up to the point where (inaudible) stuff like political mission like the peoples of justice (inaudible), I support them, do work, and I do education stuff. I haven't been involved in (inaudible), but I've been interested like helping the stuff, like (inaudible), and I'll just vote it, you know. I'll post a headline on Twitter or Facebook, but political prisoner work. But then I was just doing other stuff too. Like, like (inaudible)

convention I was so tired of myself (inaudible). (inaudible) in Harlem, (inaudible) in [Ghana?], so it was my work that (inaudible) sustainability long term like political education on all that, African American. So I helped get that project (inaudible). That's pretty much, that's pretty much it. I'll support people doing stuff. Right now, you know, I've just need to focus on family, you know, relationship with my wife is probably the most important thing that I can probably do (inaudible) family. We have children. And I think that's just as much a part of the (inaudible) work as all the other stuff. If I -- because my wife (inaudible) we're a black family, but out of all our friends we're the only ones that are married, and out of the ones that have kids (inaudible) we're the only ones who got married and then had kids. So I'm happy (inaudible) and all the kind of stuff that goes on with that. And so family being first, the root of (inaudible) is like (inaudible) thing you can do. Yeah, so that's how I see it. Before you can do any organization like that for me I got to make sure the family's all right, then my work.

Amaka: What -- is there -- and I guess it's like really the last question I'll ask, what do you see -- (inaudible) the period that you were involved with SLAM and Student Power Movement, like, what lessons did you take form that experience, and what do you think the significance of that period was?

Orlando: I learned that people with different politically [identities? legacies?] can work together. You know, some of the newbies coming out don't see that, but I saw it. But I've seen people (inaudible), you know, straight, pansexual, black nationalist, (inaudible), you know, sit in a room, you know, with feminists and work on things together without necessarily compromising too much who you are. And I think that's an important lesson when (inaudible) of society (inaudible) capitalism scares me. Some folks will split. Others (inaudible). One of the things I learned (inaudible) from SLAM was that you have to put (inaudible) at the center, particularly people of color. That might be hard for some Black nationalists, but (inaudible). I think it's very (inaudible). It actually makes sense, and I think if you don't do [02:35:00] that (inaudible) there is no move because the movement is structures in a capitalist white [supremacist?] society, and (inaudible) is just -- it's how it looks like. It looks like this where it's -- we have a gentleman everybody goes to, and as a black person you have to go to the black caucus, which we separate from the gentlemen. That's one thing. You have to separate them. If you're a black (inaudible) then you go to both. (inaudible) And whatever attendance you have you have (inaudible) meeting. Black (inaudible) guys only go to one meeting. White people (inaudible). Everybody else does just (inaudible), and that's the structure of the meeting. The structure -- like, like I've seen a lot of -- inserted myself into the working class more so than as a student. Since I was a student I (inaudible) offices work, and it's a lot of wasteful work in the movement because we're navigating around white supremacy and heterosexism. When you place women of color in the center you kind of cheat, like, (inaudible) means for the most (inaudible) people to have. To exhaust hours and get burnt out of the movement after three or four or five years, and sometimes we never come back from that. I think that's where extremely -- they still just did that once at the -- the (inaudible) convention was part of part of the (inaudible) against us, what he did, and the only thing that happened was he broke that into the black caucus. And it was like, why would you run the black caucus when the white folks don't have a white caucus? That's designed to burn us out. I mean, there are things we have to deal with, but it's still in the action to, them still being the same. So I think from a series of organization models to the (inaudible) from SLAM, I think STORM had that as well. If we're going to have a movement we have to start looking at what type of models are organizations using, especially a multiracial organization. We have to go to work. If not, the same black and Brown folks are going to burn out, male or female. You know, you can have a situation where -- Chris D, right, we were talking, and my question, you know, you could ask. It was your question, but how can he (inaudible) involving CUNY from '89, '91, '95 into the year 2000 what I see as a white male. I see no person of color (inaudible) like that, you know. He is privileged that he has (inaudible) do that, you know. Which is good because you have the history, you know to create because nobody of our folks has done that. He's the only one, you know. And I think because he's not (inaudible), and I'm pretty sure there's other people that would (inaudible) movements he wasn't in the beginning, but it's just about structure. It's something about structure, but I think people in the movement, they feel like, get the equivalent back now of someone with an MBA, you know, and critically look at the movement the way we look at corporations and just restructure it. And I think, you know, that's part of how we're going to win it though. Structure plays a big role in how we have our best people become the best people that they can be, yeah.

Amaka: Is there anything else that you want to say or emphasize? I don't have any more questions.

Orlando: I don't know anything else. I'm good.

Amaka: Okay.

Orlando:I'm good.

Amaka: Thank you so much. Very thorough. [02:39:26]

END OF AUDIO FILE

Orlando:-- campus organization, like, later on in the game a question of transitioning off campus for the older people. I was trying to move them to some kind of CUNY (inaudible), and now of all of a sudden SLAM was competing funding with its former partners in the community, like at MXG, (inaudible), and actually did not get funding because (inaudible). You know these were good comrades in the game, like, the 501(c) (3) (inaudible) is very bad with the intersection work, (inaudible). It doesn't want to fund that.

Amaka: Right.

Orlando:Right, so that's (inaudible), and two, with the hip-hop convention experience too coming off of SLAM's experience for that we saw that hip-hop convention competing for that. We believe in other groups [over and on us?] --

Amaka: Yeah.

Orlando:-- from liberal, and that's how we fit it all with the relationship we had with other (inaudible) organizations like hip-hop (inaudible), hip-hop -- I forgot the whole background --

Amaka: Who?

Orlando:Hip-hop (inaudible).

Amaka: Oh yeah, yeah, yea.

Orlando:Yeah, so even in contention with them where we didn't -- we didn't -- and other hip-hop groups at the time.

Amaka: So many, you know --

Orlando:That were spending (inaudible) convention because --

Amaka: Yeah, and there were so many -- I feel like after the convention all these different hip-hop national or political organizations started merging too.

Orlando:Yeah, but there was -- there was a need for them.

Amaka: Yeah.

Orlando:Yes, and then some of them don't have -- they don't have (inaudible), so it's just sometimes I think they're probably original (inaudible) because they didn't have the [suspended analysis?]. So yeah, so, so this is old in the Black Nationalist community, but the black national -- nationalist community is still [very?] aware. We need to have something that organizes our resources for our politics. And the politically left can look at that as (inaudible) but it's true. Any time you want to have (inaudible) that we need we need to have funding forces coming from us that doesn't force us to compromise to what (inaudible) want from us. Until we do that we're not -- I'm not somebody who says that's not going to happen (inaudible).

Amaka: [I will?], yeah, and I'm -- [00:02:51]

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