

CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ARCHIVES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Edray Goins
Part I

by Nivetha Karthikeyan
conducted over Zoom

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KARTHIKEYAN: This is Nivetha Karthikeyan, I'm here with Dr. Edray Goins. It is April 1st, 2021. We will be speaking about Dr. Goins' student experience, his experiences with activism and advocacy, and his time at Caltech, overall.

Let's start from the beginning. What made you apply to Caltech? What made you decide to enroll?

GOINS: I am from Los Angeles, I'm actually from South Central Los Angeles. And I had known about Caltech for years and years. You can't grow up in Los Angeles and not experience an earthquake, and if you experience an earthquake, the first thing that the local news says is, "At Caltech, the scientists say..." and then, you know, they talk about the magnitudes and what have you. So, anyone growing up in LA knows about Caltech. They may not know exactly where it is or what it does, but they definitely are aware of it.

Growing up there in LA, I had always had an interest in doing science and because I knew that Caltech was the place that science is done. I knew at a pretty early age I wanted to go to Caltech. We're probably talking age fourteen, fifteen, somewhere around there. Now again, I didn't really know where it was, I didn't know what it did. I just knew Caltech was where I wanted to go.

Fast forward now to my senior year (so this is fall 1989). I knew that I wanted to go into science. I really knew that I wanted to do physics. So my mind was made up that I was going to apply to two schools: I was going to apply to Caltech and apply to MIT.

Again, I didn't really know much about these schools. I just knew that this is where scientists go. This is where science is done.

Back then, there was no Internet, so you just couldn't like go online and search for these things. So, you literally had to find an application one way or the other. I sent off a postcard to MIT requesting an application. Ironically, what I received in the mail was an application from Caltech. To this day, I never received the application from MIT. It's probably just a mix up in terms of what happened with the postcard, but I received an application from Caltech. Went ahead and applied and got in.

The way I received this application (I didn't know this until months and months later) was the director of the equivalent of the Office of Minority Student Affairs was named Lee Browne. Lee Browne made it a point to learn of all of the top minority students in all of the major cities all throughout the country. So, he would just know who were the top two or three Black students in Los Angeles, the top two or three in Houston, the top two or three in Washington D.C. He would just have a list of these names, and he'd make it a point to send the application to these top

students. Most people don't know that that's how he got a lot of really good Black students to Caltech. He did the groundwork to find the names and he would send the applications out.

So I was, I guess, considered at the time as one of the top two Black students in the City of Los Angeles. So I received this application, not knowing at the time that this was directly because of Lee Browne. You know, I knew that I wanted to go to Caltech; at the time, I didn't really know how I was going to get my hands on an application. So it was just fortuitous that I received the application automatically.

No one else at my high school had even applied to Caltech. In fact, even worse than that, I don't think that any of the counselors in my high school even knew of anyone who even applied to Caltech. So, at the time, in 1989 when I was deciding on a school, trying to figure out where I wanted to apply to college, I told my high school guidance counselor that Caltech was my number one choice, by far. And I received this application in the mail, I was going to send it off, that's where I was going to go.

The high school counselor was very worried about me getting into Caltech. I think a lot of that was because she didn't know much about Caltech, and again, there was no track record of anyone even applying to the school, let alone getting in, let alone going there. So, she told me I had to have a back-up school and told me I should apply to USC. USC at the time was like 10 minutes away from where I went to high school, so it was a very known school there in the region. So I figured fine, I'll go ahead and apply.

Turns out that I really only applied to four schools when I applied to college: Caltech, Harvey Mudd, USC, and I believe it was either UCLA or UC Berkeley, I don't remember exactly which one of those two. I got into USC, but my mind was made up. There was no way I was going to go to USC (and that's a whole different conversation with myself). I decided I was not going to go there.

So that meant I debated between Harvey Mudd and Caltech. I looked at the profiles of both schools to ask things like: how large were the campuses? Meaning, how many students were there? How many faculty were there? Also, the diversity of the campuses – in particular, I was very concerned with how many Black students both schools had. And I realized that Harvey Mudd and Caltech were almost the same. You know, I don't remember the exact size – Caltech at the time, I know it's much larger now, had around 800 undergraduates, Harvey Mudd at the time I think had around maybe 700 or so undergraduates. I knew that Caltech had a PhD program; they had faculty doing research. I knew that Harvey Mudd was a lot more focused on undergraduate teaching, not so much on the research aspect. They definitely didn't have a PhD program. But what it came down to was the number of Black students. I think the numbers were comparable – and when we say comparable, we're talking something like 10 Black students out of a total of 800. So I knew that the numbers were going to be close to 0, but I made it a point to say if I'm going to go to a school where there's going to be no Black students at all, I might as well go to a school where I'll have the opportunity to do research, research with Nobel Prize winning faculty. So that's what caused me to decide to go to Caltech.

You know, certainly it was this very long journey of, you know, deciding that I wanted to go there, in the sense of being in junior high school and knowing about the campus, and then also getting the application in the mail. But I have to admit, it really came down to me looking at the number of Black students. And I really could have gone to Harvey Mudd. If Harvey Mudd had, I'd say, 10% or 15% of the Black population, I would have gone to Harvey Mudd. But just

because I knew that the numbers were smaller, I figured if I'm going to have to suffer, I'll just go ahead and do it at Caltech.

KARTHIKEYAN: That makes complete sense, and I think that's a calculus that so many students do in their senior year of high school as they're looking for where to spend the next four years.

Once you got onto campus, what were some of the communities that you joined that were important to you?

GOINS: So right away I wanted to learn about what was happening with the Black students. You know, in high school, I wasn't necessarily involved with the Black Student Union, but my high school was 99% Black anyway. So, you know, all the students were Black and a good number of the teachers were Black. It was more trying to figure out about the culture and where I could fit in.

Right when I got to campus, there were, I believe, somewhere around 14 Black students that were there as freshmen. So we all knew of each other. We didn't necessarily all come from the same kind of socio-economic background, but we certainly knew that there was a good cohort of Black students there. When I got to campus, there was a bridge type program – and a lot of the names of these programs have changed over the years – I believe at the time it was called maybe the Student Summer Program (SSP). That's merged into what's now called FSI, the Freshmen Summer Institute [now called the FRISI, the Freshmen Summer Research Institute]. So this was the precursor to all of that.

So I was in that program for the two months before classes started at Caltech, this was the summer before I started my freshman year. There, mostly it was the incoming freshmen who were minority students that were part of that group. So this is where, you know, we knew that there were roughly 14 Black students that were coming in freshman year. I'd say probably 10 of them were in the SSP, the Student Summer Program. So we all got to know each other pretty well. In fact, my closest friend was William Anderson, who actually turned out to be the top Black student from Washington D.C. And that's where we got to talk about, you know, how we both received applications in the mail and what have you. So he and I hit it off right away there in SSP and we became very good friends, very close friends, for most of the time that I was there at Caltech.

But I'll say that after those two months of doing SSP, a lot of us then started to wonder, can we form the equivalent of a Black Student Union? I'd say probably within the first couple of weeks of freshman year as we were going through rotation and then we did – what was the thing, it was almost like a retreat type thing that was a trip to Catalina Island? I don't think it's there anymore.

KARTHIKEYAN: Frosh camp?

GOINS: Yes, that's exactly right. Frosh camp. I kind of realized that something was off with the culture at Caltech. You know, there's essentially – now remember, there's something like around 200 students in the freshman class. Of those 200, around 10 to 15 were Black. And even if you went to the full 800 undergraduates, we're talking maybe 20-25 students were Black. And even if you go to the entire campus (we're talking undergraduates, PhD students, faculty, and even staff members) we're talking something around maybe 40 Blacks total.

Again, this is students, faculty, staff, out of something like 2,000-2,500. So we knew right away, something was weird with these numbers. So, we pretty much decided we were going to form something like a Black Student Union. And I remember a lot of this discussion was even there at frosh camp, but we were certainly all convinced by the end of rotation: this is something that we have to do.

So we started what was the equivalent of the BSU, the student chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers. I think our first official meeting wasn't until right around January of – let's see, that would be 1991. I said '93 earlier, but actually I was in high school in '89, that was my senior year. So 1991 was right about the first time we had that first meeting.

But that was pretty much my life for four years at Caltech, being a part of the NSBE chapter, establishing it, having meetings, trying to get other students involved with it. Almost all of my friends were involved there with NSBE. All the political activism that I did on campus was almost entirely through NSBE. That was basically where my life started, you know, first couple of weeks as a freshman.

But in a totally different axis, another thing I got involved with was Chamber Music. So, in high school, I was very much into playing the piano. I wasn't the best piano player, but it's something I was very interested in. So when I got to Caltech, I realized that they had this thing called Chamber Music. But it was something I had never done before. I had not done any performances in public. I really had not had any formal training in piano for at least ten years before I got to Caltech. I'd been trained when I was younger, but you know, in junior high school, in high school, I definitely had not gone through lessons.

So there at Caltech, I met Delores Bing, and I remember that I had to do an audition for her. That's how she decided who was going to play what instrument and would have you. I can't say that the audition was great, because again I'm certainly not the greatest pianist. And I think she was a little bit concerned, maybe, that I really had an interest in playing the piano, but there were a lot of really great pianists at Caltech. People that could have gone to Juilliard, but they decided to go to Caltech instead. So, she had to figure out, how do you place people who want to play the piano when there really are too many pianists?

So, I remember her telling me that she could put me in a group to play the piano, although she already had too many pianists, but what she really needed was someone to play the harpsichord. Because in Chamber Music, she had a lot of people that played, you know, violin, cello, flute. And a lot of the music that she had were earlier forms of music – Baroque, Renaissance, and all of these things. But she really didn't have anyone that played the instrument that should go along with those.

So, I remember her telling me that she'd have me play piano in a group, but she really wanted me to play harpsichord. I told her I didn't even know what a harpsichord was! So, that was the deal: I could play, but I had to learn the harpsichord. I had to play the harpsichord.

So, another aspect of my life was, I did Chamber Music for three years at Caltech. I played the piano *and* played the harpsichord, but in addition to playing the harpsichord – the harpsichord is a really finicky instrument, something like the violin. And if you play the violin, you have to learn how to tune the violin before you play it. Harpsichord is the same way, so I learned how to tune the harpsichord while there at Caltech.

The really cool thing is, before every concert, when they had to have the harpsichord featured, I was the one that tuned the harpsichord. It was really fun that that was a completely separate thing from being involved with student activism, but that was kind of the other aspect of my life – playing in Chamber Music concerts twice a year, practicing with at least two different groups, learning how to tune the harpsichord, listening to a lot of harpsichord music, reading books on things like harpsichord techniques. You know, it was just really fun just to be involved with Chamber Music for those three years.

KARTHIKEYAN: That's wonderful! I have several follow-ups, so let me go back to the summer that you spent with SSP. I believe that was the only summer that you overlapped in your time at Caltech with Lee Browne, whom you had mentioned. Am I correct in that?

GOINS: That's exactly right. Lee Browne officially retired in the summer of 1990. So what happened was, he admitted the class of students, you know, that applied '89-'90. So I was part of that last class of students that he admitted. And my understanding is that he could have been a very gruff individual, and he really pushed very hard to get his way. I think in maybe the 5-7 years before I even applied to Caltech, they were averaging maybe one Black student a year.

So I know that Lee Browne was very frustrated and that the admissions office was not doing a good job at all of admitting Black students. So, finally, I think out of a burst of anger – I wasn't there, I'm not completely sure – essentially, he went from 1-2 a year consistently for 5-7 years to admitting 14. So that was a major thing in the spring of 1990, when there were 14 Black students that were admitted. I sensed that was his last hurrah, that he admitted those students knowing he was going to retire, he was going to be done.

So that summer, he ran SSP, and we knew that he was going to retire. In fact, we even knew that there was going to be his replacement coming in at the end of that program. His replacement was going to be Eddie Grado, who was coming in from MIT.

In SSP, the big thing Lee Browne would do every year is, right at the start of the program – you have to understand, Lee Browne was not about having parties and socials and telling people Caltech will be a fun place and making sure that everybody is going to be happy in their time there. He made it very clear: Caltech is a harsh place. People have a very hard time, they have nervous breakdowns, they drop out of school, they get Cs and Ds in their classes. He was very, very clear Caltech is a harsh place, and you have to be ready for that.

So his big thing, very first day of SSP, is he would have all of us in the room. And he would tell students, "Look to your left, look to your right. Only one of you will be here at the end of four years."

Now, I think students can take that one of two ways. Nowadays, I think students would be very upset, saying that this guy is being incredibly racist and saying minority students can't make it at Caltech. Now, Lee Browne, himself, was Black. But still, you know, I think students would say that. A lot of us, though, realized that he was probably right. And we were not going to be one of those three – I should really say we were not going to be one of the two of the three that were going to drop out. So I do remember there being this sense of competition during SSP of which of us is going to make it by the end of the program? Which of us is really going to survive and graduate at the end of four years?

I can tell you, sadly, for me, Lee Browne was right. If you take a look at those 14 Black students that came in, only I believe 3 of us graduated at the end of four years, and then 2 more

graduated at the end of five years. The other 10 or so dropped out. They did not finish. So for him to say that only one out of three of you was going to make it – at least for the Black students, he was 100% on point.

It was certainly something to see Lee Browne as gruff as he was during SSP, but I can say for me at least, it worked. You know, I was never upset with Lee Browne. I definitely thought what he said was 100% right, but it also caused me to be very careful, to really think very carefully about the other Black students at Caltech – not just the 14 that came in in 1990, but the ones that came in in '91, '92, and what have you. So I was always cognizant of the fact, historically, the chances of the students making it is slim to none, we're talking 33%. So that's what really caused me to think very crucially, what do I need to do during my time at Caltech to make sure that the other Black students are also going to survive Caltech?

Yeah, but simply put, Lee Browne was there during the eight weeks that we did SSP. But again, we didn't have barbecues and socials, so I think I saw Lee Browne maybe three times during those eight weeks. It was simply, we went in, we had class. When we were done with class, we did homework. When we were done with homework, we went back to class the next day. But it was certainly not, you know, this thing where when some of us were feeling like we're overwhelmed with the homework, we would go into Lee Browne's office or that his office was the place to hang out. No, it was not. He made it very clear, you are here to do work, because if you don't do work, you're gonna get kicked out of Caltech.

So when he retired at the end of that, there was really no fanfare, no ceremony. He left, he did his thing, and then Eddie Grado started pretty much the next day. We saw Eddie there at Frosh Camp, but he was a very, very different person, different in every way you can possibly think of. But yeah, I was part of that last group that saw Lee Browne.

KARTHIKEYAN: Do you mind sharing a bit of what you remember about SSP? You mentioned that you'd be going into classes and then you'd be coming home and doing work. What do you remember of those classes?

GOINS: OK, let me see if I can remember, this is now 30 years ago, so we have to see how well my memory –

KARTHIKEYAN: No problem if you can't remember.

GOINS: Well, I should because it really made a huge impact on me. So I believe that we had maybe four classes. One of them was math, physics, it was kind of all jumbled together. Kim Lombard was the one who taught that class, and actually Kim and I are still friends on Facebook even to this day.

Kim was actually an undergraduate at Caltech, you know, a brilliant undergraduate. But like I said, the class was more kind of math and physics all jumbled together. Some of the problems were from Apostol's *Calculus*. Some of the problems were from Goodstein's *Mechanical Universe*, but a lot of the problems were essentially impossible. That's the main thing that I remember. They were certainly not like, "Here is a function, integrate this function, plug in these values, solve for X." It was more very thoughtful, conceptual type of problems.

So, one of the problems I remember that completely freaked me out because to this day I don't know the answer: You have two jars of flies. In one of the jars, the flies are stationary, they're all kind of lying down at the bottom. In the other jar, the flies are all flying around. Both jars are

sealed, they're covered, so you actually don't know whether the flies are stationary or flying. They also cannot escape from the jars. So, the question is: which jar is heavier?

Bizarre conceptual type of questions. There are no formulas you can write down. There's no calculus that you can do. You really have to ask yourself, what do you really know about physics to be able to answer this kind of question? That's the kind of question that you will see in *Mechanical Universe*. It really caused you to really think, how well do you know physics? How well do you know the world around you?

But those were the kind of problems that we worked on there in that class. And that class I want to say met maybe three days out of the week for... four hours? Something like that, but it was a significant part of what we did that summer, pretty much three times a week, four hours Mondays, four hours Wednesdays, four hours Fridays –

KARTHIKEYAN: And you said – sorry, I cut you off, please continue.

GOINS: Well, that was one class. Another class that we had was chemistry. I believe the chemistry class was taught by a first-year grad student? Second-year grad student? I don't really remember. That class was a little bit more traditional in that we were given things like equations that we had to balance and maybe more conceptual questions about quantum mechanics. But I do remember in that class, the person spent a little bit more time lecturing there at the chalkboard, and us sitting there in the chairs, taking notes and then having to work out problems. That was also maybe three times a week, but I want to say that was maybe an hour. I don't remember that being as significant.

The other class I remember, and this was actually the most fun class, was English. I know it's a little bit weird to say that we had an English class. This was taught by Sam... God, I really should remember his last name because he actually lived in the same dorm as me, he actually was in Ricketts... Sam Dinkin. So, Sam was maybe a sophomore at the time, but he was also an undergraduate.

That was kind of a weird class in that we did have books we had to read, but we spent a lot of time discussing the books, going over what was happening. I do remember there weren't a lot of books we had to read. There were maybe five books or so, one of them was Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, I think something like that.

So, you know, we would read the book, maybe watch a movie, and then have a class discussion on it. A lot of the books weren't about, you know, race or what have you. There were just more: here's literature, here's something to do. This was the first class where I learned about Strunk's and White's *The Elements of Style*. And I loved that book. It's a very short book, maybe 50-100 pages. It just talks about, here's what it means to write. Here's how to write well. Here are some very specific grammar rules. But I remember that Sam was really big on Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*. This is one of these books where if you're at like an Ivy League, you would know about this book. But most people don't know about it, especially at Caltech, because Caltech isn't really big on the humanities. I think that class really caused me to think seriously about people, about writing, about what does it mean to express yourself.

I also remember that in that class – which I think met in the evenings, maybe it was Tuesday/Thursday in the evenings for 2-3 hours. That was the first time I ever had a class in the evenings. But what I liked about that was we, as a group, would have really deep conversations on what did it mean to be a minority.

There were somewhere around 20-25 students that were at SSP, I'm not going to remember the exact number. Around 10 were Black, I think maybe 8 to 10 were Latino, and 3 were Native American. I remember that in particular because amongst the Black students, we were from all over the place. So, you had some Black students like me that were from inner cities where it was 90-100% Black in our schools. You had other students who were Black who were not only the only Blacks at their schools, but they might be interracial, have a parent that was white, and they made it very clear they were not comfortable being around other Blacks. Because it was something they didn't grow up with, they didn't understand it. So, for them to be there at SSP, it was the first time they had ever been around other Black students.

You had these really bizarre kind of dichotomies there, with all of us there in the room having discussions around what did it mean to be Black. Some students would say, "To be honest, I don't feel comfortable being around other Blacks." And then myself and my friend William would look at them and say, "But you're Black, that doesn't make any sense."

I also remember in particular that the 3 Native American students also had the same kind of very deep conversations. So, let me see... there was Troy Bassett, who actually ended up being a really good friend. Troy, if I remember right, he's Native, but it was his grandfather that was Native, his parents weren't. So, he was really struggling with the whole thing of, what did it mean to be Native American?

It turned out that Troy and I actually were both majors in physics. He actually did a double major in math and physics, but then he switched to math and English. He's an English professor in Indiana now, we reconnected some years ago.

The other guy was named Josh Walker, and Josh had essentially grown up on a reservation. His family was Native, he grew up there in Idaho, full Native.

Then there was Michelin Aldridge. And I think that she was the only woman that was there at SSP, but also Native. She really didn't feel comfortable telling people that she was Native. I believe, and again, this was 30 years ago, so if I'm remembering this right... when she was in high school, no one knew that she was Native American, so she felt very uncomfortable even saying during SSP that she was Native American.

So, you had the three of them that were really the only three Native students, period, at Caltech. And I remember Josh and Troy really not getting along very well, having some real arguments around what did it mean to be Native American, much in the same way that the Black students were having this kind of argument about things.

And this would happen there during the English class in the evenings. This wasn't necessarily something that was part of the reading we had to do, but if there was a 30 minutes break (because we were sitting there for two hours or so), we would then break down and have these kinds of conversations. And, for me, that was very enlightening in that: I didn't really understand what it would mean to be a Black student at Caltech. Namely, one not understanding that there were going to be students there – minority students – who would have to have the moniker of being a minority student, but never having even thought what it means to be a minority student. So I realized, even during SSP, forming a Black community was going to be a lot more complicated than I first thought.

KARTHIKEYAN: How did those conversations translate once SSP ended, when you were all shipped off to Frosh Camp and then sent through rotation and first term and all the insanity that that came with?

GOINS: So, Frosh Camp was really an interesting time. I think for me it was very frustrating seeing that there was a homogeneous culture that was not accepting at all. Let me see if I can kind of give you a sense of what Frosh Camp was like (and this is very much the kind of culture that we had during rotation)... I have no idea if it's the same way now, my guess is that it's nowhere near as bad, but this is the way that it was back in 1991 when I started there.

Frosh Camp, simply put, was Lord of the Flies.

You had white kids who were 16, 17, 18 who had never had this kind of freedom and autonomy before. And it was just insanity and chaos for 3-4 days during Frosh Camp, and then for the entire week that was rotation. You had people that were doing things that were clearly sexist, clearly racist, they were rude, they were doing things that any normal human being would not have done. But because they were there in the dorms and there were no "adults" around, they got away with it.

They were just doing random, crazy, insane things that made a lot of us as minorities stop and think, "What the hell have I gotten myself into?"

So, I remember being at Frosh Camp, seeing a lot of kids that were just extremely immature. Now, you also have to realize that the ratio was the big thing at Caltech. When I say the ratio, it's the ratio of men to women. At the time, I believe it was 6:1, six men for every one woman. I know before I got there, they said that the numbers were much worse, that before I got it was like 8:1, 10:1.

So, when I say 200 students, freshmen (and I think that the majority of them were there in Catalina Island for Frosh Camp), we're talking probably 100-120 were white men. Probably another 40-50 were Asian men. I think there were maybe 30 women that were in that class and, again, we're talking on the order of 10 Black students, 10 Latinx, 3 Native American. So, it's majority white and Asian men who were extremely immature, who were just doing crazy, crazy things.

I really was not happy at Frosh Camp. You know, I still realized that I was going to be there at Caltech for the long haul. I was still determined that I was going to graduate. But being there at Frosh Camp really, for the first time, made me very uncomfortable being at Caltech.

I can tell you that I met two faculty there, in particular, who were my mentors for the entire four years that I was there. So that was the one saving grace. One person that I met was Doug Flaming. He's this tall, white professor, very thick accent from Tennessee. I remember meeting him and the first thing he said was, "So, I hear that you're from South LA." I had no idea who this guy was and no idea how he found that out. Turned out his research – he actually was a professor in the humanities department in the Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences (in HSS) – and his research was actually on the Black churches in Los Angeles. He was actually writing a book on the Black churches in Los Angeles. So when he found out that there was a Black student from LA, he right away wanted to know who this person was. So, Doug and I hit it off within the first two minutes that we met each other. And we were very close for the four years that I was at Caltech. I didn't realize that he was doing all this research until two years later, but the point is that he was very welcoming, very accommodating, just really fun to be

around. And he's really one of the reasons why I had my sanity there at Frosh Camp, during that time.

Another person that I met was Steve Frautschi. Frautschi was this very awkward, tall guy. It was very clear that he himself had graduated from Caltech [Stephen Frautschi did not attend Caltech as a student, but did serve as a professor in the Caltech physics department from 1962 to 2006], but just this really, really awkward guy. He actually was a professor in physics, and also, right away we hit it off. He actually was the reason why I decided to go to Stanford for grad school eventually, because we would just have conversations over the years about being a Black student at Caltech, why Caltech had no Black faculty in physics, I mean you name it, we would have these really detailed conversations. But he was another guy that I met there at a Frosh Camp.

But yeah, just those two individuals were two that just helped me to form lifelong friendships. They were my mentors that completely helped keep my sanity in check for the four years. But that was Frosh Camp. That was Frosh Camp. And it was pretty much the same type of thing there at rotation, which really caused me to think, "I am not going to get along with the Caltech culture." I knew right away I was going to be at odds with the Caltech culture. The question was how much pain was I going to be willing to let myself have for the four years?

KARTHIKEYAN: Frautschi was my TA when I took Ph1a as a freshman. He was great, I had a notebook of funny things he would say during our recitation sections, he always had stories or anecdotes to share.

GOINS: Yeah, yeah, that was Steve.

KARTHIKEYAN: So, you met Professor Frautschi and then Professor – I'm sorry, I'm forgetting his name.

GOINS: Flamming.

KARTHIKEYAN: Yes. Did you also meet Eddie Grado during Frosh Camp?

GOINS: I did. You know, I don't remember that Eddie and I talked a lot during Frosh Camp. Definitely we met each other, definitely we chatted with each other. I think I was a little bit more standoffish with Eddie during Frosh Camp because, remember, Eddie was the complete opposite of Lee Browne. I had known of the philosophy of Lee Browne for eight months or so. You have to remember, I applied to Caltech, got into Caltech somewhere around March or April, Lee Browne had talked to my mom on the phone a couple of times. He definitely wanted me to come visit the campus, get an idea of what I was getting myself into. So when I got to SSP, I chatted with him a little bit, I definitely knew about his philosophy that the students would have a hard time graduating. So we're talking April through September, learning that whole philosophy, and then... I meet Eddie Grado.

Who was this guy? He's kind of short, he's super social, he wants to have parties and hangouts and all this. My thinking right away was, "Who is this guy?" You know, I'm more focused on being a physics major, finding a way to get research done during the summers, all these very academic things. And he wants to focus more on the whole person, you know, and make sure that people are going to be happy.

So yes, I met him during Frosh Camp, but I was very much standoffish, you know, I didn't really know what to make of him. I think it probably wasn't until... maybe towards the end of that first quarter freshman year that I finally felt comfortable enough to actually chat with Eddie a little

bit more. But I would tell you it took awhile for me to warm up to him. I mean, I did. I finally did, but it definitely took a lot.

KARTHIKEYAN: Yeah, that makes sense. Do you mind sharing a bit about how you went from these, frankly, horrible experiences in Frosh Camp and rotation to realizing that you could find and form community with NSBE and Chamber Music and the other groups you were associated with? What was the trajectory of finding those spaces and managing your academics in your freshman year?

GOINS: So, freshman year, I was pretty focused. I knew that I was going to major in physics. The question was whether I was going to major in something else, so I remember spending a lot of time first semester freshman year – first quarter – thinking of a few different things.

One of the things I wanted to know was, can I graduate in four years? I remember spending hours and hours in the course catalog mapping out which classes I was going to take, which years. I really do mean mapping out the entire four years, things like second quarter, second term sophomore year, I'm going to take this class; first term junior year, I'm going to take this class. Really mapping it out to make sure that I was going to graduate in four years.

I could also see that I could possibly take classes in history and art. So actually, it turns out when I got to Caltech, I was going to be a double major in physics and art history. That was actually my original two. I realized pretty quickly that art history isn't a major at Caltech, and there weren't enough art history classes for me to do that. Now, freshman year, I did take art history classes. I definitely did that, but there just weren't enough that I could do what I wanted to do.

So, I started to think a little bit more seriously about the history department. I'll say that probably about halfway through my freshman year, I could tell I really liked math, so I was going to double major in math, but I also wanted to take as many classes as possible in history. So now, it became an obsession of, how could I finish in four years with a double major in math and physics and then essentially a minor in history?

That was where I spent many hours in the evening, just going through the course catalog, just trying to map all of this out. But I was totally focused. I was going to finish in four years, no matter what. I do remember a lot of people telling me that being a double major in math and physics was very difficult, close to impossible, couldn't be done within four years, but again, I said it's going to happen, I'm going to finish in four years.

I also knew that Caltech had a culture that was destructive for minority students. I could see this within the first month or so, being there at Caltech. And again, this was through Frosh Camp and also seeing rotation. I remember I really despised rotation to the point that I wanted nothing to do with rotation, but I remember them saying they were essentially going to take attendance, and if you missed out on any of the activities, then your pick for rotation was going to be at the very bottom. So I remember going to it, not wanting to go, but being there just long enough so that I could show people I was there, but then not wanting to be around much longer after that.

So, the house I chose was the lesser of all evils. That's what it came down to. I'm not saying that, for example, I picked Ricketts because it was the house that I liked. I knew that I couldn't stand the North Houses, it was too much of a frat culture. Well, too much of a pretentious culture that was a frat culture, but they didn't want to admit that it was a frat culture. I remember that of the South Houses – and let me see if I remember all of them. Fleming was a hell no. It was just over

the top. Dabney was too weird and it came down to either Blacker or Ricketts. For me, it was kind of an even tossup between Blacker and Ricketts. So, Ricketts is what I chose, but again, it was just the lesser of all evils. And actually, ironically, sophomore year, I decided to move off campus just because I really couldn't stand living on campus.

But I could see that it was that toxic culture that was making a lot of minorities feel really, really uncomfortable. So I started thinking very seriously, what can I do to have a separate culture where minorities can feel comfortable? That was a big part of my philosophy in the four years at Caltech: having a separate culture in which minorities are comfortable. I was never into finding ways in which minorities would feel comfortable in, let's say, the house system, because I was convinced that that wasn't going to happen. Now there were minorities that were very comfortable in the house system, don't get me wrong. But as I started to talk to more and more students, I realized that this was not the case for the majority of students. It was only a minority of the minorities that felt comfortable in the house system.

So I really had to think, what are ways we could build our own culture? That's where the idea of NSBE came about, you know, really saying that we needed at least one place where we could meet and talk about some of these issues.

Chamber Music for me was just kind of a way that I could get away from all of that and play the piano. Really, it was being there in the South Houses, the system underneath the South Houses [the Student Activities Center or SAC], where I could just go and play the piano for many hours. It was just kind of a way to escape.

But there were just a lot of aspects to Caltech that I found to be incredibly toxic, and I couldn't understand why some people hyped it up as the greatest thing ever. The house system of course was a big, big part of it, but also seeing what was happening in the department.

I'm the first to tell you that I despise the math department at Caltech. I was there as an undergraduate, but I also came back as a postdoc because I really wanted to change the department to make it more welcoming for the other undergraduates. So I've been a part of the department as a student and as a staff member, and I can tell you, to this day, I despise the math department.

What I've never understood is how the faculty in the department didn't understand why there were essentially no math majors at all. You know, in the years that I was there as an undergraduate, I think there were five math majors. I think there were five. Which is kind of bizarre for a school that is focused on science and technology, but yeah, no one wanted to be a math major. Even when I came back as a postdoc from 2001-2004, same thing. There might have been maybe 10-15 math majors total. You know, I started the Math Club when I came back as a postdoc, but still, I could tell that a lot of the math majors were just not comfortable being there as part of the department.

So I didn't want to spend time in Sloan, the math building. I decided to spend as much time as I could over in Baxter, over in the humanities. I spent a little bit of time over in physics, but a lot of that was talking with Frautschi about things, but the whole point is, I did not want to spend time in Sloan because I could see how toxic that culture was.

There were these various aspects that I saw even first term of freshman year, and I just really couldn't understand why the campus was as toxic as it was. Just seeing students doing very immature, illegal things – literally illegal things – in the house system. Seeing that faculty were

being openly hostile towards students in the math department. It just kind of shocked me seeing that on these two different ends. And I knew very early on, really two things: one, I had to do something to protect myself, to make sure I wasn't going to go insane with all of this. And then, number two, I had to do something to really find a safe haven for minorities. And this I learned very early on freshman year. You know, we're talking within being on campus for two months.

KARTHIKEYAN: How did you go about forming those spaces? Where did you find support amongst other undergrads or staff or faculty, especially as a freshman when struggling to adjust to Core.

GOINS: So, I was pretty lucky in that I was pretty cocky my freshman year. I was also pretty mature in that I kind of knew what I needed to do in order to be successful. So I wouldn't say so much that I struggled in classes, I think it was more just learning to adjust to the culture at Caltech, but I definitely can't say that I struggled with things. I certainly remember taking Honors Calculus with Tom Apostol and placing out of the final exams because I was doing so well in the homework, doing so well on only the assignments.

I remember even then there was a grad student in the department, in mathematics, who was one of Tom Apostol's PhD students, and this guy was doing number theory. I didn't know what number theory was, so he kind of took me under his wing to tell me a little bit about what number theory is. I remember that he gave me a few papers of things to read. I wish I remembered his name, I just remember his first name was Ben. I don't even think he graduated. I think he may have dropped out. But he's one place where I really learned a lot more about, this is what mathematics is, but he certainly encouraged me quite a bit.

Also, one of the faculty there, Wilhemus Luxemburg, was also very, very encouraging. So, at the time, I was taking Math 1 with Tom Apostol. But I really wanted to learn more math. Luxemburg was teaching Math 2, which I really should not have known anything about, but I just heard about Luxemburg, went to go talk to him, and I remember that he said these words, "The more the merrier. Come take the class."

So, I was actually taking Math 1 and Math 2 at the same time as a freshman, and I did really, really well in Math 2. In fact, one of the grad students who was the TA was a guy named Dean Evasius. Dean was like god for those of us who were in his sections, he was just very smooth, he always had answers to all the questions. The funny thing is, after Dean graduated with his PhD in math, he went to go work for the National Science Foundation, and he and I kind of reconnected over the years because I would go to NSF to be in various panels, and I would see him there.

So, all of these were my connections that formed by my freshman year. But I would say that between those two grad students and Luxemburg, I learned a lot about the department, but also, I felt very encouraged with them. Now, there were other faculty in the department, I'd say at least 6-8 other faculty, that just really made my life hell, and I decided I wanted to spend the least amount of time in the department as I could because of those individuals. But still, you know, I did feel somewhat encouraged behind doing mathematics.

In terms of setting up the NSBE chapter, that was complicated. So, there were two Black students who came in my freshman year, Sanza Kazadi and Mbuyi Khuzadi. They were both twins, both from Evanston, Illinois. But they were two who made it very clear they did not grow up around other Black students. And they found it very, very difficult to get along with the Black

students freshman year. However, it was their idea to start the NSBE chapter. They knew about NSBE – actually, they wanted to start a Black Student Union.

There was a grad student on campus named Danny Howard. It was his first year, he had known about NSBE because – he actually was a grad student in Aeronautical Engineering, and as an undergraduate, he was very involved in his university's chapter. So, I remember all of us kind of sitting in a room, chatting about what we could do to get together with the Black students. Sanza and Mbuyi were there for that discussion; I was there in the room; I believe Jack Prater might have been there for that one; Walter Crim, I think he might have been a sophomore, junior at Caltech, he was there for that; Danny Howard was there, a graduate student; Jean Andino, who I think was maybe a second-year grad student in Chemical Engineering, she was also there in the room. So, you know, we had all these different individuals that were there, some were freshmen, some were upperclassmen, some were grad students.

And Sanza and Mbuyi were saying we need to start a Black Student Union. But then the conversation was, well, how do we do this? Because we don't really know where the Black students are, which is then when Danny kind of recommended, let's call this a NSBE chapter. I remember I wasn't happy about that idea, Mbuyi and Sanza weren't happy about that idea, but we figured we'll just give it a shot. We'll go ahead and give this a try.

Then we had to sell this idea to the other Black students. The hard part there was, we had some Black students who were not comfortable being in the room with other Black students and they instantly were against the idea. I remember talking to several Black students that were saying it's racist to have something like a NSBE chapter, they didn't want to be a part of it, don't contact them anymore. You had other students that really wanted to be a part of this group, but they didn't understand why the focus was on engineers when there really weren't any engineering majors at Caltech. You know, they were in math and physics and chemistry and what have you, but in terms of straight engineering, there really weren't a lot of people. So, there was another question of, I don't want to be involved with the NSBE, so when you call it the Black Student Union, call me back.

So, we had a lot of debate and discussion about how we should form it, who should be there. And I would say that that discussion lasted the entirety of my first year at Caltech. It was really difficult to figure out what to do. The first several meetings we had for the NSBE chapter were not really the best meetings. There were a handful of people there, but we were really trying to figure out what were we doing.

The sad thing is, Mbuyi was the president, he was the one that started the NSBE chapter, but I can't say that he was well liked. So, we had elections during my sophomore year and the natural progression would have been Mbuyi voted in president a second time. He was not, and I was voted in as president. And I remember feeling really horrible for Mbuyi because he and I were friends, we were taking classes together, but it was just very clear he was just not liked as president at all.

When I became president, I wanted to move NSBE in a slightly different direction. I really wanted it to be viewed more as a Black Student Union, so I actively tried to talk to more Black students. I remember spending a lot of time literally walking through the house system, knocking on peoples' doors, telling them, "You know, look, even if you don't want to come to the NSBE chapter, what do you think are things that Black students here on campus need? What are things that *you* need? What can we do to make sure that you're going to graduate?"

There were a lot of people that I was talking to that kind of helped to form more or less the community of Black students that wanted *nothing* to do with the NSBE chapter. They did not want to come to the meetings. They didn't even want to hear about when the meetings were, but these are people that I was talking to on a weekly basis, so I would learn what it is that they wanted. It was a really strange thing in that, I was on paper president of NSBE, but I was de facto the voice of the Black community because I literally knew everyone on campus – we're talking undergrads, grad students, staff, faculty members, people that we saw. If you were Black tending to the flowers on the grounds, I would go up to that person saying, "You know, we have this Black Student Union chapter type thing, do you want to come to the meeting just to kind of hang out and get to know us?" So we had grounds people that would come to the meetings, like this guy named Virgil. He would just come, just kind of hang out, see what we're doing.

And that's a lot of what happened during my sophomore year, really just chatting with everybody. And again, it wasn't the chapter, it was more – I was the kind of the glue that kept it all together. But it was a lot of work, constantly knocking on peoples' doors, walking around, seeing what people had to say. You have to realize that it definitely wasn't as easy as knocking on someone's door, saying, "Come to the meeting on Thursday". It was knocking on the door knowing that person did *not* want to come to the meeting, but still keeping them involved with what was happening with the Black community. So, no, it wasn't easy. It was a very difficult first year as president to keep it all together.

April 8, 2021

KARTHIKEYAN: This is a Nivetha Karthikeyan, I'm here with Dr. Edray Goins. It is April 8th, 2021, and we're having our second session of Dr. Goins' oral history. We left off by talking about Dr. Goins' election as the President of the NSBE chapter at Caltech, and we were going over the work that he did in that role.

So let me start by asking you about what NSBE looked like in your sophomore year. What were your goals during that year?

GOINS: So we're talking, maybe this is fall 1991? Somewhere around there. Mbuyi wasn't even president for an entire year. I think we had our first meeting maybe January 1991. I mean, he certainly had a lot of ideas of things that he thought that NSBE should do and ways that he thought NSBE should be. But I don't think that he really had a very strong vision of how to actually get things done. I think he saw it as, it's a place for Black students to get together, to hang out, to chat about things. But I will say it was, ironically, his idea to hold elections in the fall. Because I think he was thinking, you have elections in the fall, then you could have brand new leadership, and then this person can kind of run things for the entire year.

But it was ironic in the sense of, he was really the one that had the vision of the organization, and then he got voted out of the organization. Luckily, he and I were very good friends, and we would chat about things a lot, but I think Mbuyi was very hurt by that, and so he didn't really come to the meetings after.

That was fall 1991. His brother Sanza came to a lot of the meetings. In fact, he pretty much came to all of the meetings, but I know Mbuyi really never recovered from that. He wasn't really involved with the Black community at Caltech after fall of '91.

Now, the first few months, it was a very small, fledgling organization. We might have consistently had 5-10 members. It really wasn't a lot of people. At least half – probably more than half it felt like – were grad students. You know, I know Danny Howard was very involved, he was a grad student in Aeronautical Engineering. I think '91 would have been maybe his second year. Jean Andino, grad student in Chemical Engineering, maybe this was her second or third year at Caltech? I don't remember exactly.

Sanza was there quite a bit, and Sanza at the time was also a double major in math and physics. Well, technically, I think he was a triple major. Maybe math, physics, electrical engineering, something like that. But Sanza and I took a lot of classes together so he and I saw each other all the time. Mbuyi and I were also taking a lot of classes together, but he was also a triple major in math, physics, electrical engineering, and so we also were taking a lot of classes together.

Sanza and Mbuyi were twins – so this is kind of where it was a little bit complicated. They were taking a lot of classes together. They were also both involved with NSBE chapter together. They kind of had a falling out right about that time.

So this is what I'm saying, it was kind of a weird, fledgling community because, you know, Mbuyi was the one who started it. Then he had a falling out with his brother, so he wasn't really talking to his brother, and he wasn't coming to the NSBE chapter meetings. So I spent a lot of

time going to Mbuyi's room, meeting with him off campus, chatting with him, and I would just feel really bad that he wasn't really involved. But I still have to give him the credit as the one that started the whole community.

On the other hand, we also had a lot of grad students who felt that they were very involved, and when they themselves were undergrads, they were very familiar with what NSBE was. The rest of us really did not know what NSBE was – like I had never heard of NSBE before. I didn't know that it was really part of a nationwide organization. I didn't know any of this. But Danny and Jean knew this really, really well. They knew everything about what NSBE was.

So, we didn't have a lot of students involved the first couple of months or so. And I have to admit, I spent part of the time trying to figure out what is this NSBE thing, and who are the different Black students on campus.

Also, to kind of add to the picture, remember that there were fourteen of us that came in in 1990. So now we're sophomores. It felt like we were kind of scattered to the winds because a lot of us moved off campus our sophomore year. You know, I wasn't living in Ricketts House. I was living in – it was a Ricketts-owned house, but it was... I don't even remember the name of the street. It's where the fire station is now up there on the corner of S. Holliston and Del Mar. I just don't remember anymore. So, a lot of the sophomores at the time weren't really central to campus, so it just felt really strange that they weren't really around.

However, '91, this was Eddie Grado's first year of admitting students, and he admitted these students back in January, February of '91. So now they're on campus by the fall. There are maybe 10 Black students that are on campus now. They, I would say, were really the NSBE chapter because they were the ones coming to a lot of the meeting. So we're talking Adrian Hightower, Agyeman Boateng... Oh God, I can't remember... Cedric Hobbs. Yeah, they were a lot of those students, they all kind of came in at the same time, and they were spending a lot of time at the NSBE meetings. So, I remember like Adrian Hightower, he used to always be there. Pretty much, he was there at every meeting. You know, he actually eventually stayed on as a grad student at Caltech and what have you. So he's been very, very involved for years and years. But I just remember a lot of those freshmen were really around quite a bit at those meetings.

But my thing was, I wanted to really learn what NSBE was. That's what I really didn't understand. I kind of wanted to view this as a Black Student Union chapter, but I really wanted to learn more about what NSBE was. So, I don't remember if it was fall of '91 or January of '92 – it was March of 1992. This is when I went to my first NSBE national conference.

I remember it was in New York City. Danny Howard and I were the only two Black students from Caltech that went – actually we were the only two *students* from Caltech that went that I know of. Eddie Grado was the one that came with us. So now, remember, I didn't really know Eddie all that well. This is the first time we had ever been to a conference together, and I hope I remember this right – I think Danny and I flew together. But I think Eddie Grado might have been in first class. It was kind of the running joke because Eddie *always* flew first class, didn't matter what conference he went to. That eventually got him in trouble and it got him fired, I will say. But I remember Danny and I were together. This was the first time I had ever gone off to a conference with anyone, so I had a great time, you know, just seeing Manhattan, the city, seeing the NSBE National Conference.

Now, you have to understand, NSBE National back then was a big conference. It's much bigger now, but I want to say there might have been... 3,000-4,000 students that were at this conference. It was just this massive conference, we're talking two to three times the size of Caltech kind of conference, and it's just a conference. I had never seen anything like that before. You had Black students, undergrads, grad students from *all* over the country, but they're all majoring in engineering.

One of the big claims to fame for NSBE is what's called roll call. So this is where you have... in a big room, before they kind of start the conference, they want to know who is at the conference. So they kind of go around and they just read off the name of the school, and you're supposed to do some kind of a shout back or a hello to the whole room and what have you. Now, remember, we're talking a massive room of people, so it's not like, you know, a couple hundred people. There might have been maybe a thousand people in the room, I can't really remember. But they're kind of reading off the schools one by one by one, and some people you know would just say a real simple, "Present." But more often than not, you would have schools that would do these rehearsed 30-second type of deals where they might get up and do a little dance, or get up and read some kind of poem. You know, it was very much a showy, showy kind of thing. Again, I had never seen anything like this before. This is when I kind of understood what NSBE was, and I'm learning all of this by being around Danny. So again, this was the first time Danny and I had really ever spent time together. First time I had ever been in Manhattan. First time I had been around Eddie – you know, all of these things for the first time.

And I came back, and I was really energized to see that we could be a part of a much, much larger entity. The trick there was to try to bring the NSBE national spirit to Caltech, and I think that's what I spent the next three years trying to do.

In hindsight, I probably shouldn't have done that because I realize now that NSBE is very different from the vibe that's at Caltech. But that's always the way I tried to see the NSBE chapter at Caltech. It's from the lens of this young 19-year-old that went to Manhattan for the first time, seeing all of these crazy things happening at the national level.

Now, when I got back from the NSBE National Conference, I did try to spend some time thinking formally about what was happening with the student chapter at Caltech. I remember we spent some time working on a constitution. I don't even remember what happened to the constitution. I should have it in my notes somewhere, but I know we spent some time discussing things like: what are the different positions we should have? So, I think we had maybe President, Vice President, Treasurer, and there might have been a fourth person, but I don't remember exactly. But I do remember we spent a lot of time discussing what should the NSBE chapter be, how should it be structured. We also decided that the meeting should be pretty regular, and I think we said once a month, but honestly, I don't know, that's what I seem to recall. It was either Wednesday or Thursday afternoon.

That very first year we had all of our meetings in the SAC [Student Activity Center] there underneath the South Houses. Yes. That was more out of logistics – like we just physically needed a place to meet. At the time, Eddie's office, the Minority Student Affairs Office, had moved around a little bit. Lee Browne had his office in Winnett. What is the name of that cafe now that's right there? I can't even remember the name of it... [Red Door Cafe] but you know, the cafe where they have the oak tree, Hameetman? That space is where Lee Browne's office was for like 20 years. I remember when it changed, when they kind of did all of that.

But when Lee Browne retired, Eddie's office then could no longer be there, so then he had the office that was... let me see. I have to remember the North houses. What is it? Page, Lloyd,

Ruddock? Am I remembering that right? So there was a space just outside of Lloyd House that might have been the MOSH's [Master of Student Houses] office. I can't quite remember, but there was a little space just in the front of Lloyd House. That was Minority Student Affairs. So it was there for probably a year. No, actually, sorry, two years, because it was '90 through '92. I remember it was there when Eddie first got there. He had to move into the office and that was kind of like the center of operations.

They had no space. Like absolutely no space. They had enough space for Eddie's office, and then I think you had the secretary who was literally sitting right in front of the front door. And that was it. So, there was no space to have any meetings with students. Students couldn't hang out, they couldn't congregate there. So it wasn't ideal, but that's just where it was.

Yeah, but we had our meetings in the SAC [Student Activity Center], and, you know, we just tried our best to kind of go week by week and just figure out what is it that we were going to do. We didn't really have a good plan of things, like activities we wanted to do or what even the goal of the organization was.

I think Danny and Jean wanted to push it more as, you guys need to come to the NSBE National Conference and kind of be involved with NSBE national, overall. The rest of us didn't really understand what NSBE was, and I really wanted to think more about what was happening with the Black students on campus. So, it was really after the NSBE national meetings that I thought more the way they were thinking, Danny and Jean. But it was still this tug of war of, I wanted to do more NSBE national, but I really wanted to focus on the students that were there on campus.

So now, fast forward to about 1992, and this is where everything changed. I don't remember exactly whether this was '91 or '92, but I remember there was an older gentleman who just arrived and just showed up at the NSBE meeting one day. This was Bill Hutchinson.

So, Bill Hutchinson, first of all, told us that he wanted to go by Hutch, and he must have been in his seventies at the time, maybe late sixties. We didn't really know who this guy was, you know, at the beginning. He was coming to the meetings, and he would tell us he used to be a grad student at Caltech back in the '50s. So, you know, we kind of welcome him in, you know, this Caltech alum, this Black Caltech alum. But I don't think that any of us really knew him. We just knew it was really nice to have him at the meetings. He didn't come to all of them. He came maybe like every other month or something like that, but I can tell you for me, it was really nice to see him there. And, you know, Hutch and I still talk to this day, we're talking almost thirty years later. And it's because he came to that very first meeting either in '91 or '92. I should remember the exact first one he was there, but I'm just drawing a blank now.

So seeing that NSBE could potentially be a way to have alumni involved – that was a big change in thinking about the chapter. I don't think anyone else saw it that way, but that was one of the first things I realized: that if we could maybe get alumni more involved, we could really do something with the chapter here.

The second thing was the LA riots. And I believe that was... March 1992, maybe April 1992. That for me was a big thing. I grew up in LA, and I remember that whole week was a very awkward week.

You have to understand what was happening in Southern California at the time. You know, all of this happening about Rodney King, the fact that all of us saw the video... now remember, there really wasn't any Internet or anything like that, so you just couldn't go on the Internet and find

these things. It was pretty much on the evening news every night. They would show like a 30-second clip saying, "Oh my God, look at all the stuff that happened," and what have you. So, a lot of us had seen the video. A lot of us knew that the trial was happening.

The trial was something that you just couldn't escape from. You know, there were these four police officers, and the debate was, are they going to go to prison or are they going to get off scot-free? And I will tell you that it was entirely split along racial lines. If you were Black, you said they were going to get off scot-free. If you were not Black, you said no, of course they're all going to go to prison. That's just the way it was. So everyone was saying, well, they're going to go to prison, you know, clearly it's a bad thing. There's just no way that they're going to get off scot-free.

I remember the day the verdict was supposed to come out. The jury had already said that they had an announcement to make. It was going to come out at like 3:00 PM, something like that. The mayor of LA, Tom Bradley, came on television saying, "No matter what the verdict is, *do not riot*. Just trust the system. If it's not the verdict you want, trust the system." But I remember him coming out on TV first. Then Rodney King was on TV, saying, "I agree, please don't riot, no matter what's going to happen."

Now, remember, he still had... you know, he's a Black guy, he's bruised, he's on crutches, and all the rest of this, but he's saying all of that. But it's clear he's struggling with his words, because I mean, it's very clear he got hit in the head pretty hard, so he's really struggling to get his words out. So, you know, it got very emotional, he kind of slurs his voice, and then he starts to cry, and that's when he said the whole thing of can we all just get along. But you know, remember we're seeing all this stuff happening on TV in real time.

Then the verdict comes out. I don't remember exactly when, it may have been about 1:00 PM, something like this. But I remember when the verdict came out going to Minority Student Affairs, to Eddie Grado's office, and the TV was on. Now, remember, before this Lee Browne would have never done anything like this. You would never have walked into his office to watch him watching TV. Ever. So, for me it was kind of a change of thought, that I could actually go here, this person had the television on – so this is kind of thing, you know, where we're watching the press conference and watching all this stuff unfold.

Then they cut to South Los Angeles. Remember, this is where I'm from. And they show the police pulling out of the city. I'm watching all this, so I can see there on the TV what streets they're on, you know, I see exactly the different parts of the city. And this is when I knew all hell was going to break loose because the police had made the conscious decision they were not going to be around when everything goes to hell.

Not too much longer after the verdict comes out – maybe 3-4 hours, I don't remember exactly – they show this clip of this intersection with a guy who had been pulled from a truck, a white guy, and he's lying on the ground and two or three Black guys are over him beating him so. So, this is Reginald Denny there in the middle of Florence and Normandie. Right away, I notice, crap. That's two blocks away from my mom's house. Now, I think - I don't remember this exactly - I may have been in Eddie's office when I made that realization.

On the one hand, I'm kind of freaking out because, you know, my mom is home, my brother's home. I'm watching all this stuff happening and, remember, the police had decided to pull out of the city. So, it's not like these things are happening, they're going to call the police, and all the rest of that. They made the conscious decision there were no police around. Even the reporters on TV are saying, "I don't get it, where are the police? Where are the police?" It was clear from

several hours before that they had pulled out, so they were nowhere to be found. So, all of this stuff is happening, and we knew it was only going to get worse.

On the other hand, I made the realization that Eddie had set up this office as a place where I could actually come in and watch this in a safe space. So, I had these two light bulbs that went off at the same time. Yeah. Eddie and I were close after that moment.

KARTHIKEYAN: There was an article actually in the *Tech*... I don't know if you remember this? It was on the LA riots.

GOINS: Yup, I remember it, I remember it. I remember it very, very well because that was a very awkward article and I kind of didn't really want to do it, but yeah, I remember that.

KARTHIKEYAN: I'll just say for the record that it was an article of the *Tech* from May 22, 1992 and the article title was "Caltech Students Affected by LA Riots, Kings Verdict," written by Matt Metz, and it quotes Dr. Goins as well as Danny Howard.

GOINS: So what made that article awkward was... probably the best way to say it is that it was kind of manufactured. There weren't a lot of Black students from LA who were at Caltech. Maybe three of us? Let's see... I know Adrian Hightower was from LA, but even Adrian would say he's from the part of LA where there really weren't a whole lot of Black students, whereas I was from the middle of South Central. So, all the stuff that happened – that was my home, that's where I grew up, and all of that. Everybody knew, you know. Eddie Grado definitely knew this very well.

So, I know that the students could all understand kind of what was happening, but you have to understand what Caltech was like when that entire week was happening. I need to be careful how I say this so that I do not understate what Caltech was like.

I don't think I had ever hated Caltech more than that week of the riots.

There were students who were paranoid that the rioters were going to come all the way to Pasadena. There were students who were saying things like, "Those people need to be shot." There were various signs put up all over campus, part of it trying to be in support of those of us that were upset about the verdicts, and I remember several of those signs were ripped down and they were burned in the middle of campus. I remember that there were a few discussions and protests that people tried to have in the middle of campus with bullhorns and this kind of thing, and Caltech students shouted them down.

And this surprised me because I figured these are all scientists. These are all liberal individuals. But I learned very quickly that that was not the case. And these are the same students that I'm essentially living with there in the houses.

So, there were some students that really wanted to talk about why the city of LA had exploded, why this verdict had come out the way it had, and what people can do. I mean, it's kind of like the same thing that's happening with George Floyd. I would imagine if Caltech were actually physically in session that there would be a lot of these same types of issues: people wanting to have protests, put up the flyers, talk about it, and then Caltech students wanting to shoot it all down. You know, not wanting to have any discussions or making really bad jokes, all of those things.

I remember us trying to talk about this in class, especially my humanities classes, and the discussions going off the rails because the students really saw this as, “Those people are burning down their city. Those people deserve all of the stuff that’s happening to them.” Students were just not being sympathetic at all.

I remember, in particular, in one of the classes I had, Doug Flaming was the professor. Doug, of course – remember, he knows I’m from LA because that was how we met. I know he felt really bad for me that the discussions we were having in class were just these horrible, really insensitive conversations with the students saying, you know, they are burning down their neighborhoods, I hope that they don’t come here to Pasadena because I’m scared for my life. And then trying to say, hold on, we live eighteen miles away. We live in a relatively nice, secluded area. You need to have a little bit more sympathy towards what’s happening in South LA. But a lot of the students were not trying to hear any of it. Doug and I actually got very, very close after all of that because he knew I was the only student at Caltech that was from the area.

So all of this happened for, you know, maybe about a week or so, and then of course things eventually died down. This is when *The California Tech* wanted to run an article on it, but they didn’t really know what to do because they didn’t know of any students that were from South LA. I think eventually they approached the NSBE chapter because they knew that it existed, they wanted to talk to some Black students, and because Danny was vice president and I was president, they decided that they were going to talk to the two of us.

I didn’t really want to do it because I knew that the questions were going to turn to, “How is this affecting you?” Whereas I wanted to say, you know, more from a depersonalized point of view, this is what it means to be Black in America, and so on and so forth. So that’s why I’m saying that it was a little bit manufactured because I think that once they realized that it was affecting me personally, they wanted to kind of change the article to be a little bit more about that, but I really didn’t want to have it go in that direction.

So yeah, I remember when the article was written. I remember that when the guy interviewed me, he was stretching a little bit, trying to pull out some information that wasn’t there, at least information that that I wasn’t willing to give. But I mean it was a well written article. I can’t say that it was an article that I really wanted to talk about over the years, but it definitely came out.

KARTHIKEYAN: You said that was when your relationship with Eddie Grado changed?

GOINS: Right, that’s definitely right. I think I realized what Eddie was trying to do was the right thing. Now remember, Lee Browne was not about being friendly, having a space we can hang out in his office. Not that at all. Eddie was the total opposite. When I realized what *I* could benefit from having that kind of space, then my whole thought of what he was trying to do changed. And this is when I completely agreed that there needed to be a space like that for students.

Now what I’ll say (and I’ll eventually come back to this) is right about the end of 1992, his office moved from that space outside of Lloyd over to a house – I need to pull up a map so I can remember all this now – that was actually just behind the house that I lived in when I lived off campus.

So, he moved away from campus, but now it was literally a house. One of the floors was some undergraduate – sorry, some high school program, and it’s going to come back to me in a minute what the first floor was... but the second floor was now the office of Minority Student

Affairs. So Eddie decided (because he really wanted that to be *the* space for minority students to go), he called it La Casa. And that was our place for the next five years or so. That was the spot.

So, if you wanted to go somewhere where you felt safe, where you could do homework, where you could hang out with friends, you went to La Casa. That's what everybody knew. I'll come back to that a little bit later because that's a whole story in itself.

So, what I will say is that by about the end of maybe spring semester, kind of going into the summer of 1992, things were totally different at this point. So, Hutch was now kind of a regular at the meetings, people definitely knew about him. We kind of knew that there was something different that happened back in the '50s that we didn't really know about. But, you know, he would tell us a few stories here and there, but at least we had that connection to someone to tell us more about what happened in the past.

Eddie had shown himself to be a real ally, especially after everything that happened with the LA riots. Danny and I had grown closer because, again, he was my vice president, I was president, and so he really turned more into a mentor. Not just helping me with what was happening with NSBE, but also with just surviving around these crazy things on campus. Because again after the riots, you know, we just wanted to chat about things a lot more, and it gave us a little bit more direction in what we wanted to do with NSBE.

So not too much longer after the riots, maybe about two months or so, I decided I wanted to do more with my old elementary school. The elementary school was only about maybe like a block or so away from Florence and Normandie where all of this had happened. So I had proposed to Danny, why don't we have some type of a day where we could do math games, engineering games, something like that, but at my old elementary school. I don't remember how many times we did this, we may have done it twice, but I know one of the times we worked with the principal to find a good day to come out.

It was really just me and him. We couldn't get anybody else from Caltech to go. I remember us being there on the grounds outside, we weren't in any of the classrooms. We had maybe one or two tables set up. Students were supposed to come by, you know, kind of read the sheets of paper that we had with math games and what have you.

The first time, it was a little bit awkward because we were trying to figure out what we were doing. Even the teachers, they were kind of willing to help us, but I think they didn't really understand what we were there for, what we were trying to do.

The second time we were there, I think it was a little bit better received. It turned out that there was actually a news camera that was there. They were there for totally different reasons. It was Channel 13, KCOP at the time. They were doing a report on the area and the LA Riots, so they happened to be there at the elementary school because, you know, it was something like maybe a block and a half away, and they were just interviewing different people there in the area.

So, when they noticed that we were there – I remember my brother was actually there too. I don't really know why he was there that day, but he just happened to be hanging out there. He's two years younger than me. So, we were there with the table, kind of chatting with the students, and then this reporter comes over, and the camera comes over, and they said, "Well, can you tell us a little bit about what you're doing?"

I remember that Danny didn't really want to talk so I just said a little bit, you know, that we were part of the NSBE chapter from Caltech, we were just there to work with the students a little bit. Word got out that I was from the area, that that was my elementary school. So the reporter got really interested at this point and wanted to know more about my story, and me being from Caltech, and coming back to help the neighborhood, and all the rest of that.

It was a little bit bizarre. There were maybe ten people, ten of us standing around, and it was clear that this reporter really just wanted to talk to me one on one. So, I'm trying to tell him all these stories about how it kind of felt that South LA was a little bit excluded and what was happening, and that we need to do more to get the community together, and to encourage students to go into the STEM fields, and what have you.

After all of that, the reporter was very interested in keeping up with me. We actually did a couple more interviews after that. The reporter would just come out to Caltech, and we would just chat for about an hour or so, and the camera was right there. He had actually planned to do this whole documentary, two hours long, on different people who are from South LA and how the riots had impacted them.

Remember, this is maybe like three months or so after all the riots had happened. He did several hours with me, but then ultimately decided to cut me from the whole thing because he really wanted to focus on people that were still living and working there in the area. But I remember the documentary came out, it was cut down to about an hour or so, but it was actually a pretty good documentary. I just realized I haven't actually remembered this in almost twenty-five years, I should probably look to see where the documentary is. But yeah, that was one of the bizarre things that came up after all of this was happening.

But Danny and I definitely spent a little bit more time thinking about how we could be more involved with the local community. That's why I'm saying a lot of things changed in 1992. But I would say that really for me was a very pivotal year in how I viewed NSBE, but more generally how I viewed Caltech, and I would say I had a lot of animosity towards fellow Techers after that semester.

KARTHIKEYAN: That makes complete sense. Do you mind giving me a good idea of how NSBE was interacting with the other offices on campus at this time?

GOINS: So, one thing, it wasn't. But you also have to understand that there weren't really any other offices to interact with. You know, there was no Womens' Center. There really wasn't anything anybody did with the Dean's Office. There were no other offices. The only other offices might have been the Dean's Office, but the Dean's Office was not trusted by any of the students. No, the Dean's Office did what the Dean's Office did, and none of the students liked them, trusted them, wanted to work with them at all.

Minority Student Affairs was very specifically with the minority students, but that was it. It was kind of an island in and onto itself. Eddie reported directly to who would have been... what was her title? Associate Dean, I think it was. Let me see. Gary Lorden, who was in the math department, was Dean of Students at the time. The person who worked under him was Jeanne Noda. Jeanne Noda, I think, had come from the Claremont Colleges before she got to Caltech, so she wasn't there that long, but Eddie Grado reported directly to her.

Eddie and Jeanne did not get along. Plain and simple, they really, really did not get along. We all kind of knew that, but we also saw a lot of things like, Eddie's office did not have a lot of

money. It was really difficult to get support to travel to conferences, to get money for barbecues, for events to run student activities with the NSBE chapter.

There were other student chapters that we were trying to start up. There was the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers that we called SHPE. They started right about the same time as NSBE, I think that they started maybe '91, fall of '91, maybe January of '92.

We also attempted to start an AISES chapter, the American Indian Science and Engineering Society. That was a little bit awkward because there were only three Native American students on campus, the three that came in with me: Michelin, Josh and Troy. I don't know if they really wanted to start a chapter because the chapter would have been the three of them, and remember, they didn't really get along all that well. I know Michelin didn't really want to hang out with the other Native American students. I think she really just wanted to be viewed as white so she stayed away. Troy, I think, was really struggling with, do people see him as Native or not. Those of us that knew him knew that he was proud, but also if you looked at him, he looked like he was white, so it was really hard for people to come to grips with that. Josh was the other extreme. I mean, he wore being Native on his sleeve, and everybody knew it, and he was kind of militant about it. Militant to the point of, I think that a lot of people didn't like him because of it. So, the three of them really formed the AISES chapter and it might have been around on paper, but I don't know if they ever had a meeting.

SHPE, though, I think struggled for the first couple of years. I think they didn't really know what they were doing, and they didn't really meet very much. So NSBE was *the* chapter. You know, we were the ones that were really starting to push activities, and having barbecues, and working with Eddie's office and what have you. But essentially that was it.

There was the NSBE chapter, there was Eddie's office, and nothing else. Most students on campus didn't really know who Eddie was. They kind of saw this Hispanic looking guy walking around campus, but they didn't really know him. But then again, where would they have known him? Because there weren't really any other activities where he was going to say to the whole campus, "Here's who I am." Remember that he had a very small office, and then that got moved away from campus, so students really never saw him.

NSBE was getting to be more visible, but that's because of me. I was really pushing that NSBE should be a very powerful political entity on campus. I'll come back and tell you how '92 went, but I'll say more generally, there was no interaction at all with any of the other offices, but that's because there were no other offices. There was just the Dean's Office, which was Gary and Jeanne, but we didn't like the Dean's Office because Jeanne did not get along with Eddie.

Yeah, but I mean that's just the way it was, '91, '92.

KARTHIKEYAN: After you came back from the National Conference for NSBE, was there any association between the Caltech chapter and other chapters from other Southern California schools?

GOINS: That's an excellent question. Yes, but it was tenuous. So, there was a NSBE chapter, I believe, at Pasadena City College. We never went to their meetings, but I know we tried to figure out who they were, what they were doing.

There was one student in particular who was over at PCC who would come to the NSBE meetings at Caltech. Adrienne Nash. Actually, Adrienne and I, we kind of stopped talking to

each other for about ten years, but you know, now we're at least friendly over Facebook. But she used to come to the meetings all the time.

In fact, when we would go to the NSBE national conferences, she would actually be there to hang out with the Caltech chapter, even though technically she should have been hanging out with the PCC chapter. I don't remember ever meeting anyone in the PCC chapter other than Adrienne, but I know that they had a chapter, that they often went to the NSBE national meetings.

The way NSBE is set up is, there's the national office, but then there are these regional types of structures. I wanted to get more involved with the Southern California region of NSBE. I'm not going to remember exactly what Southern California meant, whether it was more LA or what have you, but I remember a person that I met at one of the national conferences, Elise Anderson. She was an undergraduate over at UC Santa Barbara, she was very involved at the regional level, she might have even been the regional president for Southern California, I don't remember exactly. She and I got to be really good friends and that's when I learned a lot more about, regionally, what was happening with NSBE. So, I got very involved with the regional structure of NSBE. In fact, the region actually might have been California, now that I think about it.

I know there was one conference in particular – it was a regional conference that was in Sacramento – and I remember convincing – that was actually a fun conference. It was myself, Adrian Hightower, Agyeman Boateng, and Cedric Hobbs. All four of us went to Sacramento and we were there for the conference. Just the four of us from Caltech. There might have been sixty people total that were there at the conference. But the four of us ended up going to a lot of NSBE conferences together. That was one of the first ones where it was the four of us together, four Black men, and we just hit it off really, really well going to those conferences.

We tried to go to some of the NSBE regional conferences, and definitely the four of us would go to a couple more NSBE national conferences, but I don't remember us being involved closely with any local chapters. It was more going to the regional meetings and then me personally trying to have a few more contacts regionally with some people. Elise definitely came to a couple of the NSBE Caltech chapter meetings, but I don't remember us formally having any other ties with any of the other NSBE chapters in California.

KARTHIKEYAN: That makes sense. Let me go back and ask you about your sophomore year, as an individual student. I think, and correct me if I'm wrong, I believe this was the year that you had gone to the National Conference of Black Physics Students.

GOINS: That's right, that's right. I'm just trying to remember back to piece everything together, but that is right.

So let me think. I don't remember now whether it was February '91 or February '92, but it must have been February '92. The conference I went to was the National Conference of Black Physics Students (NCBPS) that was being held at Stanford University. There were... 4-5 Black undergraduates majoring in physics at the time... I think that's right. Myself, William Anderson, I don't remember if Mbuyi Khuzadi and Sanza Kazadi were still officially physics majors at that point because I know that they dropped it right about then to just major in electrical engineering [Mbuyi later graduated from Caltech with a degree in mathematics and physics, while Sanza graduated with a degree in physics]. I don't remember if they were still there. There was Stanley Grant. So, we were the five.

I personally really wanted to get involved with this conference. I remember learning about the conference – I think Eddie might have been the one to show me the brochure and tell me about the conference. I know that his office was the one that paid for it, but I remember flying from LAX, going up to San Francisco. I was the only student from Caltech because Eddie did not go to this conference.

I remember wanting to meet as many people as I could. This is where I remember seeing a lot of different people that were around, some of the people I still know to this day. I remember in particular asking if there were any Black mathematicians that were there at this conference, and I met three individuals. Two of them, I remember their names, the third, I'm not completely sure if that was him or not. One was named Ronald Mickens. He just retired as a professor at Clark Atlanta University. The second is Bill Massey, who is now Professor of Operations Research at Princeton. At the time, he was working for AT&T Bell Labs. And I remember meeting the two of them, they were the first Black mathematicians I had ever met. You know, Ron, I still talk to to this day, some thirty odd years later.

But I remember asking them about this guy I had heard of named Jim Gates because I had been hearing his name float around Caltech quite a bit. So they told me that yeah, Jim was here, he's at the conference. Ironically, I didn't meet him at that conference. Jim and I still argue about this to this day, but I remember every time I went to a room, they said he had just left and I just missed him.

He was such a towering figure at that conference that I definitely wanted to meet him, wanted to get to know him. Nowadays, Jim and I are good friends, but it was kind of ironic that I kept hearing about him back in that conference at Stanford and never saw him. But at least I met Ron Mickens and I met Bill Massey, and that for me was a big thing.

I also remember meeting some undergraduates, Black students who were at Harvard and at MIT. And those students were the ones that I would see every year at the NCBPS because, remember, there really weren't any Black students – none of the other Black math majors, physics majors from Caltech ever went to that conference, so I would go by myself every year. Eddie wouldn't go. I think maybe he went once; I can't quite remember. But that was kind of my community. It was going there, seeing the same faces, seeing the faculty. I always felt welcome going to that conference. And I basically went every year until probably... 1998, something like that. Because I just loved going to the conference every year.

I'm trying to get back to going to the conference now, but I definitely have students here at Pomona that I try to get to go because it was just such a big influence.

KARTHIKEYAN: What else do you remember from your sophomore year? I don't know if I have my timeline correct in this regard, so I'm not sure if this is when you started TAing for the Saturday Science Program, or if the Saturday Science Program even existed that year, or what the summer program that the Minority Students Affairs Office put on was named at that point.

GOINS: So, that that was my freshman year. So when Lee Browne left, Eddie then had to take a look at everything that Lee was doing.

I can tell you, I've read through the interview that Lee Browne gave to Caltech back in, I don't know, 2005. I forget what year this was. I know that Lee Browne really didn't like it, and I know that Lee Browne felt that Eddie kind of messed up his office. But I can say, on the flip side, Eddie thought Lee Browne left the office in shambles. It was just very confused, things didn't make any

sense, there were like all these acronyms that were the same thing. You know, SP, SSSP, people had a really hard time understanding. Lee Browne had a lot of enemies, so that meant that a lot of people did not want to work with Eddie when he first got there. I remember just hearing Eddie always complaining that it was really difficult to get that office together. So, I'm saying that I know the two of them complain about each other quite a bit. I don't know if they ever met face to face, but I definitely remember that first year hearing Eddie grumble that it was just a very difficult office for him to run because of the shape that Lee Browne left it in.

But one of the things Eddie wanted to do was take a look at this Saturday program. I think it was called SSP, I don't remember exactly. That's the one that I taught in, on Saturdays freshman year, and it was a mess. It was a complete mess. I despised every Saturday I did that program.

The original intent of the program was for Black and brown students in Pasadena to come to Caltech on the weekends, learn a little bit more about what Caltech had to offer, take some enrichment classes, and just physically be there on campus, so that they could be a little bit more acclimated to what Caltech was.

By the time Lee Browne left, that was no longer what the program was. The program was these very pushy white and Asian kids who wanted to use the program as a leg up to get into Caltech. There were a handful of Black and Latinx kids that were in the program, at least in the classes that I was teaching. But it was very clear they weren't interested in being there. There were a lot of discipline problems, you know, they wouldn't listen, they wouldn't pay attention, wouldn't do the homework. But it was the white and Asian kids that were really pushy. I remember parents calling to say things like, "Now that my students are here in the program, what do they have to do to get into Caltech?" And these are students that were ages fifteen, fourteen, sixteen. I just remember a couple of times being in Eddie's office when he would have just gotten off the phone with one of these parents, and it was just insane to me. I do remember a few times parents coming up to my class on Saturday wanting to know, now that their thirteen-year-old is in this class, what do they have to do to get into Caltech five years later. Just all of these really crazy things, and I hated it every minute of it. I did not like doing this program at all.

So, at the end of that quarter, I remember Eddie having a meeting with several of us to say he's going to cancel the program, do away with it. But he wanted a program to convince Black and brown kids that they should come to Caltech. So we had a series of meetings – this might have been maybe April, May; I don't remember the exact months, but this was in my freshman year – so we could hash out what we could do. This eventually became the YESS program, Young Engineering and Science Scholars.

Eddie had run a similar program in MIT; I think that it was also called YESS or MITES. He wanted to figure out how to bring that to Caltech, but that program grew out of a series of conversations I had with Eddie and other people. I remember us all sitting in a really large room, there were maybe like eight of us. We all just realized we despised SSP, but we still wanted to save it for the original intent.

I don't remember if we ran YESS for the first time in the summer of '91, but I think we ran it for the first time summer of '92. But I do remember we had a lot of conversations that YESS needed to happen.

Let me add that, right at about the same time, I had planned to do a SURF with a Caltech professor, with Tom Apostol. Everything fell through at literally the last minute, and I don't even

know if that's something you want to go through today, that's a whole different story in itself. But I remember telling Eddie I still needed something to do for the summer.

Eddie at the time was eyeing doing something with one of the local high schools. This was Blair High School that's right there in Pasadena. That school was maybe like 50/50 Black and Latino and then white and Asian, but he knew that the Black and Latino kids were not getting admitted to Caltech, and he couldn't really understand why. So, he asked if I was willing to help out. They were going to run a tutoring type of program where we were going to take some students from Caltech, go over to Blair a few different days during the summer, work with some of the students, and then see how it was going to work from there.

Essentially, it was a failure. The students were happy that we as Caltech students were there, you know, the Black and Latino students. They were maybe going into their senior year at the end of that summer. The teachers despised that we were there. It was very clear they despised that we were there. They gave us a hard time, they were not respectful to us, I mean just every day it was a battle. It just wasn't fun.

At the end of that whole experience, I remember talking to Eddie and telling him, "This was a bad experience, none of us were enjoying it. The students were getting a lot out of it, but the teachers definitely don't want us there. What do you think we should do?"

Eddie told me if I thought it was a bad experience for us, write a letter to the principal explaining why it was a bad experience and make a recommendation as to what I thought we should do.

I remember I got along very well with the principal – I'm not going to remember his name, but he was a white guy, he was very sympathetic, he was really happy we were there. But I outlined maybe a four-page letter with all of the experiences that we had doing all of this, and all of us decided to sign off on it. Eddie signed off on it and the other students that were there doing the program from Caltech. It said, number one, here's all the bad experiences of doing this program and, number two, Caltech needs to pull out and never do this program again.

I remember talking with the principal and he read over it and he chatted with me, and he said, unfortunately, he was sad to hear about all the experiences. He didn't realize how bad it was, but he was going to respect our decision to not be involved with the Blair tutoring program.

And so, as far as I know, we stopped doing it in summer 1991. I don't know if Caltech ever revisited that, but I do remember that's one of the first times I really had talked with Eddie and really had worked with him. You know, not just in designing YESS for the first time, but also in figuring out what to do with that Blair high school tutoring program.

So yeah, that was the end of freshman year.

KARTHIKEYAN: So the SURF – that was a freshman SURF that fell through with Tom Apostol, who you took a class with?

GOINS: Yeah, it was supposed to be a SURF. Yeah, it fell through. We actually never submitted the application, but that's right. Yeah, that was freshman year with Tom Apostol.

KARTHIKEYAN: What did your experiences in the math department look like throughout your sophomore year? I think this was when you decided that you were going to be a math major?

GOINS: I decided first quarter freshman year I was going to double major in math and physics. I'm just trying to try to piece together the whole timeline for sophomore year... sophomore year is when I realized I despised the mathematics department.

That first quarter, I took Ma 5 with Dinakar Ramakrishnan. I knew that I really liked number theory. I knew that I was going to go into number theory more or less as a career. I didn't really know if I was going to be a physicist or mathematician, but I know if I was going to do math, I was going to do number theory.

There were only two professors at Caltech that did number theory: Tom Apostol and Dinakar Ramakrishnan. I took honors calculus with Apostol that first year. I remember that there was a grad student who was really kind to me, one of Apostol's grad students. I remember talking to him and saying I really wanted to do research. He said, "Well, Apostol is a really great guy, he's my advisor, you should really consider working with Apostol." I figured I'm basically getting an A+ in his class. I'm placing out of the final exams. His own grad student thinks that I'm one of the best students in the class, so let me work with Apostol to see what we could do. This is when I kind of got screwed over in freshman year and could not do a SURF. Apostol told me at the end of class one day that he was not going to submit this proposal for me, good luck.

And again, that's a whole long story in itself. So, I'm feeling already at the end of freshman year, I want to do number theory, Apostol's off the list. Even though I'm doing really great in his class, his grad student really likes me, it's clear he doesn't want to work with me, so I need to cross that off the list. Which meant it had to be Dinakar Ramakrishnan, if I'm going to do number theory at Caltech.

So, sophomore year, I figured Dinakar is teaching this class, Ma 5. It's supposed to be the first real class that math majors take, so I'm going to take this class. I take the class, and I hate the way Dinakar's teaching it. You know, he's at the chalkboard, he's not organized, he's all over the place, he's not motivating any of his theorems, any of his results. Every lecture I'm there, but I just can't stand the way he's doing this class.

At the end of that quarter, two things happen. One, I decide I'm going to come back to Caltech as a professor. I'm going to teach this class because I like the material, I just can't stand the way he's teaching it.

Second thing, I realize I despise Dinakar Ramakrishnan. To add insult to injury, I end up getting a C in that class. I can only chalk it up to, I just was so angry at this class, at Dinakar, I couldn't even focus during the final exam. Now the material is material that I knew. I mean, even to this day, it's material that I actually work on research wise. So, you know, even that semester, I knew the material. But I just hated the fact that I got a C in the class, and I couldn't even throw it back in Dinakar's face to say, look, even though you screwed up this class, even though you did a horrible job, I want to do number theory, and here's proof that I can do it because I still get an A in your class. Ended up getting a either a B or a C in the class. I don't remember the exact grade, but I know I didn't do anywhere near as well as I should have.

Also, at the time, the Dean of Students is Gary Lorden, who is a math professor. And remember, Gary has Jeanne Noda who reports to him. Jeanne has Eddie Grado who reports to her. Jeanne and Eddie are not getting along. So, I see this as, Gary Lorden is making my life as a minority student horrible because he's not giving Eddie the resources that he needs and, you know, things are not going well there in that office.

So already these are two people in the math department that I really don't like. Actually, it's even worse, it's three because of everything that happened with Tom Apostol the year before.

Now, on the flip side, though, I was starting to take some really, really difficult math classes. I remember taking this one class, Introduction to Analysis, with Tom Wolff. I don't remember if it was the first quarter or second quarter... it might have been that first quarter. I remember that there were four of us who were in that class: myself, Troy Bassett (remember, Troy is one of the Native American students who, at the time, was double majoring in math and physics), Mbuyi Khuzadi, and Sanza Kazadi. The four of us were in that class. Mbuyi and Sanza were maybe in that class for about a week. The class was about as close to impossible as you can get. We couldn't do any of the homework, couldn't do any of the exams, Tom Wolff was one of the worst lecturers any of us would ever see – it was something about the way Wolff was displaying the material. He would stare at the chalkboard the entire lecture. He would never turn around and look at the class.

But I could see within the first couple of lectures, the guy is brilliant and loves this material. So, the ironic thing is, he's one of the worst lecturers I ever had, but I *loved* that class. I cannot explain it. That class I think is what convinced me to stay in math because I could see, even though he was a horrible lecturer, the way he was putting the material together – it was beautiful.

Mbuyi and Sanza had dropped that class and they dropped the math major after about the first two weeks, so it was just me and Troy. Just the two of us together. We struggled with that class, but we eventually made it through.

So, I was seeing a couple of different things then in the department. On the one hand, there were certain faculty that I just despised, couldn't stand, wanted nothing more to do with them. Tom Wolff was not a great lecturer in that class, but I loved the way he was showing the material. I loved the fact that I worked so hard in trying to understand the material.

Then probably the person who really was the most supportive was Wilhelmus Luxemburg. Luxemburg was just someone I loved to go in and just chat with. You know, I don't really know if he really understood how much I really despised the department, but he just loved math so much. I never met anyone that loved math that much. When you went to his office, it was like turning on a faucet. You would ask him a math question and he would just ramble about random things for the next hour, but every last thing he was talking about was interesting. So I just loved being in in Luxemburg's office. Luxemburg is the reason I majored in math. Plain and simple. If Luxemburg was not in the math department, I would not have majored in math.

So, at the end of sophomore year, I asked Luxemburg if I could do a SURF with him and he said yes. It was a very awkward SURF in that we didn't really research any one question. He gave me a sheet. It was maybe four pages long, it was a list of maybe thirty to forty questions that he had written out, things he had thought about over the years. I don't think I actually solved more than two of them. But just being able to chat with him once a week, throwing out different ideas, things that I was thinking about, seeing how infectious he was and chatting about mathematics – I treasured going in to talk with Luxemburg each and every week. I can't really say that it was a good two-way relationship because I didn't do a whole lot of talking. He did almost all the talking. But I just loved chatting with him every single week. Just meeting with him once a week about all of these things was a big thing for me.

So, I have to say sophomore year was a mixed bag. I mean, I'll be honest, to this day, I hate the math department and really it started that sophomore year. But between seeing Tom Wolff and chatting with Luxemburg – they were the two that kept me at least in in the math major.

KARTHIKEYAN: And you won two awards from the math department in your freshman and your sophomore year.

GOINS: That's right, yeah. Freshman year, I got the Morgan Ward Prize and then sophomore year, I got the Morgan Ward Prize, but Troy and I wrote a paper together. I was hoping I would win the ET Bell Prize – Morgan Ward was given out to freshmen and sophomores, but then ET Bell was given out to the juniors and the seniors. That for me is still kind of a sore point, that I never won the ET Bell Prize.

I'll just quickly say – there were too many favorites in the math department, and I even saw that when I came back as a postdoc. There were certain students that faculty in the math department adored, and they ignored absolutely everybody else. I was never the favorite in the math department. I was never liked in the math department. That was clear.

So, junior year, I had gotten very obsessed with a subject called group theory. It started with Ma 5. I then took every class I could find in the math department. There were classes taught by David Wales who was kind of the resident group theorist at the time. I was taking grad level courses in group theory. I remember taking group theory classes in the physics department, in the chemistry department, just everything I could find in group theory.

So I knew the stuff better than practically anybody else in the department. So, I started writing my own book, trying to say, here are some properties about group theory, but I wanted to completely generalize it, abstract it, and what have you.

I even remember showing some of this to Luxemburg, and he got very interested, and he would tell me there's a professor named Magnus Hestenes who wrote a paper on some of the stuff over at UCLA. I mean, I don't even know how he knew this because the idea that I had was so crazy that there was only one other person on the planet who had actually worked on this, and it was like twenty years before, this guy at UCLA. To this day, that's the only paper I've ever found on this, so I had no idea how Luxemburg even knew about him. But again, Luxemburg was very supportive of a lot of these crazy ideas that I had.

So junior year, I tried to write up some of this, and I figured it was a generalization of group theory. I have been working on this for at least an entire year. Let me write up all of this and turn it in for the ET Bell Prize. Did not get it. I kind of asked around a little bit to try to figure out what was happening.

I never learned that this was the reality, but this is what I heard from people. The secretary in the department was an older woman by the name of Marge D'Elia. Marge, at the time, was the only secretary in the department. She was kind of the life force of the department. You know, math departments aren't really like this anymore, you have maybe five or six secretaries that are there, but she was the one. She knew that all the math faculty were really awkward and really gruff, so when the undergrads came in, she was the face of the department. She always had a smile, was always easy to talk to. So we as students *adored* her. Couldn't stand anybody else, but we adored Marge.

My understanding is that Marge – because I was the only Black math major that had been around for, I don't know, twenty years or something like that – she was extremely supportive. Every time I saw her, she was always kind, welcoming, what have you.

Luxemburg I knew was also very, very supportive. I don't think anybody else was. I think everyone else just kind of wrote me off as this crazy kid that didn't know what he was doing, didn't know what he was talking about. I had heard that they did not accept my submission junior year because it wasn't typeset correctly.

I didn't know anything about LaTeX or any of these things, so I literally wrote everything by hand. They said it needed to be typeset, so they weren't going to accept it. Again, I have no idea if this is true, this is just what I had heard. I figured, okay fine, senior year, I'm going to do everything that I can to make sure that I get this.

Submissions were going to be due something like, let's say, May of my senior year, 1994. I don't remember the exact timeline, but it something like this. So I asked David Wales, can I start meeting with you in January so that I can talk with you each and every week to make sure what I want to do is correct, it's sound, I'm going to get this prize. I made sure to tell David Wales right away, day one, I want to win the ET Bell Prize. I want to do everything I can. I have a theory, I want to talk with you about it week after week to make sure it's legit. He said everything sounds good, let's do this.

So, we met practically every week where I would go to the chalkboard, explain some of these ideas that I had about group theory and all the rest of that. I don't know how much he really paid attention to everything that I was saying, but again, I had taken a couple of classes with him, gotten A's and what have you. At the end of all of this, I wrote up everything, submitted it off to the committee. Did not get it.

So that's when I just realized the department was just kind of stacked against me. I didn't really know what more to do at that point. We're talking a paper that was twenty to thirty pages long. I had chatted with a professor each and every week for weeks to make sure it was correct. I even asked him if he would sign off on it, if he would endorse it. This was David Wales. He said yes. I really had no idea what more to do than that.

I say that it is kind of a sore point that I really worked hard, and I honestly did not know what more to do. So that's why I really felt that I just not only was not supported by the department, but it really actively felt like there were forces that played against me surviving in the department.

You know, you have to piece together: Tom Apostol my freshman year, the fact that I really never got along with Dinakar Ramakrishnan, not really knowing why I didn't get the prizes either one of those two years for the ET Bell. And then senior year with Dinakar Ramakrishnan, I did not ask him for a letter of recommendation because I really felt he was not going to be supportive in any of this. So yeah, I have to admit it was very difficult dealing with the math department junior year and senior year.

KARTHIKEYAN: But you still went off to graduate school in math, and you're a full professor in math, now!

GOINS: So, I didn't think I was going to do math. I had a lot of conversations, very heartfelt conversations, with Steve Frautschi at the end of junior year and start of senior year to ask him,

should I do math or should I do physics? I despised the math department, and I really worried whether I would see the same thing in grad school.

Physics. It wasn't that physics was like a warm, friendly department, but I didn't have anyone – well, I had one professor who was kind of actively against me in physics, but you know, it wasn't like something that I saw for four years. In physics, Ward Whaling was really, really supportive. He was my TA freshman year. I knew him for the next three years or so, and whenever I would see him on campus, he would always stop, he would always chat with me. Ward Whaling was incredibly supportive in the four years that I was there.

There was another guy; I need to look his name up while we're over here chatting – Bill Softky. He was my grad student TA my freshman year. He was also really supportive. Whenever I would see him on campus, he would stop and chat and what have you. So, there were people in physics that were just really nice to me the whole time.

And of course, Frautschi was just extremely supportive. I consider him to be – outside of Doug Flamming – the most supportive faculty member I knew on campus. We could just chat about anything and everything. I remember I was telling him I was really unhappy in the math department, and I didn't know what I should do for grad school. We would actually talk about it quite a bit where he would just tell me, you know, look. Sorry to hear about everything that you're going through here in the math department, but maybe you should consider going to a grad school like Stanford. Stanford is a welcoming place. The math department is really good. The physics department is really good. I think that you would like being there.

I also remember him telling me there was a former Caltech grad student who was in the physics department at Stanford named Doug Osheroff. He told me, you know, go talk to Doug Osheroff. He'll probably be a really supportive guy, and I think that you'll really enjoy it.

And he was completely right. For me, it was heaven. I loved Stanford. But I still had that debate of, do I do math or do I do physics? So, my first year there at Stanford, I took a lot of classes in the physics department, befriended other students in the physics department. The one Black faculty that they had in physics, I would chat with all the time. But I was really very nervous about the math department the whole time I was there because of the experiences I had at Caltech.

KARTHIKEYAN: Let me go back and ask about the development of NSBE throughout your junior and your senior year. You mentioned Eddie Grado's new office, the separate house becoming a new space that minority students would spend a lot of time in. I know when I was talking to Athena Castro [Executive Director of the Caltech Y and previously Community Outreach Coordinator and Assistant Program Director for the Minority Student Affairs Office], she mentioned that you and some of the other people in NSBE essentially had keys to La Casa.

GOINS: No, not essentially! We *did* have keys.

Okay, so let me see. Junior year was a hard year. That was definitely my most difficult year at Caltech for many reasons. Eddie had moved to La Casa my junior year, in '92, '93. That year, I was living off campus the whole year. It was a house owned by Ricketts, but it's not quite the house I lived in my sophomore year. There was only one quarter, I think, sophomore year I was in Ricketts House. Then I moved back to Ricketts and was there in the building, in Ricketts House, for the rest of my sophomore year. But then junior year, I think that was more a lottery thing that I got kicked off campus.

It was fate that the house I was in was literally right in the back of La Casa, so I spent as much time in La Casa as I could. Probably more time than legally I should have, but you know, Eddie actually gave me keys to La Casa. Now, remember, this is an office building that's owned by Caltech, but it literally looks like a house. So I would just kind of walk through – there was a hole in the fence between the house that I lived in, owned by Ricketts, and then this other house. I would just pass through that hole sometimes, you know, Saturday afternoon, Sunday morning, that kind of thing. And I would just go there, open up the house with my keys, and I would just hang out and work there for Saturday and Sunday.

Remember, I'm not really supposed to be there because it's not like this was a place for students just to come hang out, but that was my thing. I would just go in, sometimes just cook burgers in the grill there in the kitchen, and hang out there in the backyard. But that was kind of my second home. That's where I spent most of my junior year, at least on the weekends. Just there at La Casa.

NSBE had grown to become somewhat of a powerhouse by then. At that point in my junior year, it was well known by anybody. If you were a minority student, you got involved with NSBE. Remember, AISES wasn't really off the ground, SHPE was having a really hard time defining itself. NSBE at this point was putting on barbecues on the weekends. If admitted students were coming to visit campus, we would have different activities. I was trying to write various articles for the newsletter to kind of hype up that these were things that NSBE was doing and share other activities for Black students that were happening in Pasadena and also on campus.

And I'd say – oh, what I going to say before I lost my chain of thought here...

KARTHIKEYAN: You were talking about the events that NSBE would put on...

GOINS: Yeah. Yeah, there's something in particular that we did at the end of my sophomore year...

We had a lot of discussions about, what we were going to call, the Minority Student House. I haven't even thought about this in almost twenty years. This was a very, very difficult thing.

After the riots happened and after a lot of us saw the way Caltech students were talking about Black students, minority students, several of us decided we needed to form our own house. The house system was not working. It was not doing it. It was racist. It was oppressive. We needed to do something different.

So, several of us came up with the idea of taking over a house, calling it the Minority House, but realistically, the way we were going to do it is as follows: we knew that Caltech owned various houses in Pasadena. Some of them were technically run by the Ricketts House, the Lloyd House, that kind of thing.

We were going to make the argument, why don't we take one of those houses that students are going to live in off campus anyway, but just make sure that minority students are living in this house? That way, we can have various social activities and what have you there at the house, and this was just going to be like a second La Casa.

In fact, we even had the house picked out. What's ironic is that's where the Caltech Y is now. So, this is why when I see Athena, it freaks me out – her office is the bedroom that we were going to

choose for the Minority House. That whole house, all the rooms that were there – that was the house that we had picked out. That was the house we were going to live in. We even knew who was going to live there and all the rest of it. So to see Athena in her office freaks me out in ways that I can't even describe.

So, we decided we were going to do this. We had various meetings with the minority undergraduates just to ask them what they thought about it, what they felt about it. We told them, realistically, there were only going to be like three of us living there, so it's not like the entire campus is all going to be living there in this house. We knew that there were only going to be maybe three, max four, but we wanted to know their thoughts.

The majority of the minority community was against it. Most of the students were saying they didn't want to segregate. They didn't want to be ghettoized to live in this one house. They didn't really understand why we needed to have a separate culture from things.

But at the same time, when we asked them, well, how do you feel about the way that the house system is now? They said – I'd say about half of them said that they didn't like it. They felt that they couldn't be themselves. They didn't like the culture. Another half said that they really *did* like it and that they did want to live in the house system, and they just wanted to be kind of left alone. They didn't really want to be identified as a minority, they just wanted to live in the houses. We realized that some students were saying they liked the house system. A lot of students were saying that they didn't like the house system, but when it came to supporting the Minority House, most students were against it.

Now, we're already getting kind of slammed from the minority students saying that they don't like it. Then word got out to everyone on campus that we were going to do this. Which meant, almost daily, I was getting harassed by students who were saying they didn't like this idea. Why were the minority students trying to segregate themselves? Why were the minority students being racist? There were friends of mine who didn't even know about the proposal, but they were coming up to me giving me all this crap about this and that.

We eventually did write a proposal to explain all of the details of what we wanted to do with the Minority House. But of course, it got shot down by almost everybody. And I think I felt really kind of upset that before we had the idea, there were a lot of minority students saying that they really hated the house system and that they wish that there were an alternative. Then when we provided an alternative, those same students flipped, saying they didn't want to be part of this whole racist idea, even though we kept telling them only three students were going to live there, so that makes no sense. It's an argument that makes no sense.

There were maybe about eight of us that really worked hard for the Minority House. But because we were getting crap from absolutely everybody, we decided just to stop with the idea. And I think I personally felt really kind of upset about it because that was something I really, really pushed hard for for months.

Just as a follow up, even though it was totally dead at Caltech, when I applied to Stanford, I realized that Stanford actually had not just one of those houses, they had several. At the undergraduate level, there's a theme house for the Black students, one for Asian American students, another one for Latinx students. And they had one for the graduate students.

The one for the grad students, I was the RA for five of the six years – no, sorry, four of the five years I was there as a grad student. So, it was just amazing to me that even though this idea got

completely shot down by everybody at Caltech, it was embraced by a lot of students at Stanford, and I was able to be the RA for one of them for four of the five years I was there. It was kind of like a little bit of vindication when I went off to Stanford.

Yeah, but that was the first half of junior year, knowing that we had really pushed this. Eddie Grado was 100% behind it. But yeah, the students were not supportive at all. I knew Eddie could tell that it was really getting to me that the students were so much, that they were so against this idea.

Second half of junior year came the bombshell. Eddie had been fired.

We kind of had known about the grumblings that he and Jeanne Noda weren't getting along, but it finally came out that there were some questions of whether he mismanaged the funds. We certainly knew that he was very extravagant in things like, when he would go to conferences, he's always fly first class. He'd go to conferences and pay for the meals of the students.

We're not talking simple meals – I remember, in particular, there was one NSBE conference. It was in Texas. Eddie decided we were going to go to Pappadeaux's. There were maybe twenty people at this restaurant. I don't remember how many were Caltech, some of them were friends that he had known at NSBE and what have you, but we're talking twenty people that were there. Not everybody was a student. He would pay for the whole thing. At least he would have Caltech pay for the whole thing. And Pappadeaux's is not cheap.

Now, I remember my meal in particular was probably \$20-\$30. And you know, I was small and young at the time, and I did not eat a whole lot, so I know he must have ordered a good four or five appetizers. I mean, different kinds. And of course, he had to order like two or three because there were so many people that were there. We're talking expensive, expensive meals. And this was almost every meal, every conference. So we would always wonder, where's the money coming from to pay for all of this?

So when the grumblings came out that maybe he was mismanaging funds, we didn't think twice about it. We knew, yeah, that kind of makes sense.

So here's my story. Eddie got fired. I think he let a handful of us know. Maybe it was December '92, somewhere around there? We didn't really know when he was going to leave, we just knew it had been announced that his contract was not going to be renewed. He was going to leave at some point.

Fast forward to maybe February '93, somewhere around there – I'm not going to remember the exact months, but it's somewhere around there. Eddie tells us he has like a month left. He's going to leave. So we as students decide, we're going to throw a big party in his honor and everything is going to be great.

I remember it was maybe at a barbecue that I wanted to announce that we're going to have this going away party. And it was at this barbecue that was probably being run by NSBE, I don't remember exactly. Eddie wasn't there, it was just the students that were there. I remember getting up in front of this whole group, I mean like thirty people that were there at the barbecue in the backyard of La Casa like we typically had, and I said, "Well, as you all know, Eddie's been fired, so we're going to have a going away party."

The audience said, "What are you talking about?" They didn't know. They had no idea. So I was the one that broke it to everyone at Caltech that Eddie had been fired, that he was leaving, and I

felt horrible because if I had known that they didn't know, I would have not said it that way. It completely killed the spirit of the rest of the barbeque because, I mean, at this point Eddie is loved. He is kind of the heart and soul of the minority community. All of our events, our activities are happening at La Casa. You know, we're very, very tight as a group. But yeah, I was the one that announced that Eddie had been fired, that that he was leaving.

But still, Eddie wanted to have a big, big going away party – we're talking mariachis and all the rest. He's going to go out big. He puts together this whole party, and we decide, as students, that we're going to have a few kind of... I don't even know... statements where students are going to go around the room and say how they got to know Eddie.

He didn't want to have anything sad. He really wanted to have it be upbeat and up-tempo and happy, so it was a really fun time. There were a lot of people at this going away party. We're probably talking close to a hundred people. It was a big, big thing. I don't know how we did it, but we stuffed everybody in La Casa for this event.

There was food, laughter, you know all of the rest of that. I remember I was able to say a little bit, to say that when I first met Eddie, that I was a little bit nervous about working with him because I didn't really know who this guy was. One thing I will say that Eddie got a kick out of was I told him that I kind of gave him the benefit of the doubt when I first met him because his name was Eddie, my name was Ed, and so at least we had the same name, so maybe we'd get along.

So I know Eddie really liked that, but that was a good time, at least when we were trying to have people giving their stories of how they got to know Eddie.

Right about that time, Gary Lorden walks into the party. Now, remember, Gary Lorden is Dean of Students. The person who reports to him is Jeanne Noda. And the person who had fired Eddie is Jeanne Noda. So, it could be argued that Gary didn't fire Eddie directly, but that's not the way we as students saw it. No, we as students all saw it as, the buck stops with Gary because he was Dean of Students. So, if Eddie's fired, it's Gary's fault. I don't think Gary saw it that way, which is why he came to the party.

Nobody really said anything for the first, I don't know, maybe half an hour that that he was there. I know at one point, I was talking to Eddie, and Eddie was a little bit tipsy at this point, and he just kind of mentions to me he thought it was offensive that Gary was there at the party. Now, he didn't say it very loudly, just kind of said it offhandedly and then went off to chat with more people. So, while everybody is downstairs at the party, I walk over to Gary and said that, you know, we need to step aside and chat for a second.

Gary and I walk outside, right outside the front door, and I just quietly tell Gary, "You know, not everybody is happy that you're here at the party." Now remember, I'm a junior. I'm majoring in math. He is a math professor, he's Dean of Students, but I'm trying my best to be very calm, very diplomatic and just tell him that we're not all happy that you're here.

So Gary looks at me and says, "Well, which people are not happy that I'm here?"

And I look him in the eye and say, "I personally am not happy that you're here." So, Gary puts his head down and he walks away from the party. I walked back into the room.

A few minutes later, I run into Eddie and he looks around and says, “I see Gary Lorden is no longer here.”

I say, “Yeah, that's right. I asked him to leave.”

Eddie was – I think he had mixed feelings about that. On one hand, I think he was kind of happy. On the other hand, I knew that he understood that that was a very difficult thing for me to do. But yeah, Gary left the party, and then you know we just had a good time for the rest of it.

KARTHIKEYAN: As a junior and as someone within the math department, already knowing that you have difficult interactions with the department –

GOINS: That's right.

But the most difficult time of all of this is... maybe it was a week later? That's when Eddie had to clear out his office, when he had to leave. There were only a handful of us that were around, maybe four of us. He had been spending about the week or so packing up boxes and that kind of thing, but this, this was going to be it. He was going to take the last of his boxes, put them in his car, drive off, drop off his key somewhere, and that was going to be it.

So, a handful of us were there. I don't even remember what day it was. It might have been a Wednesday, 5:00 PM, 6:00 PM. But the offices were already closed, people had gone home. The main secretary at the time was Michelle McClanahan, and I think Michelle left early. I think she couldn't handle it, that Eddie was leaving.

But I remember I was there... and the last thing that Eddie did was, he was just going to try to pack up his car and just tell everybody, okay, you know, did the best I could and I'm out of here.

But he stopped for a second. He gave each of the four of us a quick hug, and he couldn't look us in the eye, and he drove off. And that was Eddie Grado leaving Caltech.

So it – yeah, junior year was a hard year.

Of course, ironically – now, you have to fast forward from 1993 to about 2004 when I was a postdoc at Caltech. At the time, I really wanted to be on the faculty. There was an opening in the math department, I sent in my application. David Baltimore, who was president at the time, I know he was very supportive and really wanted me to stay as a faculty member. He, his office, had been putting a little bit of pressure on the math department to at least consider having me to stay.

Gary Lorden was department chair. And I remember walking into Gary's office because I hadn't heard anything from the department. This was probably around February or so of 2004, maybe about March 2004. At that point, I had gotten an offer to go to Purdue, I had got an interview at Rice University, but I hadn't heard anything from Caltech.

So, I met with Gary, and I just asked him, what's the status of my application? Knowing that all of this had happened eleven years before. I just knew it was fate that things were happening this way.

And so Gary very politely says to me, “When you are more of an accomplished mathematician, we will read your application.”

So I just said, "Okay, thank you." And that's the last time Gary and I have spoken.

KARTHIKEYAN: Wow. I completely understand your feelings about the math department at Caltech. To say that to you – I'll leave it at that.

So, what happened after Eddie left? Did someone jump in and fill the void in the community that he left? Was his replacement taking on that role or was it just not the same?

GOINS: So when Eddie had left – this is maybe around February, March 1993 – I took over the office. Michelle was still secretary, but there was no one who was running that office. Gary Lorden had made no plans to put in a replacement for that office, so there was no one temporary. I think Jeanne Noda maybe left Caltech about a month or so after this. But there were absolutely no plans to have any replacement in that office.

Now, remember, at this point we already had a pretty vibrant community. We're running barbecues pretty much every weekend. Whenever admitted students were there for Prefrosh Weekend or what have you, we were running all these different activities. We also were trying to send out notices about conferences so that students could decide which conferences they wanted to go to.

So when Eddie left, I took over all of that.

KARTHIKEYAN: As a junior at Caltech!

GOINS: As a junior at Caltech double majoring in math and physics. So that meant when I wasn't in class, I would go back to La Casa, and I would just set up shop for five hours a day, every day.

And I remember talking with Michelle McClanahan, the person who was secretary, asking her, are there any flyers that she has for conferences coming up, anything that she's heard about students? I would then gather all the information. I created an email list for all the minority students, so I would then send them messages. Now this is 1993, you know, email is not exactly a big, big thing, but I set up the very first email list that we had, and I would just send it to students saying, you know, there's going to be an NSBE conference, a SHPE conference, and AISES conference, you name it. I would just send out all these notices about conferences.

If there were barbecues, I was the one that was planning the barbeque. Michelle would be the one purchasing all the food, but I was the one making sure the flyers were done, they were sent out. I'd be the one opening up the building because I had the key, would make sure that the barbeque grill was set up. When it was done, I would put back the barbecue grill, I would clean off everything.

So, I mean, nobody really understands it, but I was running that office for several months. You know, not getting paid for it because of course Caltech doesn't know that I'm doing any of this, but in terms of the minority community, that was my life.

It was crazy. In some sense, it was kind of a good thing, because I learned a lot about time management. I was taking full load of classes, double majoring, still thinking about grad school, I was still president of the NSBE chapter. But I found a way to make it all work. I was still taking classes, surviving classes, but trying to do all of these things to keep the community together. So there was a lot of work, but it was all getting done.

Yeah, the rest of that junior year was not a fun time because I really did not trust the administration, but things were getting done.

KARTHIKEYAN: And did you receive any support from any of the offices at Caltech when you were running Minority Student Affairs –

GOINS: Well, there were no offices! It's not like, you know, you go to this office or that office. There was the Dean's Office, but remember we weren't talking to the Dean's Office, we didn't trust the Dean's Office.

There was maybe the Graduate Office, but Connie Caldaron was kind of the equivalent of NSBE – sorry, of Eddie, who was in the Graduate office. Connie would oftentimes come to the events, so we knew who she was, but she didn't have an office where she would run activities. It's more she was the one that would do recruiting, but there was no office. There were no offices to work with.

KARTHIKEYAN: Yeah.

GOINS: I mean, there was nobody. We were it. La Casa, Minority Student Affairs, that was it. Period. Things like the Womens' Center, all the stuff that's happening with the Student Support Center [now called the Center for Student Services] now, that's all an outgrowth of what we were doing at La Casa. That's *because* we were doing it.

I mean, we were it. One hundred percent. We were it. You know, I certainly had a good relationship with the Caltech Y, with Athena Castro, with Sue Borrego when she was there.

But I mean, that was the Y, they were doing their own thing. So I knew about them. I would be happy to chat with them. They oftentimes would come to our barbecues and hang out and what have you, but the reality is, we were it when it came to doing anything on campus. So, it was *entirely* student-run for several months.

KARTHIKEYAN: Let me ask you a general question about that. I think one of the things that student organizers have to run into at Caltech is, Caltech is such a specific environment. A lot of the organizing tactics that you might use at other schools or in bigger communities or more diverse or broader communities don't work at Caltech. So, as you were in charge of this massive ship, what were some of the tactics or strategies that you used to put on events or to bring the community together that you found effective?

GOINS: So what worked for me was, I was constantly talking to people. In all of this, I'm still knocking on people's doors in the evening just to kind of see how they're doing, see what they're up to. Even if they weren't coming to barbecues, I could knock on their door, tell them we're having a barbeque, this is what's happening, these are debates in the community. Students that didn't know that Eddie had left because, you know, they wouldn't come to the NSBE meetings, I would tell them.

I knew every Black student on campus, plain and simple. I knew everybody because I was literally knocking on people's doors every other day just to kind of see where people were.

I think what worked for us was having a pretty clear vision of what we needed to do, and then it was just a matter of figuring out how to do. So, for example, we knew how many Black students

there were in the undergraduates, how many Black students there were as grad students, how many Black faculty there were. I worked on having a list, having a database. I worked on the email list. So, there wasn't a question of how do you rally the community, how do you talk to people. That was solved. If we needed to rally people, send an email to people, we had an email list. We knew everybody on campus. Even if we didn't have the email list, I knew every single person on that list personally. So rallying the community was never an issue. I don't know how much of an issue it is now, but back then because of the way things worked out, we all knew each other. Even if we didn't, I was kind of the central focus point, so I could definitely make sure that people knew what was what.

There were four questions, four issues that that we had. The first one I'll mention is faculty. We basically knew we had no power over faculty. There was nothing we could do, so we're not even going to worry about this issue.

I will say, however, there were two Black faculty on campus starting junior year – sorry, starting senior year. Sossina Haile, I think that's her name, she was Electrical Engineering? I forget which department. But she's left Caltech now, I think she might be at Northwestern University, I can't really remember. A Black woman, I think she's from Ethiopia.

And then there was a young Black faculty member. He was a grad student at Caltech, I think he had gone away to Stanford to do... maybe a postdoc, and then he came back to Caltech as a faculty member. So we welcomed him right when he got the campus so we could kind of chat with him, bring him into the fold. That was Steve Mayo.

So, he had *just* gotten to campus. I mean, literally, he was on campus for maybe four days. I remember that there were three of us that kind of came as the welcoming team. It was myself, Danny Howard, and a guy who... I just forgot his name, I can see his face... David Alan Beam, who we called Lieutenant Commander. He was a grad student in physics. So the three of us (myself, Danny, and David), we literally went to Steve Mayo. He hadn't even had his office, his lab set up yet. He even told us the MRI is still sitting in crates over there, on the other side of the building. But we wanted to come in, welcome him, ask him to come to the NSBE meetings so he can kind of get to know us and we would get to know him.

So, he did. He came to the first NSBE meetings that we had. The problem there was David Beam talked too much and offended him. And the rest of us thought David went too far. I think at one of the first meetings, maybe it was the second meeting that we had throughout the year – you know, David was a slightly older guy, he had been in the military, that's what we called him Lieutenant Commander. He had been in the military, then he came back to be in the physics department at Caltech.

At that first meeting, he kind of launched in to Steve, saying things like, “You're one of the few Black faculty members, you need to do more to help us, these are all the different things that you need to do on campus.” And Steve, rightfully so, was saying, “I just got here three weeks ago. I'm not going to do all of this stuff, you know, kind of wait until I get myself tenure. Then maybe I'll come back and I'll help.”

And David kept launching into him, saying, “No, you need to do this stuff now.” So Steve never came back to the NSBE meetings, and I 100% don't blame him. If I were young faculty member in his position, I wouldn't have come back either. For what it's worth, David actually pissed off a lot of people, and there are a lot of us, myself included, that just did not want to talk to him anymore. But that was kind of our first idea – to work with the faculty members. We tried to reach out to Steve. It backfired, in particular because of David.

Second thing we wanted to do was recruit grad students. So yes, we did try to work a little bit with Connie Caldaron, who was in the Graduate Office. She herself was doing a lot of recruiting.

This is where we spent a lot of time going to the NSBE conferences. I would literally be at the recruitment table there for the graduate fair. I did this for SACNAS [Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science], for NSBE, for the NCBPS. I cannot tell you how many recruiting tables I did for Caltech. Now, this wasn't like I was there with five other people. This was, I was there by myself for the full five hours. Me, as an undergraduate, trying to recruit on behalf of Caltech. And this was *conference* after *conference* after *conference* where there were no other Caltech faculty, no other Caltech students, and I'm there doing all of this by myself.

Danny definitely came with us for a few conferences, and I know one of our successes was when we got Karina Montilla Edmonds. She is somebody that we met at the NSBE conference, and I don't remember where it was. Maybe it was New York City? I don't really remember, but that was at the NSBE Nationals in... '93, maybe it was, that we met her. Turns out she already got into Caltech, but then I know Danny did something to kind of help her out with the financial aid part. But she came in as a grad student in Aeronautical Engineering.

So that was step number two. We knew if we wanted to get more students, *we* had to do the recruiting. We did not rely on "an office" because there was no other office. So we decided, ourselves, we were going to learn about these conferences. We were just going to go find people, talk to them, convince them to come to Caltech.

Problem number three was recruiting for undergraduates, and this was things like Prefrosh Weekend, making sure that we were literally calling students, asking them to please consider coming to Caltech. It didn't matter whatever else was happening at Caltech during Prefrosh Weekend, we always had a barbeque. We would find the list of the minority students that had been admitted. We would then call them, email them, tell them we're having a barbeque at this location at this time, this day, come to it. So we would organize the whole thing ourselves and we did that for maybe 2-3 years. That was our way of reaching out to the incoming – well to the admitted Black students to convince them to come to Caltech. We couldn't care less what admissions was going to do. We just know that this is something *we* had to do, so we did it. It was 100% student-initiated, student-run.

And then the fourth thing that we decided is we had to fight the fact that Caltech did not celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday. I know it's something that you don't think about now, but remember, Caltech did not observe it as a holiday.

The President at the time, Thomas Everhart, was 100% against observing it as a holiday. I met with Everhart several times to tell him this is offensive, we need to change it. Everhart was just condescending, saying no, Caltech doesn't celebrate holidays, so no. But we fought year after year trying to meet with him, write him petitions, all the rest of that, and he just completely ignored it.

Eventually, we tried to do the strategy of convincing the faculty they should cancel classes because, at the time, faculty were told it's optional whether they wanted to cancel classes. Of course, no faculty did. Every faculty member would just hold classes that day. In the humanities, they realized how insane it was.

So, in the humanities, we did not have classes. All the classes were canceled in humanities. But physics? Math? They would all have classes, that was never a question. Eventually we would have a King Day celebration, and I don't remember exactly who started that. I think it might have been the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences, HSS.

They might have been the one to start that celebration. We would have an outside speaker come in and talk about the importance of Martin Luther King Day, and all the rest of that. And we, as students, were always making a point, almost like a protest, that we would be there for it. But remember the insanity of it all: we would have an outside speaker come and talk about the importance of Martin Luther King. All the classes were canceled in HSS, so this was a big thing over in Baxter. And the rest of campus, they would have classes. Classes wouldn't be cancelled. Math, physics classes would go on like it was nothing.

So, it was this weird dichotomy that we as NSBE students were really pushing this, trying to convince other students to attend. And sometimes the students would push back saying, I can't go because I have physics class that day. But that was our thing as NSBE. We just said we're going to push this, we're going to advertise it, even if the President doesn't care. We're going to push it anyway.

But I would say those were the key four issues that we always talked about. Once we knew those were the four, we had a strategy for those four. And we just pushed forward.

Whether or not they worked, that's a totally different question, but I'm saying that when I would meet with all the Black students and chat with them, when I would knock on their doors, I would tell them these are the four. This is what we're doing. And if you want to be a part of it, great. If you don't, you know, okay, but this is the four. This is what we're going to try to focus on.

KARTHIKEYAN: The lack of support that you all had is so atrocious.

GOINS: Mhm hm.

KARTHIKEYAN: I should say, I know it's 4:57, I know we should close up. I was hoping to ask you about the series of articles that you wrote for the *Tech* and a bit more about your senior year, but I don't want to force you to go over, I'm sure you have a meeting after this.

GOINS: I'm actually free, so if you wanted to keep chatting, it's totally your call.

KARTHIKEYAN: That would be great if you are free.

GOINS: Okay.

KARTHIKEYAN: Thank you for that... yeah, I'm sorry, it's taking me a minute to process everything you're saying. I'm so shocked that you're still willing to talk to me and engage with Caltech.

GOINS: Yeah, this is what I was trying to say earlier. There's a lot that went down, a lot, and people have no clue. They have no idea. I haven't even told you the whole story, you know, these are just kind of the easy things to talk about. It's just a lot, a lot that happened.

KARTHIKEYAN: Yeah.

GOINS: Well, let me say in terms of writing, I had kind of made the decision my junior year that I just wanted to write. Not necessarily write about the history of Caltech, just more saying, here are activities happening in Caltech, you guys need to know about these things.

There are several articles I wrote for *The Tech*, and I have them all listed in my CV. It took me awhile to find them, so I can send links to some of those, but they all didn't just appear in my senior year. I wrote maybe two or three in my junior year, just kind of announcing different things that were happening on campus.

So, one of them that a lot of people don't know is Michael Eric Dyson came to Caltech maybe in '93, somewhere around there. That actually happened in a really, really weird way. So, around 1993, there was this guy that we saw on Oprah a couple of times. This young guy who just really liked to talk. It turned out that he actually visited my church in LA right about that time.

Now, this is where things get a little bit unfortunate. Danny and I were kind of starting to have a falling out, right around my junior year. You know, even though I'm from South Central LA, it's only about eighteen miles away, I didn't have a car. So the times that I needed to go back to LA, I would ask Danny to drive me. There were a couple of times that he would drive me to my church that's there in LA. I can't say that I'm very religious, but, you know, it's this place where I grew up, all of my friends and family were there. I would listen to the church broadcast on the radio because it would come out every Sunday. I at least wanted to go back just to be able to see family and this kind of thing, but I couldn't do it unless Danny would drive me.

I eventually found out that Danny was going to visit the church, but he didn't tell me that he was going to visit the church. The way that I found this out was, there was one Sunday Michael Eric Dyson was giving a sermon there at the church. Danny met up with him afterwards and told him it would be really great if he could maybe come to Caltech to give a talk. Now, he wasn't extremely well known at the time. I mean, he was literally the guy that was known from Oprah because he was just very young and he threw out all these really big words, was just really interesting, but he's nowhere near as crazy famous as he is now.

So Danny had worked it out with Michael and his wife Marcia, that they were going – sorry, Marcia. I think that that's how you pronounce it – that they were going to come to Caltech to give at least one talk. It was going to be an evening address. I forget exactly how it was all set up, but basically it was Danny's thing. He had set everything up.

But remember that we had all these barbecues that would happen at La Casa, so we had this really fun time with Michael Eric Dyson, who was hanging out in the backyard at La Casa. And we got into this really detailed argument about rap music because several of us were hardcore into rap, and I remember we got into this really weird argument about the Pharcyde and whether the Pharcyde was really the best group or not. He was this young guy and he was really, really into rap, so he hung out with us for a couple of hours, just chatting about a lot of these different things.

When he was done, we did have the talk, and I don't remember that the talk was extremely well attended. I think it was in the basement of... Beckman Institute, I think that's where it was. It might have been sixty people in the audience, I don't really remember, but I do remember I thought that it was such a significant thing, it needed to be discussed in *The California Tech*.

So, I wrote an article about the whole thing. It was just something I decided to do. I thought it needed to be discussed, no one from *The Tech* was there to talk about it, so I needed to talk

about it. So that's one of the articles that I wrote for *The Tech*, this whole article about Michael Eric Dyson visiting Caltech.

KARTHIKEYAN: Let me just note when the article came out because I have it pulled up. For the record, so it's there, it's the issue from *The Tech* from Friday, May 6, 1994 and it's the front cover article on "Instilling Pride in Our Black Community," page 1.

GOINS: Great, great.

I will say, by that point, Danny and I were not really on great terms. That was during my senior year, and it was just very awkward at that point.

But again, you know, these were things that I just thought I really needed to do, to write these articles because they were about things happening in the Black community, but *The California Tech* wasn't reporting on them, but they needed to be reported on. Somebody needed to talk about these things.

KARTHIKEYAN: This is unrelated to writing, but I'm curious – I think you had mentioned last week when we talked that NSBE had become a hub for the broader Black community and for the minority community on campus, beyond just students, beyond undergrads and graduate students. What role were people like Bill Hutchinson, or I think you mentioned Virgil last week, what were they doing as part of NSBE at this time? Were they coming to events, where they involved in the efforts to set up the Minority Student House? What was the relationship between the student part of NSBE and the rest of the community?

GOINS: Let me see if I can give you a better sense of what NSBE was like. I think we increased our meetings to maybe once a week. I think that that's what we did. I wish I could remember whether it was once a week or once a month, but we had it set up so that we had a lot of things happening at each and every meeting.

So some of this was just discussing what's happening on campus, trying to figure out if there's going to be Prefrosh Weekend, who's going to be there to welcome students, send out the emails.

Some of this was bringing in outside speakers. So sometimes, we would have someone who was doing recruiting for a company, and we would have them come in, hang out, chat with our students to see if it was a good fit, if they want to work for such a company that summer.

Others were like when I mentioned Elise Anderson who was, I think the President of the California chapter of NSBE, she would come out and talk about this is what NSBE is. So it wasn't just that we were sitting there all kind of talking to ourselves.

There were some weeks where that's what we did, but other weeks where we were really trying to say, if students are looking for jobs, for employment, if they want to know what's happening outside of campus, here's kind of a bigger picture of different activities.

So there was a lot of discussion at the meetings. A lot of students, grad students, undergraduates, just sitting around chatting about things. This is where we could really discuss things like, what are we going to do about trying to get more faculty? What are we going to do about trying to get more grad students in such and such department? If we know that these people are going to travel off to this conference, then who wants to go so we can have a recruiting table? We would actively have conversations like that.

The meetings were definitely not just awkward students sitting around having pizza for an hour. I mean, maybe they had the awkwardness for about 20 minutes or so, but then we got into planning and strategizing mode, figuring out who's going to do what, how are we going to do this, you know, what's happening here and there. That wasn't everybody's cup of tea. Some students really liked that and they would hang around and chat. Others would leave a little bit early, which was perfectly fine.

I'd say the meetings where we had somebody like Bill Hutchinson, who would come by, he would sit around and then just start to tell the stories about people like James King, and how Jim King was over at JPL and he's doing all these great things, but that they knew each other as grad students. And we would all kind of say, who's Jim King? We had no idea, so he would tell us a lot of stories about this and that. So a lot of this was just this constant communication and learning a lot about these things.

I think I personally really got interested hearing these stories from Bill Hutchinson, wondering if he's one person telling us all of these crazy stories, how many stories are there out there that we don't know about? So having him there was really what piqued my interest in things.

Now let me also say that there were other alumni that were around chatting about things. Like Jack Prater. He graduated in 1991, at the end of my freshman year. He went off to grad school for maybe a year – either one or two years, I don't remember exactly. But I know that he came back in 1993 and he was just literally hanging around campus at that point.

But, see, a lot of the younger students, those that came in '91 or '92, they didn't know who he was. It was those of us who were juniors and seniors who knew about him because we know him from our freshman year. So he would come to the NSBE meetings and hang out and tell us stories about other alums that he had known from years before.

One name that he used to always talk about was Jones Murphy. He used to tell us crazy stories about Jones Murphy. So for years and years, I just heard story after story. I *just* met Jones Murphy for the first time like six months ago over on Facebook. And I had to tell him that he's kind of a living legend and the way that Jack used to tell us stories when Jack was at the NSBE meetings.

When I say stories, these weren't fun, happy stories. These were stories such as... we might sit around and talk about how we were trying to walk from one House to the other, and were stopped by campus security. That was the typical story. Black students *consistently* would talk about being stopped by campus security. Every Black student had a story about being stopped by campus security because you left one dorm, were going into another dorm, and campus security would say, I need to see ID. It was 9:00 PM on Caltech's campus. Nobody is in Pasadena, who do you think is going to be walking into Rickett's house without a Caltech ID at 9:00 PM?

And they would say, "Oh well, I'm sorry." And then the same thing would happen the next day.

This was constant, story after story after story. We always talked about this at the NSBE meeting.

So then Jack, of course, would one up us and talk about the infamous Jones Murphy and stories about how Jones Murphy would maybe get stopped by the police. He then escalated by cursing the police out, then the police would ask for backup, then you would have one Black guy being surrounded by six Caltech security members, and then eventually they realized that he really

was a Caltech student, so then they would apologize and let him go. But this would happen constantly with Jones Murphy.

So those were the kind of stories we would talk about at the NSBE weeks. They were not fun, happy stories about, you know, people doing a Tommy's run. No, they were crazy, crazy stories all the time.

But yeah, that was our history. That's how we learned about it.

KARTHIKEYAN: And those are still stories that are told by Black students on campus. Stories about getting stopped by campus security, getting stopped by Pasadena police running in the neighborhoods around campus, especially to the south of campus.

GOINS: Yep. Yep, that is right. That is right.

I know at one point, we at the NSBE chapter had talked about actually meeting with campus security, and I think we did that at one point, just to kind of say how we were upset. I hope I'm remembering this right, I think that we did have the head of campus security come by for one meeting and apologize and talk to us about this kind of thing. And I know things got a little bit better for a while because the campus security understood that we were not happy about constantly being stopped.

But of course, things went back to business as usual, you know, maybe like six months later.

KARTHIKEYAN: Yeah. How did you get started researching the history of underrepresented minorities at Caltech, in particular, Black students? Do you mind walking me through what prompted that?

GOINS: Yeah, let me see if I remember how this all started.

Summer 1993, in between junior and senior year, I wanted to do my next SURF. Now, remember, I couldn't do a SURF summer '91 because of Apostle. I worked with Luxemburg summer of '92. So, summer of '93, I decided I wanted to do something different.

I was not happy with the math department, didn't feel comfortable talking to any professors in the physics department, but I had done a lot of work with Doug Flamming, taken a lot of classes with him in humanities. So, I asked Doug if we could work together and then do a project summer 1993. Doug said a couple of things. I think Doug knew, in general, I was starting to ask questions about Black scientists and what have you. I don't remember whose idea it was to look at the Black students at Caltech. I honestly don't remember if Doug suggested it or if it was something that I brought up first, but I know that he and I talked about it as a SURF project.

Now, ironically, Doug was going to be on leave, on sabbatical, that summer. I don't remember exactly, but there was a guy visiting Caltech at the time, named Bryant Simon. He was a young guy, had a really thick accent. I loved Bryant. Bryant – I don't know if he and Doug had gone to the same school in Tennessee, but they definitely knew each other very, very well. Bryant was not much older than I was. I mean, Bryant may have been twenty-five, twenty-seven. I don't even know if he had gotten his PhD yet, but if he had, he had had it for a month or something like that. Bryant and I completely hit it off like within the first two minutes we met each other, just totally, totally hit it off. So Doug asked if Bryant would officially be my advisor for the SURF project. So we worked together the whole summer.

What I learned from Bryant is how to do history research. Plain and simple. I am extremely indebted to Bryant because of how patient he was because I know I was not a great writer, I was not a great researcher, I did not know what I was doing. I often came to him with these crazy ideas and Bryant found ways they could actually happen.

For example, I had no idea where to start in even learning who were some of the first Black students. No clue. So this is where Bryant would recommend nowadays what I think are kind of obvious things, but he would say, what about going to the Alumni Association, going over to the Admissions Office, and just asking them what alumni there are.

So I went over to the Alumni Association, asking what Black alum do you have that I could cover for my SURF project, and they told me, well, we don't keep track of Black alum and you are not a member of the Alumni Association, so we can't give you any of that data anyway. So that shut down the Alumni Association during the SURF.

So then I thought, okay, fine, let me try to go over to the Admissions Office. I believe Carol Snow was the Admissions Director at that point. I remember asking her a little bit, and she could give me some information, but they were admissions, they didn't really deal with alumni. So she kind of helped me a little bit, at least in figuring out how many people were coming in per year. How many have been admitted, how many matriculated. She eventually asked me to talk to this guy named Frank Vargas.

I forget exactly what his title was, but he worked over in Admissions. Frank was not exactly the world's most supportive guy when it came to this data, but he's the one that said, look, I have this data sitting over here. If you're willing to sit over in the corner in my office, then you can work while I'm here. So, you know, I would kind of be there in his office while he's sitting at his desk, and I was literally on the floor, going through papers and all the rest of this, writing down in my notebook just numbers of things. Because, you know, I couldn't photocopy any of this stuff, so I would just write down the numbers whenever I found numbers here and there.

The next thing was, I wanted to figure out what were the experiences of the Caltech students. I wanted to do a survey, but I didn't really know what a survey was like, I didn't really know how to do this. Bryant spent a lot of time telling me you have to be very careful in how you bias individuals in a survey. I think I did a first draft, he looked at it and said, these questions are a little bit too biased. They're too negative against Caltech. I know that we went back and forth a little bit with him trying to tell me, here's how to be very careful as to how to write a survey.

Then, of course, the question came up: how do I get the survey mailed out? So I think at this point, I maybe went to the Graduate Office to ask them if they had any addresses of former PhD students or what have you. But I know getting those addresses was not easy because, again, the Alumni Association wasn't really willing to help, so I had to be a little bit creative in getting some of that. I don't remember at all how I got some of the addresses, but I know I mailed out somewhere around 60-100 surveys to former alum.

I don't remember how many I got back, maybe 30-40? Somewhere around there. Some of these were asking things like, "Did you like your experience at Caltech? Did you have any awkward experiences as a minority? Can you describe them?" You know, things like this. I can always send you a copy of the survey since I don't remember exact questions. But I know that the general feeling was, at least amongst people who responded, they did not have a positive experience at Caltech.

But again, a lot of those questions were just trying to get at the general experiences of students from Caltech. Now, at the end of the SURF, as you know, is the SURF Seminar Day. I gave a few presentations on some of the things that I had discovered over the summer, and I think some of those included talking about... let's see. Bill Hutchinson, Jones Murphy... I might have talked about.... no, I don't think I talked about James LuValle at this point. But it was just, you know, very kind of preliminary information that I had found. I gave several talks as part of SURF Seminar Day and they seemed to have gone over pretty well.

This is where I don't remember the timeline, but I do remember at some point, I got a couple of letters in the mail. One was telling me I needed to look up information about James LuValle, who I did not know about from the research, but I don't remember if I learned this at the end of the SURF or at the start of the next quarter. But I do remember this is someone I didn't really know about during the SURF.

So, someone just said you need to look up this information about James LuValle, and when I did, I realized that there's a whole treasure trove on this guy who was in the Olympics, you know, first Black to get his PhD at Caltech, from what I could tell with the records. No one at Caltech seemed to know about this guy except for a couple of staff members. People who had been around for a really long time. So the more I learned about LuValle, I think at one point, I wrote a letter to what I thought was his address. Turned out it was his wife's, and he had just passed away a few months before. But then, you know, I started to learn more and more about this guy LuValle. Of course, I'm fascinated, thinking that there's a guy that I knew nothing about, that no one else knows anything about.

So I think at that point is when I kind of decide I need to write some articles for *The California Tech* to put this information out there. I know one of the most popular articles was about James LuValle, the fact that he was in the Olympics and what have you. I get a second letter from a staff member – and I wish I could remember exactly which office – saying something to the effect of... I think I'm talking about... What is his name, what is his name... he's a physicist at Western Kentucky University, was at Ricketts from '61 to '65... I can see his face and I can't think of his name. Charles Hosewell McGruder III. I thought he was the first Black student to graduate from Caltech, because he's there in 1961. I couldn't find any information before him, so I thought he was the first one. I don't remember if I exactly say this in *The California Tech*, but I say something to this effect.

This is when I get a letter from a staff member saying, actually, he was not the first. The first was a guy named Grant Venerable, and he knows this because of two reasons. Number one, it was in the Caltech news, maybe fifteen years before, that they listed him out as the first Black student. And he was in the Caltech news because there is a book fund in his name, and the guy shows me a copy of the actual little insignia with the book fund.

Apparently, no one knew this. From all the stuff that I could find out from people I could talk to, nobody knew about this. So I learned about Grant Venerable from the staff member who happened to read the article in *The California Tech*.

So, that's when I was really happy that I was trying to write these articles, because then I'm getting back feedback from staff that are saying that they're happy with seeing this. They're writing me letters telling me, you know, here's information that you might not have known before.

You have to understand, at the same time, the undergraduates were *not* supportive. It's completely torn how the undergrads feel about it. Some undergrads feel like I'm being a little bit

too angry in these articles, trying to talk about how racism is a thing when racism really isn't a thing because "science is colorblind."

Other people are trying to say that it's a good thing that I'm writing all these articles, because then people are learning more and more about the history. And remember, these are some of my friends that I'm seeing in Ricketts that are coming up to me, talking to me about pros and cons. So it's very awkward in my senior year that the staff is overwhelmingly supportive that I'm writing this, but yet the students at Caltech are kind of mixed.

KARTHIKEYAN: I think you mentioned to me that you – oh, I'm sorry.

GOINS: Yeah, no, no, it's fine, it's fine.

KARTHIKEYAN: I think you had mentioned to me that you also tried going into the Archives to get records for your research. Right? Do you mind reminding me what happened with that?

GOINS: Right, let me see if I remember the details here. The head of the Caltech Archives at the time was Judith Goodstein, who also was the Registrar and was also the wife of David Goodstein, who was a physicist. He's the person who taught me Ph 1. I didn't like David Goodstein as a professor. I didn't even like Judith Goodstein as a person, but I had to talk to her for two reasons. One is, she's the Registrar and this is my senior year. Two is, she's the head of the Archives, and I want to get this data, this information.

Now I'm not going to remember all of the details, but I do remember meeting with her saying, "I'm doing this history project, I really want information from the Caltech Archives." And I remember her telling me, essentially, I cannot have access to the archives. It's not going to happen. But I remember specifically asking her, can you give me information about one or two individuals. So, one that I asked about... me see if I'm going to remember this guy's name. He was a Black student at Caltech from '65 through '69. I know him because he eventually went off to be a senator in Pennsylvania and was very involved politically. It'll take a second –

KARTHIKEYAN: Oh, I know who you're talking about.

GOINS: Yeah, let's see if I can just do a quick search to find him.

KARTHIKEYAN: It's not Joseph Rhodes, is it? Joseph Rhodes Jr.?

GOINS: Joseph Rhodes, yes, thank you. Yes, Joseph Rhodes.

So I remember asking in particular about Joseph Rhodes and I know that she sent me a lot of information from the Archives on Joseph Rhodes, like a few pictures that she had when he was working with Lee DuBridge, who was President of Caltech at the time.

But that's the only thing I ever got from the Archives – maybe, I don't know, six pages or so of a few things that they had photocopied, but I couldn't get anything else from the Archives. I just don't remember any more details. I just remember, at best, meeting with Judith Goodstein and her telling me that she was not going to give me access to look at things. So they sent me copies to my mailbox, but that's the most support that I've got.

KARTHIKEYAN: And you were saying before I jumped in that the student population was not responding well.

GOINS: Right, right. They were not. I think it didn't really surprise me because of what I remember seeing back with the LA riots, back in '92. I had a certain attitude of, I really don't care how you all feel because I've done this work. I've done this research. I just need to get the word out there that this is what's happening. So I just made it a point that there were going to be ten articles.

Now, I was never approached by anybody to write these articles. Adam Villani who was a fellow Scurve [member of Ricketts House] was also, I think, the lead editor for *The California Tech*. So, he loved it. I mean, he was 100% supportive of me writing all of this. But the funny thing is, I just remember telling Adam, I'm going to do it regardless. If you decide that you don't want to publish any of these, that's totally on you. I'm going to write this because I, myself, really just want to get the word out there, so I'm going to challenge myself to get out a total of ten articles.

I mean, I'm happy that I did it, but I will say that it wasn't like I really gained any friends in the whole process. It's kind of nice now, in hindsight, that people are saying that it's a really great thing that I did all of this, but you have to understand, when I was writing it, it wasn't like it was a great thing.

I mean, it wasn't great to go to dinner there at Ricketts in the evenings, knowing that half the people are happy that I'm writing this and the other half of the people think I'm just wasting my time and making things worse.

I also remember that there were certain editorials that were coming out saying very awkward things about the articles, that I don't have the information right, and all the rest of this. So, you know, again, it's not really like I'm getting a lot of support from people.

One of the nicest things, though, was when Morgan Kousser wrote an editorial in support of what I was doing. But, again, he was very good friends with Bryant Simon, with Doug Flamming. He saw me over in Baxter all the time, working on all of this, and he knew I was spending week after week, literally going through microfilm, just trying to find information to get all this stuff together. Some of that was actually for Doug's book, but it was not easy to get a lot of this information. This is something that I was doing even after the SURF project was done because I just really wanted to know the answers to these things.

KARTHIKEYAN: Let me note again for the record that the first of those articles was published in the Friday, January 7, 1994 issue of *The Tech* and it started on the first page. It's titled, "It's Part of Our Past: A Look at the History of Caltech's Black Students," and it continued on a weekly basis for ten weeks.

Let me ask – we've talked a bit about the math department and the physics department. Clearly, you were spending a lot of time in Baxter. What was HSS [the Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences] like for you?

GOINS: I found it to be extremely welcoming. I spent a lot of time in Doug Flamming's office, just chatting about this or that. I remember also spending a lot of time in the basement of Baxter because that's where a lot of the humanities classes were held, typically in the evenings. So I do have a lot of fond memories of sitting there in the awkward chairs, in the awkward shaped building. But I really enjoyed almost all of my humanities classes.

The discussions with the students were awkward, but still, you know, Doug was always wonderful. Bryant was wonderful. Morgan was wonderful. It's ironic that I never had a class with Morgan Kousser, but I would see him all the time, and I would really enjoy just chatting with him.

Morgan, I would say, is even to this day my image of a college professor. You know, this guy, you walk into his office, and it is terrifying. There are books everywhere, papers everywhere. You have no idea how he gets along because he can't find anything, but clearly he is a brilliant guy and when you have a conversation with him, he is just 100% engaging. So, I always enjoyed chatting with Morgan, even if it was just a quick twenty-minute conversation about something, it was always fun to chat with him.

So there were these individuals that were just fun to talk to. Not fun in the sense of, they cracked jokes and what have you, but just inspiring. If I had really crazy ideas, they would find a way to encourage me, to help me work with it.

I remember, in particular, there was a title I wanted to call the whole project for SURF. I think it was at the start of the summer before Doug was going to be around, when we were trying to figure out how Bryant was going to be my defacto supervisor. I wanted to call the project one thing that was going to have profanity in the title. I remember Doug asking, what's your title going to be. I said it. Doug paused for a moment and said, "No, you are not going to use that title, why don't you call it something like, 'The History of Caltech's Black Students?'" I said, "Okay, fine, that's what I'll call it." Now, I really wanted to use like this profanity-laden title, but Doug said no, he really did not want me to do that. But you know, the point is, he could have been very offended and told me no, and I'm not going to be your advisor, but he was still supportive and gave me a title that worked and stuck even to this day. So a lot of the faculty were very, very supportive, even with these crazy ideas that I had.

There was a secretary in the department. I believe her name was Olga. She had a very thick German accent, but she was also very, very supportive. It wasn't like she was Doug's secretary, she was the secretary there for the department, but I remember her being just a wonderful person to chat with.

I have a lot of fond memories of those four individuals. I can't say I talked to anyone outside of those four over in Baxter, but those four certainly gave me very fond memories of the campus.

Probably the most fond memory I have (and this might sound a little bit weird) – because I had so many evening classes over in Baxter, there were times when it was maybe ten, eleven o'clock at night when I walked back from Baxter over to Ricketts. And just the evening sky, the ambiance there in the evenings at nighttime between the Birthday Cake [Beckman Auditorium] and Baxter – I enjoyed just sitting out there for maybe about half an hour or so and enjoying that whole space.

I never enjoyed the space outside of the math department. There were times that I would be there because I had to be, because I might have had classes between Lauritsen and Sloan and – I forget the other – Bridge. Yeah, the other physics building there. But I never really felt comfortable.

But being outside of Baxter, just that area there where graduation typically takes place, that's where I would spend a lot of time relaxing in the evenings, clearing my head, thinking about

things. Yeah, humanities was my life line there at Caltech. I don't know if I would have graduated from Caltech if it weren't for HSS.

KARTHIKEYAN: So, it's your senior year. You were working on this set of articles. Were you still president of NSBE at that point?

GOINS: I was. Yup, I was still president.

KARTHIKEYAN: Yeah. As you were thinking about graduating, about going to grad school, about leaving Caltech, what was going on in NSBE at that time? How were you preparing for that transition? What was the rest of the NSBE chapter doing at the time?

GOINS: So there were a lot of things happening that senior year. NSBE was full steam ahead, we were doing still the barbecues, getting ready for Prefrosh Weekend, sending students off for conferences.

I was also being a pretty busy senior, still trying to finish up the physics/math double major. It wasn't like anything got any easier because, you know, if you're going to do physics/math, you're going to have classes right up till the very end. So I had a full load all three quarters my senior year.

I was also trying to write these articles, to get out the word to *The California Tech* about the history of minority students, so that was still something I was working on pretty seriously.

And, on top of that, I was trying to work with the new guy who had been hired as Eddie's replacement. He and I really did not get along. So I mentioned earlier, there was a guy out of the Admissions Office named Frank Vargas. Now, Gary Lorden had, I believe, finished his term as Dean of Students. And there was a new Dean of Students, a guy from the humanities department, named Rod Kiewiet. I figured Rod might be supportive because of all the work I had done in the humanities department. It turned out that I wasn't quite completely right about that.

So, one of the first things Ron had to do was find a replacement for Eddie, find out who's going to run this office. I believe that there was a search over the summer, I don't really remember all of the timeline in details, but it was a little bit awkward.

I'm definitely willing to go on the record of where I screwed up as part of this whole process. So right about this time – and I believe this was over the summer, I'm not going to remember all the details with the timeline – but somewhere around there, there was somewhat of a national search for Eddie's replacement. Advertisements went out, there were people who came to campus for visits, there were interviews and what have you. But Rod did things in a very awkward way.

He had a search committee, but he didn't have minority students on the search committee. There was, I believe, only one minority student on this committee. Everyone thought I was going to be on the committee. Everybody. Because I was literally the one had been running the office, literally the one that saw Eddie leave, literally the one that told NSBE that Eddie was leaving. But I wasn't chosen for the committee.

Mbuyi was the one minority student chosen for this committee. Now, what made it very awkward was, remember I said earlier that Mbuyi hadn't really been involved with NSBE. He didn't really come to the meetings. I mean, he and I were very close, so I'd always tell him about

the barbecues and activities and all the rest of this. But Mbuyi wasn't really involved with things, so he even said he thought it was awkward that he was asked to be, I believe, one of two student representatives that was on this search committee.

So, Mbuyi and I had a deal where he would tell me all the things that were happening. Now, you know, he wouldn't tell me confidential information, but he might say things like, "They're very close to deciding on a list of five candidates," and so on and so forth. So, I certainly knew what was happening – not fine details, but I had a pretty good idea of what was happening.

Now, we had this one individual who was coming out for an interview, and word on the street was, he was the top, top candidate. At least from all the ones that we could see in terms of who was being interviewed, we as the students liked him the most. I'm not going to remember this guy's name, but I do remember that he had a similar position to Eddie's at Cornell.

So, we were trying to figure out if this guy is as good as he looks on paper and has a wonderful community that he's established at Cornell, why is he leaving to come to Caltech? Why would he want to do that? I was a little bit worried about it, so I made the decision to call this guy on the phone, as a student, so that I could see what the deal was now.

I knew that that wasn't smart, I knew that I was taking a chance. I also knew there was no way I could call him directly, so instead, I decided to call a minority student at Cornell that I could see online had worked in his office, to see if I can't get any more information off the record.

I remember in particular, I told Jean and Danny, Jean Andino and Danny Howard, that I was going to do this. They said they didn't think it was a good idea, I needed to rethink it. But I thought, if this guy is going to come in as Eddie's replacement, and if Rod Kiewiet is not keeping us involved in the process, I needed to know.

So, I called the student on the phone. I think he was an undergraduate at Cornell, Latinx, I'm not completely sure. But the first thing I say is, "Look, I'm going to be totally honest with you. My name is Edray Goins. I'm here at Caltech. I'm a Black student. This guy that you know is the top candidate. We as minority students really don't trust the administration at Caltech, so I just want to know from you, minority student to minority student, what do you think about this guy?"

He said, "You know, to be honest, I think that this guy is great. I think that you guys will really like him. I think that you're fine."

I said, "Okay, great, thank you." Hang up the phone.

About maybe a month later, I'm not completely sure, Michelle McClanahan tells me she has to talk to me. Remember, she is the secretary that worked with Eddie, so she's kind of the last vestige of the Minority Student Affairs Office. She calls me into her office to say, I have some bad news I need to tell you about. This guy who was the top candidate did get an offer from Caltech. Rod Kiewiet apparently made him an offer saying, "You're our top candidate, we want you to come."

This candidate tells Rod Kiewiet, "If that's true, why do you have minority students from Caltech calling me, going behind my back to learn more information about me?"

To which Rod says, "What are you talking about?"

And then this guy says, “One of my students at Cornell says that there was a guy named Edray Goins that called him to learn more information about me. This guy didn't believe that this guy was a student at Caltech and thought it was someone from your office, so I don't trust Caltech now. I'm going to turn down this offer.”

Michelle tells me that this student at Cornell tells this to this guy who was the top candidate, but then tells this guy from Cornell my name, so Rod actually knows who it is. Rod apparently is upset because he says that it's my fault that this guy turned down the offer.

Now, I am totally willing to accept that that's probably the case. You know, I'm not happy that I thought that this student would know, confidentially, that I really wanted to know what was happening. But apparently this student didn't believe that, and the guy turned down the offer. So, I'm willing to accept that that's what happened, that that is totally 100% my fault.

The word is that because he was the top candidate and he turned this down, Rod then decides to go to maybe not number two, but down to number three, I'm not really sure, who is Frank Vargas. This guy who worked in the Admissions Office.

Now, I will tell you that Frank had at the time zero experience working in the Office of Minority Student Affairs. But it's worse. He's Latinx, and in all the years he had been at Caltech, he had never come to the Minority Office, had never attended a single event with the minority students. Yet, when he interviewed – now, when the people interviewed, they were supposed to meet with the students to get an idea of what the students were like. Frank certainly tried to play it off as, yes, I'm Latinx, I've always been involved with the minority community at Caltech, so yes, I know these students. And we certainly knew that was a bold-faced lie because he had not been to a single event.

So, Frank is now Eddie's replacement. He's now running the office. And I had a meeting with Frank when he first got there, when he literally moved into Eddie's office, to say, look. I was basically running this office for the last year or so. I'm willing to work with you. I'm willing to help you. I am a student, I cannot do this, so I'm willing to work with you in whatever you need to do.

Frank made it very clear within the first several months that he was there – he had a family. He had a young child. He was going to work nine to five, come five o'clock, he's out. He is not going to stay any longer.

Frank then would ask me if, on the weekends, if I would help him in kind of being there in his place to hold the barbecues and all the rest of that. Now, I was willing to do it for a while, but of course it got very frustrating in that he couldn't attend *anything*. And just like before, I was running all of these events. Now, the difference is, he's the one getting the credit because it's all coming from his office.

I remember being in his car one day, just the two of us chatting, and I had to be really honest with him, and say I'm getting really offended that he's getting all the credit for all this work that I'm doing because he is physically not around to do all of the work. Frank and I didn't really have a good relationship after that. We certainly saw each other at these different events, but whatever relationship we had was pretty much at zero after that.

So, on paper, Frank was running that office for the entirety of my senior year. The reality is, I was the one running that office for the entirety of my senior year. Frank knew it. I knew it. But say people like Rod Kiewiet, they definitely did not know it.

To finish off the whole story with Rod – he and I never talked about the fact that that guy turned down the offer. The only time I ever heard about it was when Michelle McClanahan told me directly about it. But he and I never spoke about it.

I will say, my senior year, there was a big service prize that's given out – and I'm not going to remember the name of this service prize – but either I nominated myself for this prize or somebody else at the NSBE chapter nominated me, I don't remember exactly.

I just remember that Rod and I were talking about something. We were in his office; I probably was asking for money for some event that we were going to run. All that I remember is when it came to that prize, Rod specifically said, "I'm not going to award this prize to you because the work that you've done is too narrow and doesn't really benefit the Caltech community as a whole."

Take that for what you will, but that's one of the last times I spoke with Rod Kiewiet.

KARTHIKEYAN: I will take that as an incredibly offensive and ridiculously ignorant thing to say. Some of the final interactions you've had with some of the faculty members at Caltech, I just wonder how are these words that came out of this person's mouth?

And then, in terms of the NSBE chapter specifically, as you were leaving, did it look like someone else in the chapter was going to step into that type of leadership role both within NSBE and then also within the Minority Student Office? What was going to happen after you left?

GOINS: So, we had elections and I believe Cedric Hobbs became the president after I left. Cedric was a good friend, we used to chat about things all the time and went to the conferences together for years and years. I think that he did a good job for about a year or so, I didn't really keep track very much of things. But Cedric would stay there for one more year.

Then it turns out, ironically, he went to Stanford for his Master's degree, so he was at Caltech for one year when I was at Stanford. Then he went to Stanford in either my second or third year. I don't remember exactly, but we overlapped. We would chat about what was happening at Caltech and these kind of things. So, I believe he did a decent job as president.

There was certainly a lot of concern about what was going to happen with the minority community. You know, considering that I was leaving, Frank Vargas was definitely no Eddie Grado, and we just didn't really know what was going to happen with the community.

One thing I really, really pushed for my senior year was to have an awards banquet. I figured a couple of different things.

One, we've been having all these barbecues which were really great, and we needed to really have one big, big final event at the end of the year just to say, we have all survived. We need to pat ourselves on the back. That was really one of the main, main goals.

The other aspect of this was to almost put a thumb in the face of the Caltech administration and to have this banquet at the Athenaeum. Now, I don't know if the rules have changed, but the rule back then was, students could not have an event at the Athenaeum. Period. So, for us to be a

student organization – and remember there really wasn't anybody running the office at this point – that we were going to do this entirely on our own, that was going to be a big, big thing.

I really tried to do this for the first time in 1993. But by the time we figured out how to do it, we did it a second time in '94. So, this was going to be a pretty significant thing because not only did I want to have an activity at the Athenaeum, but we were going to have a sit-down dinner. We were going to have a formal program. We were actually going to have an award ceremony with things like Outstanding NSBE Student, Outstanding SHPE Student, Outstanding Minority Student more generally. We were going to have plaques, you know, all of this, but that was my vision. We were going to have all of this, and we, as students, were going to run it. We were going to do it, and we were going to do it at the Athenaeum.

It probably could have been easier if we would have had it anywhere else on campus, maybe even over in Dabney Hall. But no, I said I specifically wanted it to be in the Athenaeum to really prove to the administration we could do this, and to really say screw the rules of the Athenaeum, we as undergraduates could run this.

So, at the end of junior year is when I had to ask Rod Kiewiet for some money to pay for this. I think I asked for maybe \$5,000 – actually, it was more complicated than that. The banquet was going to run somewhere around, let's say \$20,000, I don't remember exactly, but I had worked it out where I was going to ask money from all of these different offices, so no one office was going to put up a lot of money. I think maybe HSS was going to put up maybe a couple of thousand, the Dean's Office was going to put up a couple of thousand, I think I convinced the Caltech Y to put up some money up. There was a new office on campus, I believe the International Students Center, so Pararandeh Kia I think was the director of this, and it had maybe been around in its first year, I don't remember. But Pararandeh was a big supporter, so I asked Pararandeh for a couple of thousand dollars. So I was just asking all of these different offices.

The funny thing is, I think this is the same meeting where I met with Rod Kiewiet. I showed him the budget to say, you know, we had talked to the Athenaeum to press out how much everything was going to be. We had an estimate of how many students were going to be there. We figured out how much the plaques were going to cost. Priced out everything to the penny, and then figured out how much we were going to ask each and every office, so we had everything worked out.

I remember Rod saw the budget, he saw, let's say \$20,000, and right away he said, "No. There's no way that the Dean's Office can cover all of this." I had to say, "Actually, no, if you take a look at page two, then you'll see we're only asking for a couple of thousand dollars."

I remember he had a very shocked face, not actually believing we were that organized, that we had worked out everything and had mapped out exactly how much we were going to ask from different offices. That it wasn't just going to be a one stop shop. So when he saw that, he was kind of dumbfounded for a few seconds, but then said, "Okay, fine, I can cover that couple of thousand dollars." So, we pulled it off.

I only remember the '94 banquet. I don't really remember exactly what we did for '93, I don't even remember if we even did a '93 banquet. But I can tell you that for the '94 banquet, it got pulled off really, really well. I think everyone was shocked at just how well the whole thing happened. It was just very smooth, the meals were nice, people actually did dress up, which is very surprising for the Caltech crowd. But we had it right there at the Athenaeum.

The only downside was how the NSBE award went. So, you know we had the SHPE chapter, we had the NSBE chapter. I told the SHPE chapter, if you can decide on who's going to be the outstanding SHPE person, then you can have space in the program to give out the award.

So similarly at the NSBE chapter, we had a vote for who's the outstanding NSBE person, but I kept telling individuals, please do not vote for me for outstanding NSBE person. It doesn't make any sense if we have this banquet, I'm the one running the banquet, I'm going to be the emcee of the evening, and I get the award. I don't care what you guys do, just do not vote me in as the top person.

Of course, they voted me in as the top person. The weird thing was, I had to then go to the store and actually purchase the plaque. So Jean Andino and I went to the store. We actually went to Things Remembered, I think it was at the Burbank Mall. And I was there, and I made the decision right on the fly, I am not going to put in my name. I'm going to put in Mbuyi's name.

Now only two of us knew the results of the vote. Myself and Jean. We hadn't announced anyone because of course the plan was it was going to be announced at the banquet. It was not going to be announced any time before then.

So, I went into Things Remembered, changed my name to Mbuyi's name, and when I came out, I told Jean I changed the vote. Now I understand, morally, that's not the right thing to do, and Jean got extremely upset. In fact, she refused to talk to me for several years afterwards because I did that. But I told Jean, I realized that morally, maybe it wasn't the right thing to do, but it makes no sense. I've been the one pushing this banquet for months, I did the fund raising, I'm going to be the emcee, I can't literally get up there on the stage and give myself my own award. That makes no sense.

And, of course, her counter, which I think is fair, is, well, the people voted for you. You have to give the people what the people wanted. So, I can understand what she was saying, but you know, I made a call and I'm still glad that I made that call that I did not want myself to get this award.

Of course, it's bittersweet (I realize that now that all of this is coming out, I hope that Mbuyi does not read this in the transcript), but he got the award for Outstanding NSBE Member back in 1994. It's either '93 or '94, I don't remember the year that we did the banquet. Now, Mbuyi was totally shocked, but as far as I was concerned, that was vindication for him starting the NSBE chapter back in 1991. And yes, maybe he wasn't really that involved, he came to a handful of meetings here and there, but I always felt bad because he started the NSBE chapter. I will never take credit for starting the NSBE chapter. That was Mbuyi's idea. He brought us all together. He's the one that ran that very first meeting back in 1991. So, I was really proud that I was the one that handed him that award for Outstanding NSBE Member.

I knew that Jean was very upset in the background that I had changed all of that, but I have no regrets that that's what I did. I guess maybe what I'm trying to say is – that story, I think, encapsulates my general feeling about dealing with NSBE at Caltech. We did a lot of really good things, it's just that some things came with a price. And as much as I want to say things like this banquet were great and that we did a lot of political work that I think was very beneficial to Caltech – there were friends that I lost. There were quite literally job opportunities that I probably screwed up. And I just can't say that all of this came for free and is something that I'm

going to look back on with fond memories. Every last thing that I did came with the cost, and a lot of those I have to live with.

KARTHIKEYAN: Let me just say for future researchers' or future students' sake the name of the banquet, I think at the time (and please correct me if I'm wrong), was the Underrepresented Student Banquet and Awards Ceremony which has since morphed and is run by the Center for Diversity and Inclusion.

GOINS: Right, that's right.

KARTHIKEYAN: I have one question that I've been ending all the oral histories with, but before I ask you it, let me ask, is there anything you'd like to add? Anything that I haven't asked about that you'd like to mention or talk about?

GOINS: No, I think that that covers everything pretty extensively.

KARTHIKEYAN: We can always add things to the transcript if something comes up.

So, I've been ending the oral histories by referring back to the 1960 Caltech yearbook. There was a section in the yearbook that asked, what is a Caltech student. You can probably guess what Caltech students in the 1960s would write in that yearbook and what they said. They talked about how Caltech students are politicians or a well entertained electorate or just a bunch of ridiculous things.

But I've been wondering about what legacies *you* would like future Caltech students to uphold? What legacies you saw your class, yourself, carrying out and what you'd like to see Caltech students do now and in the future?

GOINS: You know, I've been thinking about that a lot because my 25th reunion was about two years ago. 2019. Sad that I missed it for more stupid reasons, which I guess I'll go into. There's a lot of things that I really didn't like about the math department. A lot of them being an arrogance, a dismissiveness. Most of it being the sense of, we are the gatekeepers, and we will not allow you to enter.

And this wasn't just for students. This is for the post docs that I saw as well. I won't lie, I got into various awkward situations where I had to call faculty out on things. One, in particular, I had to call Michael Aschbacher out when I was on a committee for a student, an oral exam committee in the math department, and I thought Aschbacher was out of line. There were only two of the faculty members there in the room. I was a postdoc, and I told Michael Aschbacher, "You are wrong." And he blew up at me, in front of this grad student. But I have no regrets with that, because I thought Aschbacher was totally out of place.

But this is one thing that has always worried me in general about Caltech faculty, you know, those that really consider themselves to be gatekeepers, that there should only be one Caltech. You know, this idea of, we are a unique place. We cannot be touched. We do things very differently from everyone else.

What worries me about that is then, who decides what Caltech should look like?

My dream had always been to normalize that a Caltech professor is someone African American. I honestly don't know if that's going to happen in my lifetime. But, I mean, things have been

slowly changing. There actually is a brand-new Black physicist who's at Caltech now – I never thought I would see that. He just started just within the last few months or so.

So, if there is going to be a legacy that I'll have with Caltech, I'm hoping that I can still continue to do work on this, but it's going to be to really change what one thinks of when they think of a Caltech professor.

I feel I tried to change that in one of two ways. First as a student, more or less from the inside out. Thinking that here I am as a student, now I can really try my best to talk to some of the faculty that are here and see what they're willing to do differently, only to realize that I didn't have the respect or the clout to make any difference there.

So, then I tried to do it from a different perspective and come back as a postdoc, now hopefully being someone who would be considered, someone who could come in as a faculty member. But then realizing that, again, didn't have the respect, didn't have the clout to be considered a faculty member.

So I do see some faculty members that Caltech has now that I'm happy that are there. I'm hoping that they won't experience anything near what I saw as an undergraduate or as a postdoc. But my hope is that if I can keep working with Caltech, maybe twenty, thirty, fifty years down the line that it won't seem so awkward to say things like, “Oh yeah, we have three Black faculty members in the math department.” Like it's no big deal.

We'll see. We'll see how that works out.

KARTHIKEYAN: Thank you so much for talking with me. Let me stop the recording here.