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Katherine Jordan-Goff

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Transcript from Interview with Doctor Katie Jordan-Goff

by Courtney Rose, Kayla Lehman, Jordan Kellas, and John Brooks

John Brooks: Turn it up as loud as possible.

[phone rings]

JB: It's picking it up, definitely.

Katherine Jordan-Goff: Hello, this is Katie Goff.

Courtney Rose: Hi, uh, this is, uh Courtney. We, uh, were setting up the interview with you for today.

KJG: Right.

CR: Um, are you ready to get started?

KJG: Yes, sure.

CR: Okay, so we're gonna start off, um, really simple. Uh, if you could just tell us a little bit about your hometown and your childhood.

KJG: Okay... can I know who all is there? So is Kayla there?

CR: Yes.

KJG: Okay and Jordan?

Kayla Lehman: Yes.

KJG: Yes, and John?

JB: I'm here.

CR: Mm-hmm.

KJG: Okay, cool. So it's four of y'all, and can you just, um, remind me real quick, what is the, uh, the kind of outcome of your project?

CR: Um so basically we're trying to collect oral histories of how the school closings in Prince Edward are still affecting the community today.

KJG: Mm-hmm.

CR: So you're like the next generation.

KJG: Okay.

CR: So we're just trying to see- kind of collect your version of the story, and your growing up in this community where the school closings happened.

KJG: Got it. And, um, the- the interviews are gonna be part of a collection stored, um, with Longwood and that's gonna be kinda the extent of it?

CR: Yes.

JB: Yeah, it's gonna be in an archive.

KJG: Okay, very cool. Okay so- sorry, back to your first question.

CR: No, no, you're fine. Um, so we just wanted you to start off by telling us a little bit about your hometown and your childhood.

KG: Okay, great, sure. So, um, I grew up, uh, two blocks from [Longwood] campus, and, as you guys know, uh, my dad is a professor at Longwood.

CR: Mm-hmm.

KJG: And, um, my mom was a stay-at-home mom. And so I grew up there. Uh, like many other professors' children, I went to, uh, Prince Edward County Public Schools. Before that, I was in nursery school, uh, student at the Longwood, uh- Longwood used to have its own nursery school.

CR: Oh, okay.

KJG: Yeah, I know! A lot of students don't realize that. It was, um, part- it was housed in the Wynn Building, which also isn't there anymore. Um, but it was a big round building that was up kind of by the baseball field. So, I went to nursery school there, um, and then I started at Prince Edward County Elementary School where I went until I graduated. So I was just, I guess kind of- I have an older sister. She's four years older than me, and her story is a lot the same as mine. Uh, a lot of time playing outside the avenues. Where we grew up is a very family-friendly and kid-friendly area so we just, you know, played outside, rode bikes, whatever.

CR: Awesome.

KJG: Yeah.

CR: Do you have any, um, favorite memories from your childhood?

KJG: Oh...yeah.

CR: I know that's a big question.

KJG: Yeah. So um I, um, we spent a long time down at, uh, the soccer fields, which I don't know what they call it now, but it's that big, um- I know they play rugby on it now. It's that big field in that...between First and Second Avenue. Do y'all know what I'm talking about?

CR: I think so.

JB: Yeah.

KL: Yeah, I know, I know this area.

KJG: Okay. And so, um, there used to be, um- I don't know what year it was, but they tore it down, but there used to be an old high school that was, um, right there. And, um, that high

school was an old dilapidated building and so we- friends and I would spend a lot of time playing around that area.

CR: Cool. That doesn't sound dangerous at all [laughs].

KJG: I know, right? It sounds- retelling it, it sounds awful, but, um, we had a great time. It was just so fun. It was like going up in the attic, you're discovering things.

CR: Right, yeah. Um, so, growing up in your household, what was the expectation for your education?

KJG: Hmm... That's interesting. I don't know that there was really an expectation explicitly stated. Um, it's interesting, uh, because until relatively recently, um, I guess I didn't realize that it wasn't expected that everyone was gonna go, um, to college because that was just kind of an unstated thing. Um, my mom had- she went to college and got a bachelor's degree, and my dad, you know, bachelor's and master's and PhD and all. And so for both my sister and I, we never thought about any path other than college.

CR: So it was just assumed?

KJG: Yeah, yeah, exactly. It was just assumed.

CR: Okay, um, you mentioned this a little bit, but maybe you could expand on how the Farmville community got along with each other when you were growing up?

KJG: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Sure, sure. Um you know, after we received the invitation- my sister, uh, received it, too, to work with you all, um to work with your class. We talked about, um, kind of, you know, our memories and comparing our memories, um and she and I are both aware of, um, the recent book, um, by, um- the Green-

CR: Yeah, Kristen Green.

KJG: Yeah, Kristen, Kristen, yeah. Um, and so, um- I don't know, that probably taints your interview, biases your results a little bit because I know about that.

CR: Mm-hmm.

KJG: Um, but it's so interesting. Anna and I, that's my older sister, we grew up, um, one block away from the Greens.

CR: Wow.

KJG: Um so, their house is at, uh, kind of the very first corner on First Avenue. Our house was the very first corner on Second Avenue. So really close together although she's a few years older than me. But Anna and I just talked about it, and we were surprised at, um, her- her story because that was not our experience. Um, and so, you know, at first you want to say, oh that's because she was at the [Prince Edward] Academy, and we weren't, we were at public school.

CR: Mm-hmm.

KJG: But, um, I think the reason that she was at the Academy and we were at public school was that, um, her family had made that decision to go that path. Her family: the decision to send her to the Academy. My family: the decision that I was going to public school. And so I think it's not only the schools, I think it's that the families, you know, raising her up, raising me up were of different mindsets.

CR: Mm-hmm.

KJG: Um, apparently, and I never had any, uh, much experience with- with her family. I was only knowing who they were and being friendly and whatever. Um but, um, it really, um, wasn't an issue. Like in my experience, I was a kid, and of course, there was all kinds of stuff going on that I didn't know about, but I didn't- In my experience, I have not been exposed to a very hostile, kind of two-sided population, you know, wars or anything like that.

CR: Yeah.

KJG: Um so, either I was young and naive and I didn't realize it or it's not that big of a thing, that big of an issue.

CR: Right, it can be hard to tell which one that is when you're a kid.

KJG: I know, right?

CR: Um, so you didn't know Kristen Green? You weren't friends when you were growing up?

KJG: No, I don't know how much older than me she is. I think she might be even older than my older sister.

CR: Um, not sure. We don't ask her that kind of question [laughs].

KJG: Right, right. I, um, I- She had two younger brothers who were twins, um, and they were a little bit closer to my age.

CR: Okay.

KJG: So no, like, I wasn't friends with her. I knew, okay, that's, you know, that's my neighbor the Greens, there are this many children, and they're older than me, or, you know, younger than me or my age or one of them.

CR: Um, okay, so what did you know about the school closings in Prince Edward when you were a kid?

KJG: You know, that's interesting. Uh, Anna and I also talked about that, about, you know, I really racked my brains for 'Can I remember a time when it was explained to me specifically kind of what it was?' Um, and I really can't think of a specific conversation or an instructional kind of instance. Um, when I was in fifth grade, um, I went to, um, the R. R. Moton School...

CR: Mhmm.

KJG: Um, which is where at that time fifth grade was housed.

CR: Oh, okay, I didn't know that.

KJG: Oh, y'all didn't know that? Y'all have to know that.

CR: I-I didn't.

KJG: Um, yeah!

CR: Did y'all know that?

JB: No.

KJG: They didn't?

JB: No.

CR: No.

KJG: Oh it's so cool. Um, so you know that building-

CR: Yeah.

KJG: That I'm talking about. Um, so, you know, the black school, when it closed, there's a whole big issue-

CR: Mhmm.

KJG: Um, that building, which there wasn't the-the other building built. There was only one building standing right there. Right now, there's like an interpretive...this all painted up-

CR: Oh yeah.

KJG: - building. That building wasn't there. It was only the main building. So, at that time, what that building was being used for was school space. So um, you went up through fourth grade to the elementary school, then in fifth grade, you went to that place. That was where the entire fifth grade was. And then in sixth grade, you went back to the elem-, uh, to the middle school.

CR: Did anybody ever tell you why they did that, why you switched for that one year?

KJG: Um, I think I-I, ugh, I think it was space, honestly. Um, I don't know how many years before me it was like that. My sister's four years older than me and it was like that when she went. Um,-

JB: Um-

-and it was like that for I don't know how many years after I went, but it, I mean, it's, you know, it's not that anymore-

CR: Mhmm.

KG: But it was my interpretation that it was just the place.

CR: Okay.

JB: May I ask-

KJG: Yeah!

JB: May I ask what year this was when the, when you went to fifth grade? Just, you know...

KJG: Sure. Sure. Um, let's think. So I graduated in 2000, from high school, and so that would be what, '93? Is that right?

CR: Sure, yeah. *laughs*

KJG: I mean, like '93, '94, that, I mean-

CR: That sounds about right.

KJG: That would be seven years back from when I graduated-

CR: Mhmm.

KJG: in 2000, so I think that would be '93.

CR: Okay. Um, you said you didn't, when you were a kid you didn't know about the school closings. Do you remember when you first learned about it as a teenager or an adult?

KJG: Not really. So, when I- when I went to high school there, um, I knew, um, enough to-to say 'This was the black school when the schools shut down in that whole Roe, you know, Brown v. Board of Education-'

CR: Mhmm.

KJG: Um, case when Prince Edward was the one place in the country that did something, but I didn't-I didn't understand what any of that meant. You know, like, I could kind of, sort of, maybe gather a little bit. Um, but I knew that at the time that I was in fifth grade and went to that school, um, and then I guess details got filled in-

CR: Mhmm.

KJG: Um, over the years.

CR: From just classmates and peers, I guess?

KJG: Yeah, right! And I can't think of any, uh, particular situation, um, that, you know, taught me about it. I think probably that I maybe didn't truly understand what it was all about until like, when I first went away to college.

CR: Was there anything about that situation, going to college, that helped you come to that realization?

KJG: Not really, other than when I was at college meeting new people, of course you want to-you know 'Where're you from?' 'Where're you from?' 'Where're you from?'

CR: Mhmm.

KJG: And be able to like talk about where you're from, and that's, um, a notable thing about Prince Edward County, so, to be able to say 'Oh, I'm from Prince Edward County,' and people say 'Oh, I have no idea where that is.'

CR: *laughs*

KJG: 'Oh, well, actually-'

CR: Yeah, we know that well.

KJG 'it's famous, you know, whatever.' So, um, maybe that was- that caused me to, like, go and read about it.

CR: Mhmm.

KJG: Or maybe finally I was like 'Okay, I've been saying this, what does it actually mean?'

CR: Right. Um, so, going back to when you were a kid in Prince Edward County, did you notice any differences between, um, yourself and the public school kids and the students who were attending the private schools?

KJG: *sigh* Well, for the most part, they hung out together, you know, like all the- Um, when, um, I was in school, it was, um, Prince Edward Academy.

CR: Mhmm.

KJG: Um, so all the Academy students, they kind of hung out with the other Academy students. Um, the-I don't know, the feeling I think was, maybe this was just my personal feeling, maybe, but that they were, um, the rich kids, the snobby kids, the, um, la-dee-da folks.

CR: Mhmm *laughs*

KJG: Um, yeah. That-that was I think the feeling. Um, I had occasion to interact with those folks in, you know, like in, let's say, I was in Cotillion. Do y'all know what Cotillion is?

CR: Yeah. Do you guys know? Okay.

KJG: Yeah. I know, I was-I was a debutante. Um, no, I was in Cotillion. Um, I took dance lessons, you know, I played soccer, so in those ways, um, I interacted with those other students. Um...

CR: Did you feel like you fit in with them?

KJG: I don't remember a strong feeling one way or the other, but remembering back to kind of my childhood personality, I probably would not have felt comfortable with the la-dee-da folks.

CR: Why is that?

KJG: Uh, just, you know, because you don't feel like you're-you're one of them. You're not, you're not, uh, rich and privileged.

CR: Mhmm. Um, do you remember the first time you recognized different treatment based on color of skin? Or maybe not the first time, but just a time?

KJG: Right. Or a time. *sigh* Not really. I can remember, and I think this is a very, like, multi-level, multi-factorial thing. This would be like a whole master's, uh, dissertation. Um, that I can remember when I was in elementary school that- and I don't know if they still do this in

elementary school- but the way that classes, um, were kind of divided was you had one class that was like all the high performing, kind of –kind of the smartest , you know, kids.

CR: Mhmm.

KJG: Then you had a class that was kind of the second tier down, and then you had, um, a definite class that was all the, I don't know, the not as high performing kids.

CR: Yeah. We had that.

KJG: Yeah. So y'all had that kind of structure.

JB: It's still that in high schools and middle schools and elementary schools, you got those honors courses, you know, where, you know, the high performing-

KJG: So it is still like that.

JB: Yeah.

CR: Mhmm.

KJG: Okay. Okay. Um, so yeah, I-I- should I ask you guys what class were you in?

CR: *laughs*

KJG: I shouldn't ask. I won't ask. Okay, so I was in, I was in the high performing one, and that was always the one where, um, there was like the best teachers that everyone talked about.

CR: Mhmm.

KJG: And I remember being aware that I felt like there were more African American students in, like, the low performing class than in, like, the high performing class. And so I said that, that's so multifactorial because, I mean, it's-it's just deep. Because who knows why they were in there. Was it actually the-the scores or was it because the parental support wasn't there and so they didn't show up to school and then whatever so...

CR: Did you think anything of it?

KJG: Um (four second pause)...I don't know, I don't know. I don't remember

CR: Do you think any of it now, like do you think it's due to anything?

KJG: Hmm.....yeah, I think it is probably on many levels due to um society pressure and people having children that they don't have the interests or means to support and then the child growing up in a way that they don't value education and not having th-the mentor to overcome that. So um, I think it's probably multifold. I mean....that really goes down to the question of um acts of base of us, could we all equally smart if we were given the exact same treatment opportunity.

CR: Right, that's a big question (laughs)

KJG: Yeah, that is a really big question. We are coming up with some...Y'all can go into your masters degree and come with your own research questions, you're set.

(KJG and CR chuckle at the same time)

CR: Um, So kind of a fun question; How far have you traveled outside of Virginia?

KJG Um...So I have traveled um internationally. I'm trying to think of the places. Um, England ah twice. When I was in England I kinda jaunted over to Scotland or whatever.

CR: Mhm

KJG: And that was actually with family both times. And with school I've been to Italy and Greece.

CR: So...

KJG: And.....

CR: So there are a lot of places.

KJG: Yeah.

CR: Um, how have you noticed that your travels have affected your thinking about race and inequality or have they affect it?

KJG: I don't think my travels have affected it. I think getting higher on you know, more and more on the educational ladder. Um right now um I deal a lot with the Ferrum student population. Um, you know how can we attract all different kind of students, and make sure all different kinds of students have equal access to success and support they need..

CR: Mhm

KJG:...And that kind of thing. So um I think especially my work now um that I've become more and more aware.

CR: What are you a professor of? Can you remind us?

KJG: Um I'm, Sure! Um I an associate professor of biology....

CR: Ok.

KJG:....at Ferrum College

CR: And what town is that in?

KJG: Ferrum (chuckles)

CR: Oh ok!

KJG: Um so it's close to, about an hour away from Roanoke

CR: Oh ok..

KJG: In fact some of y'all's compadres were just here.Um...

KL: Yes I heard about that, one of my friends was there

KJG: Yeah! Right, My dad always brings his honors anthropology class um to visit my anatomy lab.

KJG: So right now um... So I keep saying now like it's going to change um I'm a professor of biology and I'm um program coordinator of Health Science and pre-professional science. So um I deal with pre-med, pre-vet, nursing, and pre-med whatever students.

CR: Ok, Cool! We have a nursing student in our mix so um...(laughs)

KJG: Oh Nice! Oh cool, very cool. You working on anatomy right now, you done with it?

JK: (Clears throat) Um, I got my credits transferred from high school so at the moment I'm not in the classes.

KJG: Fair enough, fair enough. So one of your other nursing friends told you that they got to see our cadavers.

JK: No...

KL:One of the anthropology students [door creaks open] did, yes.

KJG: Right, we had one [door creaks shut} anthropology who was interested in our space, and I can't remember who it was. But um yeah our kind of Ferrum's claim to fame is that use human cadavers in our anatomy classes. Um, so what the students, part of what they come to see from Longwood is to see our cadavers and because we get new cadavers every year, and we have five cadavers, and students are the ones working on it and that's something kinda unique for an undergraduate institution.

CR: Yeah, that's really cool

JK: I saw it on Instagram.

JB: That sounds awesome.

(Courtney and Kayla proceed to laugh)

JK: I did see.....

KJG: You saw what?

CR: She saw it on Instagram.

JK: I found a pictures of your cadavers on Instagram so I was there in spirit. I..uh..

KJG: Really?

(Courtney and Kayla continue to laugh)

JK: Yeah, yes.

KJG: Well that's really interesting.....are you sure?

JK: Yes, I..I can email it to you. I will take a screenshot.

KJG: Can you see the actual cadavers or just the outside of the metal table?

JK: Uh, I think the actual cadavers. (someone chuckles)

KJG: Hmm.

JK: I'll check, I'll check. I'll let you know.

KJG: Heck, that's really concerning to me because um I have to legally sign paperwork that says "no pictures will be taken of these cadavers" and....

CR: Ohhhh noooo.

JK: Actually, Longwood might...hold on, before I say anything.

(someone laughs)

KJG: Ok.

JK: Nope, no. That's not the cadaver, never mind.

KJG: It's just the metal table?

JK: It was something from Doctor Jordan's class. It was just human bones so never mind.

KJG: Ok, ok.

CR: You got her scared.

(Jordan laughs a bit)

KJG: I know, you did have me scared because like....

JK: I'm sorry.

KJG:....we could lose our cadaver privilege if a picture is out there. Um, I make all my students and those students to sign a document saying these are the things you can't do with cadavers and all that. So...

CR: Right.

KJG: ...I'm always paranoid though that someone has a camera um has their phone holding it where I can't see it. Um, but yeah, stuff like that. So don't do that again.

CR: We're sorry.

(Everyone laughs including Doctor Jordan-Goff)

CR: So um going back to the town of Ferrum, What differences do you notice between the Farmville community where you grew up and the community where you live now?

KJG: Mhm, mhm, mhm. Ummm, I feel like the communities are very similar. Um where they use to be, let me say that Farmville has gotten so much bigger um since I left. It use to be when I grew up that the town of Farmville was about similar to Ferrum Rocky Mountain area. Um, so similar in some ways um it's rural, um a lot of kinda farming in the community. If you look at the people uh in each community um some similar. Something we have a lot more in Franklin County, which is where Rocky Mountain Ferrum are...

CR: Mhm

KJG:...we have a bigger Hispanic population then I was use to in Farmville. I don't know if if it's still like that in Farmville?

KL: There aren't a lot of hispanics in Farmville today

JB: Yeah.

KJG: There are or are not?

Group all together: There are not.

KJG: There's not, ok. So that's the way I remember it being and in Franklin County we have um a large Hispanic population partially because um of the lots of farming around. Um, they employ migrant workers.

CR: Mhm, ok.

KJG: So there is this large kind of population. In terms of um kind of White versus African American um it's pretty similar. There's a pretty good mix.

CR: Ok. Uh so you mentioned you, you went to fifth grade at the Moton school so I assume that you've visited the Moton Museum as well.

KJG: I have not.

CR: Oh you haven't?

KJG: no, I haven't.

CR: You have to come and see it.

KJG: I haven't. so I know, cause you know I know from my dad keeps me up on all kinds of stuff and I've also seen, um as he's given me ya know Farmville Herolds and...

CR: Yeah.

KJG: ... stuff that that they have turned it into a museum and then um my mom showed me um about how they've added that extra building..

CR: Yeah.

KJG: um and but I have not been.

CR: It's a wonderful museum, you have to have to come visit...

KJG: Okay.

CR: ... and see it.

CR and KJG chuckle.

CR: Umm so going back to when you were growing up in Farmville how was race discussed in your household if at all?

KJG: Um ya know it really wasn't discussed at all. I had um friends um who were black , I, I am trying to think of my best friends um one of them um was an African American um but I don't know we never really talked about it. Um especially when I was growing up ...

CR: Mhmm

KJG: ... I can remember um one single talk about um race. When I was, I was probably, I was early, early high school. Um so let me say we never talked about it and that I never saw any like um any action by my mom or dad that made me think you acted different...

CR: Mhmm

KJG: ... towards you know one race or another, they never acted different so I guess I didn't think it was a thing. I don't know. Um something that I do remember that my dad was real big about um was that um you always treated uh people um especially, he would say especially the people who were at what you might think of as like a low level job, like house cleaners and cooks and whatever...

CR: Mhmm

KJG: ...at Longwood, I've spent a lot of my childhood at Longwood, you always treat those people you know maybe even nicer than you treat regular people because they're the ones who are doing you know the hard work that's keeping this place running.

CR: Right.

KJG: And everyone else you know the administrators and whatever, most of them are full of crap.

CR and KJG laugh.

KJG: Oh God. This is going where Longwood people can hear this.

CR laughs.

KJG: Um but so I, I guess I never felt like you treated people any differently...

CR: Mhmm

KJG: The one time I can remember an explicit discussion of race was um I had a friend and it was the same friend who I used to go down and play at the old high school with um she actually

lived on first avenue um she in high school um started um she like her personality changed and um she was like hanging out with new people and doing new things and whatever um and she um started dating lots black guys...

CR: Mhmm

KJG: ...and um I remember talking to my mom about it and she said um it's ok with us if you know if you were to date someone who, or who you know or talked to somebody who was black but I just want you to be aware that other people will judge and maybe treat you different.

CR: Right. I had a similar conversation with my family.

KJG: Yeah. Right, so that's really the only um explicit discussion about race that I can remember.

CR: Okay. Um so as an adult today how do you still see racism?

KJG: How do I still see it?

CR: Mhmm

KJG: What do you mean?

CR: Like, it doesn't have to be just in Ferrum or just in Prince Edward it can be you know on the news or in our society, anything like that, do you still feel there are acts of racism out there?

KJG: Oh, for sure. Yeah for sure I mean there's still people out there who still think there race is superior and then do mean things um so for sure there is but I also feel like um racism is being used as a limb to skew other things going on um so for example police brutality um racism is being brought into that as the motivator for police brutality but has anyone looked at the data to see ok countrywide not just these ones that are being put on the news what, what's the incident that police brutality towards ethnic populations is it really out of balance sort of thing so I just think sometimes racism is brought in too early before um it's really investigated whether there is something there or not.

CR: Okay. Um so our last question to wrap things up, unless my team members have thought of anything else, is um do you think we as a society or as a country will ever be completely rid of racism?

KJG: *Sighs* That's a big question.

CR laughs

KJG: Umm because you know it's kind of like depending on how far down the road you want to look...

CR: Mhmm

KJG: Um I mean hundreds and hundreds and maybe thousands of years as um different ethnic groups um more and more mix together, there's going to be less and less of a difference between them.

CR: Mhmm

KJG: Um but I mean that's going to take like I say maybe thousands of years..

CR: Mhmm

KJG: ... a long time um and that's you know partially depending on are there some groups that never make and that sort of thing it's not complete emotionality um but even at that point there would probably still be some lingering your other you know kind of stuff going on..

CR: Mhmm

KJG: So I don't know maybe it will never be without..

CR: Do you think that um there's anything within human beings that like we need racism in our society?

KJG: No. I can't think of a single reason, I generally always think of things from a biology point of view...

CR: Mhmm That makes sense.

KJG: Um yea and uh no and I, I can't think of a reason why.

CR: Um ok that's all we have on our paper but do you guys have any other notes to add?

KL: I think that's pretty good.

JB: Sounds good.

JK: Yep!

CR: Thank you so much!

KJG: Ok cool good sorry it took us so long to get this all ironed out but...

CR: That's okay.

KJG: When is ya'lls project due, tomorrow?

Everyone laughs

JB: Oh I hope not.

CR: No, no, no no. Well we have until after Thanksgiving right?

Everyone says "yea"

KJG: Oh ok.

CR: Yea but we have other little projects to do like the transcription and things like that so..

KJG: Oh.

CR: Yea we definitely have some work.

KJG: Yea cool well I hope the rest of it goes well and it has been a pleasure talking to ya'll.

CR: Thank you. And you as well.

KJG: I wish you the best of luck.

CR: Thank you.

JB: Thank you.

Everyone says "bye"

Phone ends.

CR: Oh my gosh did you guys hear that echo? I am so sorry.