Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Nanette Carter, 2021 November 22 and December 7

Contact Information
Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington. D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions
www.aaa.si.edu/

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Nanette Carter on November 22 and December 7, 2021. The interview took place in Harlem, New York, and was conducted by Cheryl R. Riley for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Nanette Carter and Cheryl R. Riley have reviewed the transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

[. . . –Ed.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: We are in Harlem, New York, in the studio and home of Nanette Carter, the artist. We are recording for the Archives of American Art for the Smithsonian Institution. I am Cheryl R. Riley interviewing Nanette Carter, the artist. Nanette, thank you so much for being with us and sharing your life for the archive and for future generations. I know this is going to be elucidate—elucidating and a wonderful journey through your love as an artist, and I'm very honored to be able to be here to witness and to hear what you have to say. Why don't you start off and just talk to us a little bit about your work and the genesis of you as an artist?

NANETTE CARTER: Well, I want to also thank you, Cheryl Riley for being my interviewer. I have seen you interview before and really enjoyed your questions and your probing style, so I'm really pleased to have you as a part of this wonderful—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —honor.

NANETTE CARTER: —honor and, what, a wonderful experience too for me. I'll tell you it's made me think about my past, it's made me think about what really has been, you know, these sort of crucial moments that have turned my life and really directed me into the art and the fine arts in particular. And I—I have to say that my parents, of course, are so integral to my growth, uh, and my love of the arts because there was music in my house all my life, and my mother was a dancer and taught dancing, and so we would go and see performances, and that was something that I know really got me thinking about the arts and the life of an artist.

So, I was born in Columbus, Ohio, January 30, 1954. What amazing time that was I think for Black folks; you know the movement was really in the beginnings. And to be in Columbus, Ohio, at this time, I have to tell you I lived in an all-Black community and these were middle-class African Americans with homes, they owned homes, and I recall visiting friends in their homes, front yard, backyard. I also recall my house, and I have to say I moved from Columbus when I was four years old, so these are, you know, recollections that are going way back in time, again I'm 67.

So what I recall about the house was it was light gray, and the shutters and the window frames were a Kelly green, and color really, kind of, saturates my mind because I remember there was a lot of greenery in the back, I, kind of, remember some flowers, it was just great. We had a backyard to play in, you know, front yard, and this is the way the community was situated, the African American community in Columbus, Ohio. Everyone went to church, everyone went to Sunday school, and so it was a busy and active life. I don't recall seeing a lot of white folks. I think I only saw white folks when we'd go shopping—Lazarus was the big store in Columbus, Ohio—that was the only time. We would come back to this community, and kids would be playing outside, and again, I had friends, my sister had friends. I remember visiting my sister's friends' homes. And so there was this wonderful sense of security, and there's nothing like, I think, being a young person and feeling—secure in terms of food security, security in terms of a home with a roof over your head.

[00:05:17]

I also knew that there were folks who were not as lucky. That was always, kind of, presented

to me as the fact of life, that there was another community that was, you know, dealing with hard times, that may not have had food on the table, so—you know. And I have to say my father got his doctorate in divinity and so as a preacher—and he never had a church, but as a preacher, he was always concerned with that community also. And in fact, my father in Columbus was the executive director of the Black YMCA, and I say Black YMCA because there were two YMCAs. There was one for white folks across town, and there was one for Black folks. Again hence this idea of not seeing a lot of white people and not feeling like I'm missing out on anything. I'm getting the love, I'm getting the attention, I'm in this wonderful community of concerned Black folks. And at the Y, my father was working with African Americans of all stripes, again those that were educated, those that were not, poor, middle class, all of that. All of these young people were coming to the Y for basketball, for swimming. My mother taught dance at the Y, and there were recitals.

So it was a rich beginning, you know, for a young person; it was very rich. I didn't feel like there were anything that could stop me from doing whatever I wanted to do. I just—you know, the world was my oyster. So I could just, whatever—I could walk out and be what I want to be. And I met Black people that were doctors and lawyers; I must say, most of the women were teachers. I don't recall any—oh, actually I remember there was a Black lawyer, female lawyer who attended our church who was pretty close to the family. And I had a sister who was older than I was, and she was protective of me, so again, the sense of security was definitely there.

What I also recall was my mom's sewing. My mother sewed all of our clothes and so Bettye and I would have, you know, the same color dresses, you know, exactly the same dresses and all. There's about a three-, four-year difference between my sister and I and so I really looked up to her. She was very smart, and I was always excited to go with her to see her friends and visit her friends' homes. I felt—I think that it added to my sense of, you know, what young—mature young ladies would be like, you know, because I was with this older crowd. Again they were about three years older than I was.

But back to my mother's sewing. So my mother would sew the costumes for the recitals, and even when we moved to Montclair in 1958, my mother continued to teach dancing, and this was in Orange, New Jersey, at that point. We moved to Montclair in 1958, mom was teaching in Paterson. Paterson, New Jersey, it was predominantly Black and Puerto Rican at that time. So she was, in many cases, teaching young people who were barely speaking English and—but in the afternoons, she would go and teach dance. After teaching in, you know, first grade in Paterson, she would then go to Orange, New Jersey, to a center that was really based in the Black community. Again all Blacks were coming to this center, and she taught dancer there, she taught tap dance, ballet, and modern dance, and again there were recitals, and mom was sewing these costumes. So I saw, you know, taffeta and sequins and all this colorful stuff, and it was clear to me that there were these pieces that she then would bring together to make this whole tutu or whatever kind of outfit she was doing at the time for that particular recital.

[00:10:05]

And I think this idea of piecing things together and seeing her building these things that ended up being these gorgeous costumes really, kind of, instilled in me this idea that women created because I didn't see my father doing anything like that. My mother cooked, you know, that's a type of creating also, she was bringing things together to make these very tasty meals, and so I thought that's what everyone's mother created, you know? And at that time, a lot of women sewed; you know that was the big to-do. You got your *McCall's* patterns, your *Vogue* patterns, and you chose your fabric and you sewed. So, again, I thought that this was just what everyone did.

I have to say when we moved to Montclair, it was because my father had climbed up the ladder, the executive ladder of the YMCA, and he became the associate director of the Association Press, which was their publishing house, the YMCA publishing house in New York City. And these were basically religious books; again my father had gotten his doctorate in divinity. Mom and Dad both went to Virginia Union University, and Dad ended up going and getting his doctorate there in divinity. He also studied at Columbia University, and this is prior to, you know, the children coming into their lives. So Dad was again the associate director then of their publishing firm in New York City downtown. He was commuting as a lot of people did in Montclair, in fact they called Montclair a bedroom community because of lot of families were there, and the husbands or wives were commuting, mostly husbands into

the city for work.

Moving to Montclair was so strategic in terms of me becoming an artist, and they did not know this of course at the time, but they moved to a town that had fabulous art programs both in music and in the fine arts, more so than in dance. I would say that music, theater, and fine arts were really quite strong in the Montclair school system. This is a public school system. I can recall in first grade doing linoleum cuts. Can you imagine young people learning how to use those cutting tools properly so that you didn't get hurt and creating prints from this linoleum cuts? We had a tabletop press—this is elementary school—a tabletop press, and we created etchings. We created drypoint etchings using copper, which is very soft, and drypoint is where you don't have to use the acid. It's, you know, without the whole acid bath in all of etching, and you're using again a sharp tool and just applying a lot of pressure on to the copperplate to incise the line that's going to hold the ink to print. So anyway, we were working, and I do still have those prints. They were very small, they were probably about, you know, four inches by five inches, the plate. Again the tabletop press was small, but we learned how to ink these plates, we sent them to the press, just amazing, in elementary school, okay.

The music department was very strong. I did have a lot of music in my life. My father love to play classical music in the living room in Montclair, I'll never forget this because the living room was a fairly large space, and Dad loved to go there, that's where the stereo was, and he would listen to classical music, and I would dance. And, of course, Mom being a dancer and a dance teacher, that was very much a part of our lives, and I would dance, and what I remember clearly was there were points in time when I would dance because I got to know some of the music that he was playing, again it was mostly classical. I got to know the music, so I knew the high points, and also I would direct my body and movement to really accentuate—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_1of4_sd_track01_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —what was going on with the music. And I knew I was on point when my father would stop working, and he would look up at me, and I knew at that point my moves were hitting the mark because he would look. And for me to get my father's attention from those papers—he was working all the time, to get him to look up, I knew and that just—it just thrilled me. And I also knew when I was off point because he'd go back to his papers and go back to working, but there was such a high for me even as a child. And that you know your dad is your dad, and to be able to say that—I'm getting a lot of movement there—to be able to—to know that your father has dropped what he's doing—I just knew that something about creating, something about making art and also improvisational, I just—I love that. It just—it gave me such a high as a child.

So, moving forward here, I did take dance, but that, kind of, stopped because I began to take piano lessons, both my sister and I took piano lessons, and I took cello lessons, my sister took violin, so again, music was always around. You know, I didn't practice enough in both the piano and cello, my sister practiced, and she practiced to the point where she really could read music. My mother could read music. I never really practiced. It just—as much as I love music, I don't think I like this idea of performing and making the art with a large group of people looking, and I say that because when I took voice lessons, I remember the recitals. Before the recitals, I mean I would be singing in the house, I'd be practicing, I was practicing with my voice teacher and have—as soon as I had to sit in a room with a group of people and start singing, that—it just didn't work.

And so as I grew older and feel—and now, I'm about maybe nine or 10, it's pretty clear to me that I just need to be in my room, which is my first studio, and make art. I had my music, I had a stereo, I think I got my first stereo when I was around 13 or 14. I sat on my bed, and I made art, and because I was on my bed, I wasn't painting as much as I was collaging. My whole world around collage started when my mother gave me this very colorful stationery paper. I was supposed to be writing thank-you notes to friends and family and all for gifts or what have you, and I wasn't doing that. I had started using this paper and collaging it and just had so much fun with my scissors and my glue and this colorful paper. And they ended up being really geometric abstractions, and I remember giving them to friends and family, and I think I might have one or two of them here still in my flat files. I've tried to keep as much as I could. And I just—I had enjoyed to no end.

Finally around 14, I'm a junior in high school, and in Montclair High School, you could take art as a major. Now most students had four majors a semester, and in this particular school system, there were two semesters but you could take a fifth major, and so. Not everyone did that, most people had four majors, and therefore, they had time for study periods, they had time for typing classes and these other sort of other—you know, auxiliary types of classes. I had five majors all through high school because I majored, I had a major in art, which met then every day, and because it met every day, we had homework assignments.

And so my bedroom became a little too small, and it wasn't allowing me to work with paints and, you know, clay or other things; I had to then go to the kitchen. And so I started to work in the kitchen, and my parents—we had four floors, four floors in this—in this home in Montclair, it was a sizable space.

[00:05:09]

Um, we had a basement that really wasn't being used, but we had an attic where we stored a lot of things, but in the attic, there were two bedrooms and a bathroom, and there was a big space for storage. And the bed—one of the bed—I mean bedrooms weren't really being used; it was just two girls, two children and Mom and Dad. On the second floor, there were one, two, three, four bedrooms, so the house had six bedrooms, several baths. Anyway, they said, "Listen, you can use the bedroom up in the attic to paint, to work," and there was a bathroom nearby so there was the sink and all the cleaning brushes and so I began to work up there, and I began to work with oils.

I do recall my freshman year in high school learning one and two-point perspective, and I fell in love with this idea of being able to create three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. I just love this idea of being able to create a room. And then all of a sudden, I got to thinking, Maybe I should be an interior designer.

Now, let me just say my mother was quite the interior designer. Our house in Montclair, which is very clear in my mind, the interior was almost color coded, okay. My bedroom was pink and kind of a lavender, and my sister's bedroom was blue, Mom and Dad's bedroom was red, orange, yellow, and so I recall the curtains being these flowers that were red, orange, and yellow. And she—you know, just the—the carpeting was red and orange and the carpeting in my bedroom was, kind of, this pink, and actually there was a bit of a magenta in there too, and my sister's carpeting was gold to go with her blue. So I mean it was like that. The dining room was purple, okay, and I mean purple, the carpet was purple. We had purple—um, oh gosh, what's it called—not felt, but—what's furry, kind of soft and—? Oh, gosh, what's it called, velvet. But purple was the dining room, and the kitchen was this really sort of rancid green, I remember it was a horrible color, it was horrible with those terrible walls of paint, oh. And I remember there was an old oven and stove and what have you. The living room was blue, the living room was blue, and we did have a—we had a big piano, you know, it was a beautiful piano. But the kitchen was old, and we were still dealing with the old oven and stove that was there when we have moved in.

So, my parents saw me drawing these interior rooms, Mom began to get me the—what it—*Good Housekeeping,* which was then, you know, really talking about interiors and giving you the bird's-eye view of rooms and all. This is—I think it changed after a while, but early on, it really was, sort of, functioning as kind of an interior design, you know, magazine and so that, kind of, got me excited and all. And they decided, You know what, we're going to get a new kitchen, Nanette, why don't you design the kitchen? I'm 14 years old, I'm like, "Yeah, okay, fine, great, what do you-all want?" "We want and island," you know, so it was almost like dealing with a client, you know, asking them what they wanted, what was the—what were the needs that my mother really felt were not there that she, you know, didn't have in this old kitchen that we were in. And so—of course storage was important, cabinets, and what have you—I designed the kitchen, and I still have the drawings. And the kitchen was done in one-point perspective, and I drew the island, I drew this overhead suction that was going to, you know, suck up the fumes for the stove. We had two ovens over top of each other; um, you know, it was fantastic.

[00:10:13]

And then I went with Mom to choose the color wood, you know, the Formica tops, and what have you. And so the kitchen ended up being orange, my mother loved orange and red so that was—you know. It was a colored house, okay, it was a Negro house—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Colorful—

NANETTE CARTER: —it was live—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —colorful.

NANETTE CARTER: —and on, okay.

CHERYL R. RILEY: It wasn't all white walls.

NANETTE CARTER: I mean, well, and then mom did this stucco thing in the hallway with red carpeting that went up the stairs and all through the—you know, the first floor of the house.

And they entertained. You know, my father—um, I think that was around 1968 that he became—no, I'm sorry, '64. Dad ran for the mayorship of Montclair, but even prior to that, they were entertaining all the time especially Sunday. I remember Sunday after church, people came by to the house, and I would help Mom cook, I'd help to set the table in the dining room, the purple dining room. And back then, you know, everyone had all this silver, you had your silver, you know, tea thing and the coffee and the—of which we had to clean. Yeah, with two daughters in the house, I know for years, we went without anyone coming to clean the house. We did the vacuuming, the cleaning, we couldn't go out on Saturdays until we did our jobs, we had responsibilities in this home. My mother cooked, but we washed the dishes, we put the dishes away from the dish washer, we did the pots and pans, we all had things that we had to do, very organized. My mother was organized, and unlike a lot of women at the time, my mother also paid the bills. What I didn't understand until talking to other people in their households, many—there was a time men did the bills, men did all the finance. My mother did that, my mother was really organized, she was quite the businessperson, actually. Dad really married a wonderful cohort here because they've really, kind of, organized our lives and everything, kind of, went in order. You know, it was very organized.

But, um, I designed this kitchen, it was very exciting seeing it being built and having it come to fruition, and because of all of the entertaining that we would do, we—I actually got a commission. I had friends who would come by for dinner, and they said, "Hey, we want you to design our kitchen also." I was like, "Oh, okay, this is my first commission." Again, I'm about 14 years old, and so we made plans. I was to go and look at their kitchen, take measurements, you know, do my one- or two-point perspective drawing to come up with this design. And, lo and behold, they ended up telling me, "Well, we really want this to be—" Just push it down, you don’t have to do any—just push it straight down, it's kind of tough, yeah. Sorry, we're closing the window because there are some sounds outside coming in; there are men working outside.

But they just—they told me, this couple told me, "We really want this to be designed in the American colonial style." Now, what I didn't say earlier was that my kitchen was totally a very modern kitchen. You know, American colonial, it was like, eh, I don't think so, not my vibe. Well, then, I understood that the life of an interior designer is based on that client. Again, my first client being my parents were very up for a new, renovated, modern kitchen. On that island was the stove, on the other side were the—was the area where you would sit to eat, so my mother could literally basically, sort of, take the food off the stove and put it right on your plate there as you—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_1of4_sd_track02_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: are sitting there. There was also an area for a grill on that island. She could grill the pancakes and flip them over to us on our, you know, plates right there. And so I was like, Oh, my God, these—I can't do it. You know, I went home and I thought about it and thought about it, I can't do it. I can give them a great, you know, plan for something modern and updated, but calico curtains and, eh, no. So I had to be true to myself, and I basically told them, "I just—I'm sorry, I just can't do this. That's just not my cup of tea."

So I learned a lot from that, you know, and it was, hey, Nanette, you know what, go back to wanting to be an artist, which I had wanted to be before this, yeah okay, before wanting to be an interior designer. It's like, No, Nanette, go back to being an artist, because you know what, no one can tell you what to do, you're going to do what the hell you want to do. You're

going to work with the materials you want to work with, no one's going to tell you have to paint or you have to sculpt or you have to do prints, you can choose what you want to do. So it was a learning experience, but it was also this idea that not everyone is going to like your work, okay, you know, which is the hard nut to crack when you're an artist. You want everyone to like what you're doing, but at an early age, I was taking in these lessons that everyone sees life differently and their needs are different. So that was for me, I think a real, kind of, learning moment. Again that along with seeing my mother creating these costumes, I think all of these, uh, experiences, you know, gave me a sense as to where I needed to be in all of this, where I should be placed in all of this.

Moving along, I was talking about my father. 1964, he ran to become mayor of Montclair. And the system in Montclair is a system of commissioners where you had five commissioners that were dealing with different aspects of the town. And again this was a town, this is not a city, Montclair is a town. And so you had commissioner of public works, you know, you had a commissioner that was dealing primarily with education, and just these different aspects of town life. And what we were so surprised in moving to Montclair, so close to New York, this is, you know, in the '50s and '60s, was that there was an area in Montclair inhabited all by Black folks, and these were lower-class Black folks. A good deal of them worked in the mansions in Montclair for the white folks, these were the maids, the butlers, the chauffeurs, and their children basically all went to this one public school. And we noticed that the—my father noticed, I should say, that the plumbing was horrendous in this area of town. It was noted that even in 1954, there were still some outhouses in this area of town. So the plumbing—now this is '64—was really pretty ragged. There were no sidewalks, you had to walk in the street, children were walking in the street to go to school. Sidewalks were horrendous, there were no—there were no sidewalks, you just—you're walking the street.

So Dad decided—although he got the most votes and could've become the mayor, he decided he wanted to be the commissioner of public works so that he could change this area of Montclair, and he did. So he was in office as commissioner for four years, and they repaved the streets, they gave folks sidewalks, of course prior to that, they took care of the plumbing, they gave them better lighting in that area of town. It was just, you know, very clear, and there was definitely this sort of demarcation, which was Grove Street, which kind of separated the town from the middle class to this poor area and then up on the hill where were the mansions and estates were, and I mean some real huge estates, block long, you know, land owning where you had stables for horses and what have you.

[00:05:27]

And again, this is where many of these Black families went to work. So then Dad ran again in 1968, again he got the most votes, so at this point, he decided he would become mayor, so he was the first African American mayor in Montclair. At the time, I would say the town was 30 percent Black and 70 percent white. There was a very strong middle-class area, African American middle-class area, which is where we lived, homeowners. On my block, we had two doctors, we had a brilliant engineer who lived next door to us. We also had a gentleman down at the end of the block who owned a store, an entrepreneur, and I must say the engineer was also an entrepreneur because he owned his space in Newark, New Jersey, where he employed other Black engineers. And we were involved with things like Jack and Jill. There was also the NAACP, both parents were very much, you know, members and very much involved with that group. There was also a young teenage NAACP group that I know my sister was also involved with.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Tell us what Jack and Jill was.

NANETTE CARTER: Jack and Jill? Yeah, real quick too, Dad was involved with the Urban League in Newark. Jack and Jill was a very different situation from the Jack and Jill in Columbus, Ohio, okay. That's where we first became members where—was—and when we were in Columbus. It was a situation where on Saturdays, young people were to come together and go to different cultural events or different types of activities, you know, outside of the school system, outside of church, um, and most of the time, they were cultural things that we would go to. You know you'd hear the symphony or you'd go to the ballet or—and sometimes it was cookouts and just things like that or art projects you would do. There was—it varied, very varied. And each mother was to come up each year with an activity. And again in Columbus, it was a situation where there was a membership fee. If you could afford the membership fee, then you could get in. But once we moved to New Jersey, we found out that the East Coast, the northeast was very different, you had to be selected. The mothers

gathered, and you would nominate a woman because it basically is a woman's organization. You know, it was basically about the women, but we'll get into that a little later. They would nominate, you would put forth, you know, their credentials—again, this is New Jersey, which was really this whole thing of what does your husband do, you know, or what do you do or whatever. It had to be an intact family, there were no single women with children, and it ended up being basically doctors and lawyers and Indian chiefs. My mother was appalled, and she fought it and fought it, and she was always put down, you know, and they just continued to move on and ended up finding out that, yes, New York was the same way and Connecticut also. Anyway, it was definitely about upper, you know, middle class because none of them were rich, you know, in terms of what we would call rich in this country.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], owning horses.

NANETTE CARTER: Okay, exactly. And estates and lots of land, you know, or mansions.

[00:10:02]

There were some people who lived in some fairly large homes, but, you know, they weren't millionaires, you know, but anyway, this was an all-Black group. Again, it was supposed to be based around cultural events for your children, and because a lot of the children, many of them were going to private schools, which were all white. This was a way for them to connect with the Black community, you know, not only going to church and connecting that way but also even outside of church and meeting other Blacks. So, I know in my group, there were a lot of young boys in particular that were going to Newark Academy, Montclair Academy, again all of these schools, even Newark Academy at that time was predominantly white. And it was allowing them to then hook up with other Black families and what have you, and, you know, play groups came out of that and what have you but—so that's Jack and Jill.

So I recall, you know, we're talking, Dad is now the mayor, I'm in high school, my sister who had skipped first grade, okay, she's ahead of herself, she's already gone off to college. My sister and I were very close, extremely close, so it was really quite devastating having her go off to college. And I recall at that point in time in my life really thinking about the arts even more because that's where I, kind of, went. You know, I went to my studio, I went to making art. Of course, at this point too, I've got homework and art; I'm really very busy because I'm taking five majors. I recall not taking typing, and I always have been very upset with myself for not doing that, but I really did not have time. Everyone else was taking typing, which of course helps you when you go to college and certainly would help me now with my computer skills, but anyway, I just—you know, I was knee-deep in the arts.

Oh, I do want to go back. I did want to talk also again about the music side of the family and ——and understanding that my sister and I weren’t going to become musicians, it was really just—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —culture.

NANETTE CARTER: —about the appreciation—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and culture.

NANETTE CARTER: —and culture, and this appreciation of music, understanding it. And again like I said, I was taking the cello and voice lessons and piano lessons, but I do recall a couple of summers going to Montclair's music camp. This was a day camp, and this camp was absolutely—it was deep, it was serious. We were learning music theory, okay, so that you could compose music. We were not only taking our instruments, you know, and what have you, but we were also singing, and just this idea of the voice as an instrument. And it was just—it was incredible, and folks were coming from other towns. This wasn't just for Montclair children, people were coming from other towns, so I was meeting other people, and I think that was the point in time where I was probably around more white folks in terms of a school-like setting than any other time in my life.

Now junior high school where I was still had a large community because of where I lived of Black folks. It wasn't until I got into high school that I really saw this whole like 70 percent of the town is white and 30 percent is Black. When I got into high school, we only have one high school, Montclair High School, so everyone comes together there.

Oh, and I should also say that I was a part of the first busing in elementary school, okay, and they bused the white kids over to the Black school, but still, there were more Blacks in the school than whites even with the busing. Montclair was one of the first towns in New Jersey to do this where they began to bus the student—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_1of4_sd_track03_m.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: —for instance that were living in this area I was just talking about or Glenfield School, they were bused to a white—anyway busing started, but still I happen to be going to the Black school. I was going to the school that was near me; they were busing the white kids into our school. That was an interesting thing to see the changes too I have to say. They really beefed up our program. I—you could see it, you know, it was—it was sad in a way, you know, it was like, boy, this is what—what it the takes to really—

Because Nishuane and, what, that was the name of the school, named after an Indian group that was there in that area; Nishuane was all Black. When I first went to Nishuane, if I had one white student in my class, that was it, just one. It was all Black. All the teachers primarily were white. I recall only two Black teachers, and I did get one of them, Mrs. West, I'll never forget her, she was a tough cookie. But once these white kids were bused in, we had this program to teach you how to—what they called speed reading, which was a big to-do back then, you know, speed reading but also being able to still analyze and comprehend what you read, you know. And they brought in these machines that would help you to speed read. I mean, you know, all this stuff came in, now we was raving, of course but speed reading, you know, where they—they flash up a sentence, in a certain amount of seconds, they take the sentence down and put up another sentence that you learned how to read in groups. Anyway, all these different things were coming our way; it was like, Oh, my gosh. So that was interesting to see.

But going back now to high school, my family, we did a lot of traveling. I think at some point, Cheryl, what I'd like to do is maybe just go back at one point, not right now, but we go back to deal with my travels. Because my travels I know were really important and influenced me greatly in terms of my art, but I—I want to do that kind of in a—on another section of this. Yeah. I'd like to just continue to talk about my—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —upbringing.

NANETTE CARTER: —my high school, yeah, my experience and my parents. My father being the mayor, people were always calling him for help, for—you know to—for suggestions on things, for jobs, and people would come to the house all the time. So I remember there was art up. We didn't buy a lot of like new art. I just—I remember there were pieces that my mother had from her early days, but they were pieces by Black artists. Now, they were flower paintings and things like that. I remember these paintings that were in the dining room in particular because I remember her talking about this woman she knew, I believe was from DC, my mother was born and grew up in DC, so there were—you know? And there was sculpture, I remember there were maybe an African head or something, but you know, not a lot of updated art, um, but I do remember art on the walls. I know when people came in, you know, of course, all these colorful rooms, but they would look at the art and so my mother, I think, gave me this sense—a kind of a sense of style along with this idea of harmony and beauty around you and how that can affect you.

Whereas my father, being the people person, he was a social person, he liked people, he really did. I can recall going to dances with them, and Mom would sit at the table, Dad would be walking around talking to folks. He loved to interact, and people loved Dad, he was a good soul, so I know that he attracted people on many levels. I think they had great deal of respect for him, but also, he was very helpful. And I've heard even today folks who were actually just a little bit younger than me, they'll come up and say to me, you know, in Montclair, "Oh, my gosh, your Dad got me my first job, I worked for the town, I worked in the parks" or something like that or, you know?

[00:05:07]

He really did help a lot of the African American folks in that town. So I saw the way that he moved about and then I saw the way Mom, kind of, situated the home life along with the finances of the family because Dad didn't touch it. My mother was the one who got involved

with buying stocks and taking their money and building on it and that kind of, you know, a situation. Again, this was normally what a man would do, but she enjoyed it, she enjoyed it, and she had books that were just—I remember when she would pay the bills every month, she pulled out her books, she was so organized, and it certainly helped me out being an artist. And those 17 years and I'll talk about that, later on, the 17 years of living off the sales of my art, budgeting, understanding that this year might be good, but next year might not, so you squirrel away some money, you know, just in case sales go down. Again different things that are happening financially in the world or in the country where even wealthy people, you know, might not buy for a while, they just hold back to see how things are going to pan out, you know, they've all got their investments and their stocks too, you know, and they just, "I'm not going to buy anything right now." So seeing her manage was helpful; all of this I think was so key to helping me be fruitful and—and be able to pay for my way because of course I never married. I never had a patron who was just handing me money at any point in time, so this was all really quite crucial and helpful.

But Montclair High School was where I first began to go to museums. My mother and father would take us to New York, but again, we would go to the opera. I remember seeing *Aida* with Leontyne Price. We would go to see Alvin Ailey because my mother, one of her dancers Nat Horne taught at the school and was very close to Alvin Ailey. I do believe, and I've consulted my sister on this, and she's not quite clear on this, but I do believe because I remember this. I believe we saw the first *Revelations* with a very young Judith Jamison, okay.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And what is *Revelations*?

NANETTE CARTER: *Revelations* is a well-known work of art that Alvin Ailey created that really is talking about the spiritual and religious aspect of Black life and how has it—how it has sustained us over these years and given us hope and a sense of the possibilities of life, and it's joyous. And I just remember it taking the house down because again first of all, just—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —It’s a beautiful piece.

NANETTE CARTER: —being in this situation where again this was Alvin Ailey. I think they—I believe it was City Center. It was maybe his first real big concert even, and again, it was all due to the fact that my mother had this connection with Nat Horne who was teaching in the classes and was—actually had performed with Alvin early on. And I remember sitting right there up front, and as a child, it just—you know, the feeling of seeing these Black folks just gorgeous, making these moves that just were inspirational, talking about, you know, me dancing for my father and understanding how to sculpt the body in space and having it move and having it interact, and I'd already had a sense of that, you know. And to see that, I mean it was just awesome as a young child, you know, looking up at the stage and these performers. And I believe—I recall going in the back and meeting Alvin Ailey because again Nat Horne was our connection. But it was just so uplifting.

[00:10:02]

I think there was another point in time where that kind of feeling of just hope and the humanity of Black folks and also the artistry. Damn, we are artists to the damn core, we can't help it. Singing, dancing, making art, it doesn't matter, creating, you know, furniture making—

CHERYL R. RILEY: How we dress.

NANETTE CARTER: —everything, we dress, every—just colors and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: The food.

NANETTE CARTER: —and line and beauty, and is what keeps us going, and it's just a part of it, it's innate, we can't help it. The other time I remember feeling this, there was a big fundraiser for the NAACP, I believe it was the NAACP. If it wasn't the NAACP, it was the—oh gosh, I had forgotten the name now—National—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —SNCC?

NANETTE CARTER: —Council of Negro Women. It was a fundraiser, and they had Duke Ellington to come and perform in Montclair at Montclair University—State University. Back then it was just called Montclair State I think, Montclair State College. We—they had the

auditorium, I remember the fundraising aspect of it, you know, and we were all there, everyone dressed to the nines of course as Black people do because Duke Ellington was coming to perform with his full orchestra. And I just remember feeling so good and feeling—oh, and, you know, he would speak in such a way, elegance and secure. You know, Black people who are secure in themselves, in their bodies and what they're doing, and this array of Black men that were just playing these horns and making this most beautiful music, again just what every child, Black, brown, white, doesn't matter, needs to see, you know, these parts of life. And it's the arts that really just—you know, everyone thinks, oh, no, but, you know, I don't want my son to be a musician or—it's not about that, it's the appreciation, it's what really drives us I think as humans, you know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the uplift.

NANETTE CARTER: —to see creative people—yeah, the uplift of it and—and the artistry, the sense of someone knowing their instrument to the point where when they play, that music can hit a chord in your soul that just goes off or just ruminates, just goes all through your body, you know, to the point whereas Black folks, you know, when we hear music that's good, we move. Yeah, you go to see white folks, they sitting still. I don't know how the hell white folks sit still when someone like Duke Ellington's on the stage, you've got to move. Mahalia Jackson, I'm sorry, you've got to move. Aretha Franklin—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Even got to shout out—

NANETTE CARTER: —you've got to do something.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you've got to say something.

NANETTE CARTER: But your body, you know, your hips, your shoulders, your neck, your head, and it—because it just—it infiltrates you, and it's a good infiltration, you know, and again, it's just good for the soul. So anyway, as a child having these experiences, seeing what real fine artistry is about, I know that my parents again knew that this was integral for any young person's life.

The other thing that I would say about high school was again this idea of now being a minority. Now, I'm in a situation where there are more whites than Blacks, and one of the issues at the high school because the high school was set up in this system where you had—it was called a track system where you had the number one group, you had the number two group, and the number three group. Now you could all be learning European history, and it's probably—you know, it was European history, never African history—but you had these three groups, okay. And the third group, of course, was the slow learner or whatever, the second group was intermediate , and the first group was, you know, folks you could really push and excel and challenge, right. Well, they were having difficulties because Black folks were basically in the number two and the three groups. And come to find out, some of the whites who were in the number one group were getting Cs and really should have been in the number two group and that a lot of the Blacks that were in the number two group were getting A's and A pluses and should've been in the—so there was—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_1of4_sd_track04_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —a big fight, and that was probably one of my early days thinking about how this affects me. You know it's one thing to be in a community and it's all Black and it's all—right, but it's another when you're a minority now, and the majority says, "I don't care if you are smart, we will make sure you stay down. You know, you're not going to excel like the others." This is before AP, you know, in high school, which they have now, all of these advanced placements classes and what have you but this is the way they did it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Based on your scores—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —not on some—

NANETTE CARTER: —this is how—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —arbitrary—

NANETTE CARTER: Exactly. This—and so my mother, and I recall Bettye having an issue with it, had to come up to fight for my sister to be in the number one group when a white male told her that he was in the number one group and was getting Bs and Cs, and he told her. This white male told my sister because he knew it wasn't right, he knew my sister was smarter than him, okay, because my sister was smart. My sister could've gone into anything she wanted to do. She excelled in everything, math, science, things that I didn't excel in, okay. She wanted to be a veterinarian, and she could've done that if she want—you know, she ended up changing it as she—as, you know, time went on, but she was that kind of student.

And so my mother had to go up there and come to find out, there were other Black students the same as my sister, brilliant, okay, and ended up going to Stanford and everything else, brilliant, but they were holding them back. So I—you know, I remember that because it just—it hit me directly, it hit my family directly, um, and I understood, okay, there's an uneven a system out here. You're getting ready to go out into this world, and this is what you're going to have deal with, and, by golly, that was the case, and of course, being a woman also. I always say there's triple jeopardy. You know, I'm a woman, I'm Black, and—what was the triple—? I'm a woman, I'm—oh, Lord, now here we go, here's a senior moment.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Are you a creative, an artist?

NANETTE CARTER: No, no, no, a woman, I'm Black—there was something else—oh, shit. And maybe it was a creative; I don't—I don't think it was a creative. What was it? Oh, my gosh, Nanette, think, think, think. I don't remember—

CHERYL R. RILEY: The brown skin?

NANETTE CARTER: Damn, there was a—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Were you brown skin?

NANETTE CARTER: —third, no, no, no.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Were you brown skinned?

NANETTE CARTER: No, no, no—

CHERYL R. RILEY: You weren't light skinned.

NANETTE CARTER: No, I said woman and Black, but there—I had this—oh shit, okay, it'll come to me. These things will happen as we go forward [laughs] too, my recollection. But I always loved this, and I always used to use that too the triple jeopardy. Okay.

CHERYL R. RILEY: It will come back to you.

NANETTE CARTER: Ah. Oh, that bothers me now. All right, I'm looking at my paperwork here to see where we're going. Okay, so I talked about my bedroom, my Panasonic stereo in my bedroom, my bedroom being my studio. High school, yes. We will talk about travel separately as I said earlier because I did go to Europe when I was in high school. It was the year before my senior year in high school, there was a program that I attended in—in Italy, but we'll come back to that.

High school, oh, what I wanted to say also was because we were always dealing with, it seemed to me, more performance art because of my mom, it wasn't until high school that I went to the Guggenheim Museum with a trip that we did. And the show that was up was right on time, I mean it was as though the universe had put this show up just for this little Black girl who was coming over with her class at that particular point in time, and it was Piet Mondrian. And they curated the show so that you really wanted to start at the top of the museum, which of course, we all know, you know, is—is circular, it's a circular motion that you're dealing with as you walk down the ramp. They started Piet Mondrian's painting life at the top of the museum, and these were mostly landscape paintings. I don't recall a lot of figures, basically landscape trees, grass, beautiful greenery, different types of—times of the year or something like that.

[00:05:01]

And as you walked around in this circular—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the spiral.

NANETTE CARTER: —motion, the spiral, you saw how the trees, the limbs of the trees became very important, were playing the key role. Trees that had no leaves on them all of a sudden, naked trees, just the limbs, then you saw that coming forth as the primary—primary sort of impetus. Then, all of a sudden from there, those lines became straight lines and on and on, and so to do this in this circular, I felt like wow, I just walked through this man's life, and it made sense. The movement forward made sense. It was all built on what he had done. It was this very [linear –NC]—I mean it was just this—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —chronology—

NANETTE CARTER: —amazing—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and it was—

NANETTE CARTER: —movement—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and it was a chronology kind of like—

NANETTE CARTER: It really was a chronology.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —took you—yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: And—but—but it made sense to me as a young teenager. And I think what I gathered from that, and it was again this idea of this cycle, you know, that life is a cycle and all of these, kind of, iconic kind of gestures that were being thrown at me. I said, oh my gosh, so unlike Michelangelo and da Vinci who always, sort of, seemed to me from the beginning of their, you know, lives till the end of their lives were dealing with these figures and beautiful, you know, gorgeous things, but nothing really changed a lot.

CHERYL R. RILEY: The figure, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: I said, my God, an artist can change. You know, you don't have to stick within the same thing. You can create something that people have never seen before then, you know? And of course as you go all the way down, he's only dealing with primary colors, you know, he isn't even mixing them down, but okay—and white.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And geometric shapes.

NANETTE CARTER: Geometric shapes and primary colors, black lines, and then what does he say? He says, well, he moved to this country, he moved to New York, he was taken by the streets of New York, he loved the city, he fell in love the city like Stuart Davis and a bunch of guys, Duchamp, all of them loved the city, and it changed his world and his view of the world that he lived in, his—

CHERYL R. RILEY: One of his—

NANETTE CARTER: —experiences.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —most famous is *Broadway Boogie Woogie*.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, and I was about to say, he loved jazz like Stuart Davis also, they loved jazz. They said at one point—I'm reading this book, it's incredible. They said at one point, these are the white folks I'm talking about now, I'm talking about de Kooning and all those guys coming over, you know, during the wartime, trying to get away from the Nazis. Everyone at one point was listening to classical music and then all of a sudden, [snaps fingers] everyone's—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —jazz.

NANETTE CARTER: —listening to jazz. It's just—it was like, *boom*. And Lee Krasner even speaks to it. He—she said, you know, "We all were playing, you know, Bach, you know—not Bach but Brahms—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Bach—

NANETTE CARTER: —and, you know, Beethoven, all of a sudden, that ended, and we were listening to, you know, Charlie Mingus and Charlie Parker." And she said, "It just—it just happened, and no one went back to classical. It was just jazz." Because these were the same people who were creating these new worlds and they saw jazz as doing the same—

CHERYL R. RILEY: New art forms, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —things. This new art form, not sticking with the old but moving us forward. And so it just—it was a—just a revelation to see Mondrian's life within this four-hour span of visiting this museum and seeing the changes. It just told me, hey, it's all open for you Black child, you know, you can do the same.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And artist.

NANETTE CARTER: As an artist, you can just make your own world from what you know, from what you know, from your experiences. So I remember that; that was climactic for me in many ways. I know I came home from that and I was like, wow, this is the game for me. I —you know, forget the interior design. I know at one point I wanted to be an architect, I fell in love with Frank Lloyd Wright, I remember going to the library, getting books on him, I loved these ranch-style homes, his homes close—

CHERYL R. RILEY: He was a game changer too—

NANETTE CARTER: He was also—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —having actual the rocks—

NANETTE CARTER: —extremely—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —just stay there—

NANETTE CARTER: —extremely—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and be part of—

NANETTE CARTER: —part of the—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the décor.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. And this idea of living close to the ground and living to nature—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —with nature—

NANETTE CARTER: —as opposed to his—of course his teacher was Sullivan who was building these buildings in Chicago that were tall—no, he said, no, we're going to go back down to nature, and I loved all that.

[00:10:02]

So, you know, I was told though as an architect, you have to have your science and your math and your engineering and all, and it was like, no, I can't do that. So at this point now seeing Mondrian, I—you know, there's all this stuff has been pushed to the back, to the side, interior design and architecture and all that. No, Mondrian, that's it, this is my—this is my voyage, this is my journey, this is the way I have to go. And I think it was very clear at this point, again, I'm, you know, probably like a junior in high school, my parents are thinking, Hey, this is the way she wants to go, we're not going to try and dissuade her, this is her life, and they were like that, you know, whatever we wanted to do. Like I said, my sister wanted to be a veterinarian, they bought her one of these mock dogs that you put together and you put the heart and lung and then you are able to pump the blood and you could see the blood go through, okay, she got one. I mean whatever we wanted to do, they backed us, you know. Okay, you want, okay, all right then. She changed, she wanted to do something else—they backed that, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: How lucky.

NANETTE CARTER: They were wonderful. So Mom is thinking, okay, college, you know, what's going to happen here and going to a school that was all fine arts, you know, like Pratt was out of it. They said, "Go on to a liberal arts school and take art like you're doing in high school, take it as a major and then get your master's if you want to really pursue it." Now when it got out to family and friends that, you know, I would be majoring in art, a lot of their Black friends were like, "Frances, Matthew, are you kidding? You're going to let your child major in art."

CHERYL R. RILEY: She's going to starve.

NANETTE CARTER: And my mother's retort was always, because they—only person people knew at that point really was—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Romare—

NANETTE CARTER: —Elizabeth Catlett.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh—

NANETTE CARTER: —in terms of women—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh—

NANETTE CARTER: —Black women.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: Alma Thomas and Elizabeth, those were the only two, that was it, okay, no one else. And we know—listen, Alma didn't start really working until she retired. I mean she was always painting—

CHERYL R. RILEY: She was a textile designer.

NANETTE CARTER: But she was—she was—oh, the other person too actually when you say that Loïs Mailou Jones, she taught Howard, but those were the only women, that was it, okay. And because my mother came out of DC, all those women were in DC at one point, she knew them, you know, she could tell me about them, but that was it. But my mother's retort to her friends was, "She can teach." Now, basically, I came from a family of teachers, my mother was a teacher, and as a preacher he has to teach, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: And it was like, you know, that would quiet her friends and family. You know, it'd be like, "No, no, she can—she's going to—you know, we're all teachers here, she can teach."

CHERYL R. RILEY: Many artists, many artists do that.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Take that route.

NANETTE CARTER: Exactly, and that, kind of, shut folks up. So, you know, come time to look at schools, I had Spelman as a safety, Brandeis, I looked at Brandeis, but I looked at Oberlin College, and we actually went to Oberlin because it was going back to Ohio. I'll never forget, we went, we stayed in Columbus with friends, and then we went Oberlin, we went to the campus. I was interviewed, I walked around, and I saw that the Black community was so tight. And the only way that I really found out about all Oberlin—I forgot about it. My sister got married when I was about 14 years old, she was 19, but she was out of—you know, she was almost out of college, she did college in three years. She got married at 19, I was 14—no, no I may have been 15, she was 19, yeah, there were four years. The best man was a dear friend, of course, of my brother-in-law, but it was his brother, Michael Lythcott who had just finished Oberlin, and he had pulled me aside back then saying, "Look at Oberlin, the Black community there is together, the arts are strong because the conservatory is there, many other folks were—"

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_2of4_sd_track05_m.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: —majors in the conservatory, Black folks there for the conservatory, brilliant, to get into that conservatory, you know, brilliant. He said, "You would love this community." I knew, because my sister had gone to Boston, I couldn't be in the city. I knew that I would not work well in the city; there'd be too many distractions for me. My father used to call me his party girl because I partied; I partied all through high school, okay. I went to parties Friday and Saturday nights and got all my work done on Sunday in time for school on Monday, I partied. I hung out with another friend Michele Lapeyrolerie because we couldn't drive. Her mother would drive us to the parties. We went to parties in Newark, East Orange, South Orange, Orange, and West Orange, okay, and we followed these amazing musicians, you know, Black—again Black folks just amazing. We had a guy in high school, Doug Allen, Montclair High School. Like Jimi Hendrix, he could play with the damn guitar behind his head, he could play it with his teeth, he could play it in between his legs, he had the wah-wah pedal and the brother could—we had people. Albert Anderson ended up playing with Bob Marley, okay. We had amazing musicians to come to through this—again this public school system that really saw the arts as a very—

CHERYL R. RILEY: important.

NANETTE CARTER: —important subject matter for all children, and some of us branched off and ended up going in that direction, okay.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And others are—become supporters of it.

NANETTE CARTER: Supporters of it, exactly, lovers of it. So—what in the hell was my point? I was trying to make a point.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You were a party girl.

NANETTE CARTER: I was a party girl, I was a party girl, so I knew—thank you. I need you, Cheryl, [they laugh] to steer me right. I'm going to get those three jeopardies too. I was a party girl, I knew I couldn't be in the city, I just—I was amazed, my sister could be in the city in Boston, which isn't, you know, a huge city, but I knew a place like Brandeis or Oberlin, out in the middle of nowhere. Oberlin is truly out in the middle of nowhere, 30 miles from Cleveland, which was the big city. I would get my work done, that the only way I could do it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Fewer distractions.

NANETTE CARTER: That was it. So I get to Oberlin and visit this campus with my mom and dad, and I see this strong Black community. They had an Afro-House, which was a dorm, but also on Fridays in that dorm, there was a cafeteria in that dorm, but on Fridays, they opened it up to all people on campus because on Fridays, they had fried chicken, fried fish, greens, you know, and mac and cheese, okay, everything like home.

CHERYL R. RILEY: What more could you—

NANETTE CARTER: —like home.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —what more could you want?

NANETTE CARTER: What more could you want? I'm like, Oh, my God. And then these Black folks were singing. After the meal on Fridays, there always this, and these are people going to the conservatory. So we had opera to, you know, kind of Donny Hathaway shit, to—I mean all of it, right? I said, This is the place, Michael was right, this is the place to come, Michael Liscott was right. I applied early decision; I found out just before Thanksgiving. Everybody else is just sending out their, you know, applications at that point. I got into Spelman, I was denied by Brandeis, I got into Oberlin early decision, which was also wonderful because that last semester of my senior year, I could really just get into my art. You know, it really allowed me—I knew I was in, you know, I wouldn't go to fail the other courses or anything like that, no, no, no, I kept up my average, but I could really then just center on my work and so that worked out really well. And again, I'll get back to the traveling because I did go abroad, and that certainly meant a lot, and I think it helped me to get into Oberlin by saying that I had studied abroad.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I'm sure.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, yeah. So that—in other words, it was very clear that, you know, I knew art was going to my major. Now, the other thing about Oberlin that really, kind of, excited me, of course that Black community was a very strong pull, but I found that it was the only school at the time that allowed you to major in both art history and studio art.

[00:05:01]

And because my mother had said, you know, "You—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you go to teach—

NANETTE CARTER: —"you're going to be teaching—"

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you could have—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —teach as a backup.

NANETTE CARTER: I get that art history in there too, that's right. And again, saying that I went abroad, I went to the Louvre because this trip—and again I'll talk to—you know, more of that later, but, you know, the trip also included London, Paris, but we studied in Italy. So you know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: So the art was your—

NANETTE CARTER: —well, the art—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —key in art.

NANETTE CARTER: —was there, that's right—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But so—

NANETTE CARTER: —all that stuff.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —what you were saying it wasn't—

NANETTE CARTER: That's it—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —it wasn’t African art, it wasn’t African American art—

NANETTE CARTER: No, no, no.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —no, it wasn't African American artists.

NANETTE CARTER: No, no, this was all European art. But to say on my application that I had this experience, you know, and that I want to have that double major that you offer, which no one else did. Most liberal arts schools when you say you're going to major in fine arts, that's what you do, you know, you can't do both, it's either or. And so it was like this school—again, the universe put this school in front of me. It was the best place for me because again it was in the middle of nowhere, but that Black community was a jumping Black community, we partied every Friday and Saturday night, no difference from Montclair High School, okay, no difference. I would tell you, I partied in elementary school, junior high, and high school, okay. I love to dance, I love to dance, and even today. So this group—

CHERYL R. RILEY: It's good for the soul.

NANETTE CARTER: —at Oberlin, I—what did you say?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Good for the soul.

NANETTE CARTER: Good for? Oh, God, is it—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Dance.

NANETTE CARTER: —ever, release. I could be in the studio right now and if that song comes on, right there—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh, I do that—

NANETTE CARTER: —I stop and dance.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I get up, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Sometimes when Motown is on or whatever—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, my God—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I can't be still.

NANETTE CARTER: —no.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and I have to—and I'm thinking, you know what—

NANETTE CARTER: —I got to move.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —this is good, I probably—

NANETTE CARTER: It is good.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —get my blood circulating—

NANETTE CARTER: That too—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and my brain working—

NANETTE CARTER: —exercising.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a little bit more—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and moving and—

NANETTE CARTER: It is.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —take away from it a little bit—

NANETTE CARTER: Get them neurons going.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and come back to it.

NANETTE CARTER: —that's right, get everything heated up and get your—oh, no, and I'm sure that movement and all that is in the work too, you know, I can't help but. But—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Count on it, count on it.

NANETTE CARTER: —I just—you know, these were some absolutely amazing Black students at Oberlin, just powerful, incredible people to be around, very supportive, understanding of the arts, you know, just respectful of the arts and so that worked out well, that worked out well. And again, I'll come back and talk more about my travels, but my junior year at Oberlin, I spent the whole year again in Italy, in Perugia, Italy, studying. And this time, I really did a lot of traveling around Europe because, again, I was there for a year, but I'll come back to some of these travels—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I love Italy—

NANETTE CARTER: —a little later. I do too, gosh, in so many ways. And so after Oberlin, actually when I came back, you know, after my junior year abroad, I came back my senior year, it's very interesting because I was gone for a year, and I did not have a scholarship. My parents paid, and they—Oberlin did a whole change around. They said, "Wait a minute, no one can leave for a full year, you can only go"—and it was me, I know it was me—"you can only go for a half a year." They changed everything because they missed out on that money, okay. And because my parents didn't have to pay that exorbitant fee compared to going to

Italy, okay, which was much cheaper even with the flight and everything, and because of that, they were able to come over to be with me during Christmas, and we rented a car and travelled around Italy, but again, I'll get back into that later with the travels.

So when I come back to Oberlin that next year, they stopped it. They said, "That's it, no one can go away for a year." Luckily like high school, I was taking five majors, most people in college take four major classes and then have some minor classes, right, gym or whatever else, you know. No, even in college, I had five majors and that was a lucky thing because before I left, I showed Oberlin a portfolio of the work I had done thus far, I showed them the curriculum and the programming for Italy, they said that they would transfer all of those credits in Italy. Of course when I got back from Italy, they did not transfer all of the credits.

[00:10:02]

They did not transfer the credits like they had told me they would. Now, no, they didn't put it in writing, it was verbal, but luckily, because I had been taking five credits, I could still graduate on time. If not, I would not have been able to graduate on time. I would have to come back to Oberlin, and they would've gotten more money from me, okay?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: So, okay, I've taken all those credits, and I still—even in my senior year, I was taking five majors, okay. I graduated on time. Hey, no shit on my shoes, okay, excuse my language, but that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh, you go right ahead, use—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that word many times.

NANETTE CARTER: Okay. Because it's like, whoo, all right, but like I said, that year I came back, they changed the program, you cannot go away for a year. So anyway finished—oh, I should say—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That was shortsighted on their part because it just makes you a more well-rounded person when you do things—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, my gosh—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —like that.

NANETTE CARTER: —yes.

CHERYL R. RILEY: and it adds to what you're creating when you have—

NANETTE CARTER: [Cross talk]—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —those other—

NANETTE CARTER: —no, no, it's about the bottom line, darling, it's about the—always about the Benjamins. So, you know, I'm back now, I'm at Oberlin my senior year, and I'm thinking, You know what, Nanette, I need graduate school, I need graduate school for couple of reasons: I'd love to have two more years of no liberal arts classes, just focusing on my work, but also, I would really prefer teaching on the college level. I wanted to have students who knew what they wanted to do, were more focused, or at least were more mature, and I felt like I just needed to do that, and I knew I wanted to be in New York. So I applied—I didn't know Hunter at the time, I didn't know how strong a program they had. All I knew really was like Columbia and Pratt, you know, dead up in, you know, Brooklyn, Manhattan or—

So I applied to both of them. Columbia only accepted 12, back then, they only accepted 12 into graduate school. I did not get in there, but I got into Pratt. And I recall learning the lesson when I was trying to get into Oberlin, there was something about visiting the campus and having an interview; I knew I needed that. And I remember having an interview with this gentleman named Frank Lind who at the time was the chair of the graduate program. They don't do that anymore. Now there's one chair that heads the undergrad and graduate, but back then, we were in a separate building even from the undergrad on Pratt campus in

Brooklyn. And I remember going in there, I remember that and talking to him and talking—you know, showing my drawings and talking to him about what I wanted to do with my life—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Was your work—

NANETTE CARTER: —and what have you.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —more figurative then?

NANETTE CARTER: I was doing landscape, some figure, but mostly kind of landscape things, and a lot of prints. When I studied in Italy that year, I fell in love with printmaking. That was when—and maybe I'll go on into that now, I was going to do that with the travels, but let me go into do that now. Even at Oberlin, I had a printmaking professor at Oberlin who had studied with a Japanese master woodcut artist under a Fulbright grant. He had gone there and stayed there for a year and just learned all of it. So he was teaching us that particular technique and way of registering the prints very different from the way we do here, water-based pigments, so you get that gradation that you see in the Japanese woodcuts, he taught us how to do that. Really tough woods and all to—that you had to cut into because the grain was, you know, tight and therefore the water wouldn't go into it quickly, you know, and all and you had to work quickly and all the different techniques he had down and gave that to us. And then I—also and I have to say this was at Oberlin too. I really, kind of, enjoyed intaglio, a professor by the name of Paul Arnold who was teaching the printmaking. And I kind of—what I liked about the etching and this was my mindset—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_1of4_sd_track06_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —and I think this was probably started maybe my sophomore year. I got to thinking, Well, you know, first of all, I love prints, I love the different textures. And it was there that I loved—I began to really find that textures were very important for me, not just painterly textures, not just brushwork, textures, different types of textures, which you can achieve both with woodcut and with intaglio. You know, you have the aquatint, which gives you this wonderful, rich texture, the line work in intaglio, and then of course, the grain of the wood with the woodcut. Now, I wasn't the type to work with linoleum cuts when I got into college. I mean I had done that in elementary school. I was working with wood because I wanted the grain to play an integral role. So therefore when I would choose my wood, I would choose the wood because of the grain—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the grains, uh-huh [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: —and the way it worked and how I could work with—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —with that.

NANETTE CARTER: —that grain, that's right. So this idea of texture and surface really started, really fomented really during that time period with printmaking. This particular professor—I must say there were maybe two of us in the art program at Oberlin, the Black folks, and the guy who was there actually was like a senior when I got to there so you know, we only overlapped for maybe a year or something like that. But this professor was more open to me. I can—you can tell, you know.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Sure.

NANETTE CARTER: The painting professor was a little cool, and he'll go unnamed. He was okay, he was all right, but he was a little cool. Mr. Arnold was different; Paul was different. That helped of course. But again, the textures that I could get, and this is before Goldens was making the pumice that you can now put in your paints and all this other, you know, this is way before any of that stuff was happening. So the other deal was this. I said, "You know what, Nanette, prints are probably the way for you to go because you want the Black community to be able to afford your pieces," and this is way—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —multiple.

NANETTE CARTER: —the multiples will allow my people to buy my work.

And, you know, I always painted, I mean I took painting classes at Oberlin. You had—you

know, I took sculpture classes, but I said, "No, this is the avenue for you to really delve into because it—it's going to be affordable"

NANETTE CARTER: It's accessible.

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's right.

NANETTE CARTER: And so going to Italy, luckily, they had a really serious printmaking program when I was there in Perugia, I mean serious. And it was a monk, a Franciscan monk that was teaching the class. He came with his robe, his brown robe, you know, the way the Franciscan monks dressed. And luckily, there was a crew of folks, and, you know, when I say I studied in Italy that year, these were students coming from all different colleges, you know. I was the only one from Oberlin who was doing this, but these were students from California, from all different parts of the country, and there was a crew of us. And I remember there was one Jewish student, she was really steeped, she had clearly had a lot of intaglio printing, but it was a group of us, you know. We kind of band together and all, and it was great because—and I'm not going to go too much further into this because I want to come back to it. It was this group that ended up going to Egypt together because Egypt's right there at the boot. You know, you just—it was a very cheap flight, you know, that was my first time going to Africa, but we all went over together. And it was so sad because the Jewish student couldn't go because Israel and Egypt were at war, she couldn't come with us. And there were—let me see if I can get this, I believe there were five of us, counting me, there were five women that ended up going to Egypt together, and she wanted to come, she could not come.

But anyway, so coming back to Oberlin my senior year, I know I want to major in printmaking, I have these prints. The prints were again more dealing with nature and landscape and plant life and such. So my portfolio for Pratt, you know, I had quite a few of these prints, I had woodcuts, multicolored woodcuts.

[00:05:11]

And so I remember in the interview, I was saying, "Of course, this is what I want to major in, printmaking," and, um, they put me on like a standby. I didn't quite get in, you know, and I remember writing a letter, and then all of a sudden, I got in, majoring in printmaking. And, uh, it was very interesting because I was in the mix with Yale students, you know, folks who had gone to Yale undergrad and folks who were coming out of Syracuse, out of very strong—liberal arts schools but very strong art programs. and I learned a great deal, but I remember being very shy and kind of intimidated because even their language about talking about art was very different, you know. I do remember that, and I remember being a little frightened, but by my second year, I was—got my footing. I was at this point now, and I know the print, and I have the print, and I actually sold one of them to one of my early lovers who probably still has the piece. There was a print that made a difference.

I was in my apartment because when I went to Pratt, I actually had a one-bedroom apartment with a bathroom and everything. It was a studio apartment, and I had my horses and my worktable was there and all. But I remember one rainy night looking out the window and seeing the trees and thinking of Mondrian, and I did this piece, this etching. I did a drawing first but I did—ended up doing this etching of these trees in the night. And so they were sort of like silhouetted, you know, because it was the streetlight and then the trees, and that did it. This is a different Mondrian, it was like, Wait, I can push this and move this and play around, and, you know, the trunk doesn't have to be here, the trunk can be up here. You know it can be anywhere in the damn place I want to put it, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's right.

NANETTE CARTER: And I began to explore this world where at one point—you know, as things moved along, at one point, you could be looking down even at these aerial views, it seemed, of land, and that was something else that was really important for me in terms of my travels. My very first flight ever, I was in junior high school, my father had to go to Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, to speak. And he said—my father would fly all the time, he was always speaking, you know, um, and I do want to talk more about my dad too in terms of that. And my father said, "Nanette, you've never been on a plane?" At this point, my mother hadn't been on a plane, okay, she didn't want to go in a plane, but we would take my father to the Newark airport because he'd go to different parts of this country to speak, Alabama, you know, Virginia, Georgia, wherever, you know. He would speak not only in churches, but

he would speak at universities or whatever. But my father says, "You know what, come with me on this trip. We're going to go to Virginia, we're going to stay with some friends." And I knew the friends because we had—we drove down there to visit them, the Epps family, and I was like, "Yeah, I want to fly, yeah, yeah." I remember it was my first time wearing stockings, I had on black patent leather shoes, I remember the outfit I had on, okay, the dress went with the coat, you know, because when you flew back then, you dressed.

CHERYL R. RILEY: It was style.

NANETTE CARTER: The women had on minks—

CHERYL R. RILEY: It was style.

NANETTE CARTER: —and stoles, yeah, minks. I mean serious, make up, I mean everybody, you know, oh. I was clean, I had on my patent leather shoes and my outfit, my hair was done, and I went with my daddy on this plane. And when I looked down at the land masses, I was like, Wow, love this. The abstraction of reality, this whole geometric thing that was going on, which was sort of my background anyway from my early days of collaging. Cutting up space like this, these different values and greens and different saturations of color, you know? Whoa, scared to death, and this is a propeller plane now, okay, the damn propellers going, you know?

[00:10:08]

But my dad had me sit by the window, and that was it sitting by the window. Coming back, I took note in my head; it was like wow. First of all, it was surreal, and I felt like maybe I'm really not up in the air. Maybe someone is just—you know, how your mind goes crazy and your imagination goes wild? Yeah, yeah. So anyway, going back now to Pratt, all of those things kind of came back to me, and so again, that night looking out at these trees, thinking about different ways of looking at nature and then coming up—

CHERYL R. RILEY: As an abstraction.

NANETTE CARTER: —with my own world, you know, dealing with nature.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Nature as an abstraction, right.

NANETTE CARTER: And that's what my whole my whole, you know, thesis show was about. I did these huge, lead pencil drawings of basically aerial views looking down. And you could see train tracks because of a particular texture I made, or you could see a bridge linking one land mass from the other. And actually, that's one of the pieces up there, that black-and-white piece way up there?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: That was from my show. I sold pieces in that show, I sold—that did it. [snaps fingers] People didn't sell their work necessarily at your Pratt thesis show. You know, students came, you know. You know, my parents being in Montclair, they brought their friends, their friends bought pieces, they were like $60, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Sure.

NANETTE CARTER: But, hey, but that was 1978—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That $60 went a long—

NANETTE CARTER: —that was serious.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —way.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, and I'm not living at home, and I have to say at Pratt, I had a part-time job, okay. My parents did not have to pay for my living expenses. My mother said, "Nanette, you're going to Pratt, you can stay at home and commute." I said, "No way, I want to live in New York. "I had been thinking about this since I was a little girl. I always knew I was going to live in New York." When we would come over to see *Aida,* and my mother loved the Rockettes, we would go to Rockefeller Center because the dancers and the —you know, how they do the dancing with the 50 women, all this—?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh, I know it, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: She loved that. See, we—there was a point in time we came over every weekend to see the Rockettes and see a movie. You know, you see a movie and then the Rockettes would come out and you see a movie?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Right.

NANETTE CARTER: The same thing would come out again. We sit there at the beginning, see the Rockettes, the movie and then see them come out again.

CHERYL R. RILEY: See them again.

NANETTE CARTER: Okay, because that's what Mom—yeah. And we loved it, we had a ball, but we would go to New York. I loved being in New York. I said, "Mama, all these years you brought me over to New York, you know, I love New York, I want to live in New York." My father said, "Let the woman go to New York, she doesn't want to commute," and Mom was, "Well, it'll be cheaper, she could save her money so that she can—" You know, I paid for my graduate school. I—my father signed the loan with me, but I took a loan out, I paid for my graduate school.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Wow.

NANETTE CARTER: So my mother said, "No, this way, you can pay your graduate school quicker and dah, dah." Dad said, "Let the woman go."

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because she was the money person in the family.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, she was, but she also wanted to keep me home. I knew what that was. She didn't want to see her baby child leave, so—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Isn't that sweet?

NANETTE CARTER: I found myself a job that was going to take care of my rent and food in the Garment District. And I had set it up with this guy who ran this place that I could only come up certain days because of my classes and all that. He said, "Oh, as long as you can come up certain hours each week, I'm fine, whenever you come, you come." Took care of my rent for this one room, I moved out, they helped me move there, and that was it, and I knew it. And it's so funny because the summer before I went to Pratt, I broke out in hives in the house.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Stress.

NANETTE CARTER: I could—I was so independent, I had lived in Europe, and now I'm under the gun of these two people? I love them dearly, but, you know, he's talking about "You can't go here, you can't go there—"

CHERYL R. RILEY: No, you fly.

NANETTE CARTER: I can't have lovers—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Time for you to fly.

NANETTE CARTER: —in the house. Okay. It was like—I broke out in hives. It was like, get me the hell out of here, I love you both dearly, but it's time. And Dad was like, "Yeah, yeah." Dad was good, he was ready.

CHERYL R. RILEY: The sheltering is over now.

NANETTE CARTER: Over, that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Time to leave the nest.

NANETTE CARTER: We've taught you what we could, it's your time to—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Time to leave the nest.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. And Mom—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_1of4_sd_track07_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —couldn't believe—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And your sister was already—

NANETTE CARTER: —that—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —gone at this point.

NANETTE CARTER: She's gone, married, gone and married. And so here I am, not only paying for my rent and my food but still paying that loan, and I never had to ask them for any money because I was selling. Them little $60 things added up, so I could pay my $120 a month to the bank, you know. So it was like, no, this is it, and New York is my place, Brooklyn, I was living in Brooklyn, lived in Brooklyn for two years, loved it.

My parents always said that as soon as Bettye, my sister, or I graduated from college, we would get a car, I got a car. My mother and father, bless them both—and they are here in the room with us, because I have their ashes right up here under that scarf, that's my father's scarf—they told us we would get a car if we graduated from college. My parents came out to my graduation in Oberlin in Ohio in two cars.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And one they left.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. They both drove nine hours for my graduation, took—because one car was a station wagon, took some of the stuff in the station wagon, and drove back, and I had to drive back. I had a friend who actually needed a ride too, so I wasn't alone, and I could put more stuff because I had art stuff. You know, this was it, I was leaving—you know I had stored stuff there at Oberlin, you know, and your stuff accumulates. I drove and—but now check this out. Here I am, they drive out there, my mother drives my car, my father drives the station wagon because my car is a standard shift, it's a shift.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I never learned to drive those.

NANETTE CARTER: I had never—I hadn't learned to drive a shift. While she's there, she teaches me how to drive this damn car so that I can drive nine hours back. They trusted me. But, you know, again, I was such—I was an independent young woman, I was, you know. But—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But they didn't try to hold—

NANETTE CARTER: —I loved it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you back?

NANETTE CARTER: No, they didn't, no, they didn't, and they gave me what I needed to go forth. So when I was in—

CHERYL R. RILEY: How blessed, how lucky and blessed were you.

NANETTE CARTER: How lucky I was. So when I'm at Pratt, I've got a car. So, you know, of course, I wasn't using the car to—I was working in Manhattan in the Garment District, I would take the subway to that. You know, I had to park it right there to do that, but, you know, I was going up to Harlem to parties because, you know, I'm still partying now. [Laughs.] I'm in New York—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And you're still partying—

NANETTE CARTER: —now.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you're still partying now.

NANETTE CARTER: I visit—I'm in New York, honey, they got parties up the wazoo. House parties were going on all the time, you know, and people would lay out spreads of food and stuff, and you party and eat and have a good time? Oh yeah. And then of course, you know,

soon after that, the clubs were happening.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You could go to the—

NANETTE CARTER: —lots of clubs—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you were old enough—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, my God—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that you could go—

NANETTE CARTER: —I had a car—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —to the club.

NANETTE CARTER: —I could drive. And back then, you could find parking places; you know, now you can't. These young people today, *psh*, please. But I was in seventh heaven, I had a car, I was in graduate school, and—and loving it, just having a good time.

While I'm at graduate school, I become a teacher's assistant for an artist who's teaching there. Her name is Clare Romano. Now Clare Romano and John Ross, her husband, resided right over here in Englewood, New Jersey, and Clare would commute to teach at Pratt, and her husband taught at Manhattanville. They both were artists, their studios were in this beautiful, modern home there in Englewood. She and her husband write what we all called the bible for printmakers, boy, and of course, the title of that damn book is escaping me. Printmaking—it'll come to me, it'll come, and I may have to Google it because it is important. It was—every printmaker had to have this book, and it's from soup to nuts. They had lithography, monotypes, wood—everything was in there, the reduction method, which was something Picasso came up with. He came up with something no one had ever done before with woodcuts; he was doing linoleum cuts. All of that was in this book, and she had pictures because being visual artists, we need pictures to show us how to—you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: Reading the stuff is not enough;—

CHERYL R. RILEY: You need to see it.

NANETTE CARTER: —you got to have some guide, yeah, all of that, thick book, beautiful book. So I signed up to be a teacher's assistant with Clare Romano who teaches the woodcut class at Pratt Institute.

[00:05:07]

Now this is at a time when Pratt—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Perfect fit.

NANETTE CARTER: —was hot. Mohammad Khalil was teaching there, African gentleman from—I believe he is from Egypt. Mohammad Khalil, brilliant printmaker is teaching there; Clare Romano who's taught this book—who wrote this book with her husband is teaching there. I signed up with Clare because she was the woodcut person, and she would do these huge woodcuts, you know. So I get there in her class, and she introduces me as—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Ten minutes left.

NANETTE CARTER: —okay, 10 more minutes? She introduces me as, you know, a student from the graduate school, and she says, you know, "Our graduate school is not quite up to par like it used to be, but Nanette Carter is here to help us out, and she's my teacher's assistant, she'll be with us for the semester. And any problems that you have, you know, and I'm with someone else or I have to go off somewhere else, you know, she'll be here to help you out." What a way to introduce someone, right? And I was thinking, Gee, I didn't realize the graduate school here wasn't up to par. I mean, [inaudible] what this is. Now, I must say, I think the undergrad was probably better known than the graduate, yeah, but, you know, I had some Yalies in there with me too, you know, what is she talking about? Okay, this is the way she—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But this is the woman—

NANETTE CARTER: So but now—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —who wrote the book.

NANETTE CARTER: I know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: So she's coming—

NANETTE CARTER: —exactly.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —from a different standard.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, I'm also thinking, I just have to shut my mouth because I can't say anything. All I can do is show the students what I know. Now I studied with a master printer at Oberlin who studied with a master printer in Japan—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And she's a master—

NANETTE CARTER: —doing woodcuts.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —herself.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, wait a minute—

CHERYL R. RILEY: She did the book, right?

NANETTE CARTER: She didn't realize what I knew, and when she found out how I was talking to those students and I was showing them how the Japanese would do registration and all this stuff, I said, "No, do the water base, if you want to do water-based, we can do that beautiful gradation that the Japanese achieve." She looked at me like, oh, okay, she knows a little something, something.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Thought she was doing some charity.

NANETTE CARTER: Okay, so she quizzed me, "So who taught you the Japanese method?" because she wasn't teaching that. She—you know, many times, you'll teach different techniques, you choose what's best for you, but she wasn't teaching that at all. I said, "Well, I've studied with a master printer at Oberlin who studied with a master printer in Japan with a Fulbright." Do you know this woman was absent for about five successive weeks? I was teaching that class. She told me her mother was ill and had to tend to her mother, and I was coming in there and teaching that class, okay?

CHERYL R. RILEY: How great is that?

NANETTE CARTER: But no, I'm in this graduate school that ain't worth nothing, that's the way she introduced me. So people first of all, that first day, I had a hard time because people were looking at me like, well—you know, and plus I'm a Black woman. You know that's what it was. I don't know why I had—the triple jeopardy was abstract artist, Black—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —female.

NANETTE CARTER: —and a woman. Now of course—

CHERYL R. RILEY: The trifecta.

NANETTE CARTER: I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

CHERYL R. RILEY: The trifecta.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, but my—you see where my mind is, and maybe we should end there—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I think we should—

NANETTE CARTER: —and load up.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and then pick yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —the next day.

CHERYL R. RILEY: We should change our tape.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, but let me just say, I was scared on many levels because this was a woman I had really looked up to. Again, she wrote the book, she's the—you know. And so all I could do was let these folks know what I knew—

CHERYL R. RILEY: What you knew, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —you know, and that I did know something that she had not even taught them to the point where she's now leaving me with you by myself, okay.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because you could do it, you could handle it.

NANETTE CARTER: Okay. Okay, so we'll end right there.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You can handle it.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, I just—woo, I was so upset with her, and I did use her name, but I don't care.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But it's good because—

NANETTE CARTER: She's dead.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —it set you up in a lot of ways.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, as a teacher too, that's right, it did, it certainly did. So that's two hours?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Uh-huh [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: Okay.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Where is the—?

NANETTE CARTER: And we're—

[00:09:39]

[END OF TRACK carter21_1of4_sd_track08_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: Now what is that—then you do it again? And you, hold down here.

CHERYL R. RILEY: There we go. This is tape number two, interview with Nanette Carter, um, and for the Smithsonian's Archive[s of American Art], November 22, 2021.

NANETTE CARTER: All right, I think we stopped when I was at Pratt.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And you were teaching.

NANETTE CARTER: And I was teaching, doing the—that's right—a teacher's assistant for—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But you were teaching.

NANETTE CARTER: —Clare Romano, yes.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But you were teaching.

NANETTE CARTER: I was teaching this relief class, woodcut relief class. You know, the thing with relief printing, of course, the more colors that you want, you have to cut other pieces of wood. And not only are you thinking about the grain of the wood, but you're also thinking about the way that you cut the wood, which can also give you textures. Yeah, there are just many, many ways that you can obtain some really interesting textures with the wood itself. So those were some of the things too I've also wanted to impart on students, not—you know,

you're just not dealing with the grain of the wood, but you can actually come up with your own textures. So again textures have been such a—played such an important role in my own art. I always like to talk to students about that.

Um, let me also say that the summer between those two years at Pratt, that summer before my last year at Pratt, okay, I had a job out in the Hamptons. What I did—what I did not talk about, and I need to maybe go back here now, is at the age of around 13, my parents bought property in Sag Harbor, Long Island, and we bought property in what was known as the Black area called Sag Harbor Hills. There were three different areas there, all of them butted up against each other, but one was called Azurerest, azure being blue, so blue rest, Azurerest, Sag Harbor Hills that was in the center, that's where we were, and then Ninevah, which of course was a biblical name. Sag Harbor Hills was right—this area was right on the bay, and what they called Barcelona Point was not far from us, and Gardiner's Island was right out, uh, from us on the sound, the Long Island Sound, this was not on the ocean, this was on the sound. And so Sag Harbor was an old whaling town, there were Blacks that lived there, some of the homes are actually still there and have been refurbished. It has a quite a history in terms of Black sailors, Black whalers, it was a whaling town, it was a town that actually a lot of money came through because it was a whaling town.

And there was a community of Blacks only because this particular area didn't have a lot of trees. The trees appeared to be stunted. Again, it was right on the beach, a beautiful beach. And the white woman—the way I understand it, there was a white woman that owned all of this property, all of these different areas that I was talking about, these three areas, a sizable amount of property, and she couldn't sell it, no one would buy it, the white folks would not buy this. And at the time, there was a small group of Black men I think basically coming out of Brooklyn that would come out to this area because again Sag Harbor was known for having a Black community ages ago or, you know, in the 1800s. And they would come out, these Black men from Brooklyn to fish. And there was a cottage there that a Black family owned, and this is where the Black men would come to stay, and they didn't necessarily bring their wives. I think it was really just a thing for men to come, and maybe sometimes families did go, but they would stay in the cottage.

[00:05:03]

The cottages are still there, and this is now run by the, you know, third generation. And so they heard about this white woman wanting to sell this property, and no one was buying it, white folks weren't buying it. So they began to inquire, and the woman said, "Hey, yeah, I want to sell," and slowly, Black folks began to come out. It's known that Harry Belafonte went out and built a house, he didn't stay there very long, but he certainly had property and built a house. You know these were your middle-class Blacks coming out of New York primarily, then all of a sudden, New Jersey folks began to come out there, but it was primarily Harlem and Brooklyn folks, doctors, teachers, in some instances, you know, the husband-and-wife team were both teachers. We had—I know Frank Wimberley worked in the post office; his wife was a counselor at one of the public schools. So people began to buy property and to build their homes, and these were not lavish homes, these were small summer homes, but small and very nice, very comfortable. Many of the homes were not winterized and so it was really just for the summer. Some of the homes weren't winterized, but they would have a fireplace.

And it ended up where the doctors ended up buying along the beach area. You had had Dr. Cowans, Dr. Gibbs ended up buying that house later on, you had Dr. Granger, Dr. Sinclair, Dr. Shelton—Schultz [ph]—Shelton—the Sheltons, Shelton, Shelton—Sheltons from Jersey from Montclair, um, so it was interesting. So the doctors, kind of, ended up buying the beachfront property, which was more expensive. Of course your insurance was more expensive because of the water levels. And basically, one-floor homes, I don't remember any two-floor homes at that time, they were all one-floor homes, and just, you know, lovely place.

So my parents when I was 13 bought some property, by the age of 14 or so, I think the house was up, we built a house, and we would go out there in the summer. We did not go out in the fall and winter, not at all; both of my parents were working, my mother was still teaching. Actually, I'm sorry, let me back up. At this point in time, Mom was first a first grade teacher as I said at Paterson teaching primarily Puerto Rican and Blacks, then she became a reading specialist. Mom went back to school to get her PhD, and there was a term for it too. It was some—anyway, and I may come back to that. She got her PhD—equivalency I think is what

they called it, PhD equivalency in, uh, education administration. And so after being a reading specialist, she then became—after getting her PhD, she became a vice principal in Paterson, New Jersey.

Mom for many years worked in the summer. There was a summer program [Head Start –NC] in Paterson, and I'm trying to look up the name of this summer program because it was really very important especially for middle-class and poor families, uh, really enabling, you know, children who couldn't afford to go to camp to come and to get some schooling even during the summer. Anyway, she was the head of this program, so she actually worked in the summer. We would go out on weekends primarily and then when she had a vacation usually in August, you know, we might stay out for two or three weeks during their vacation straight.

So again by the age of 14, the house is finished, and I'm going out and, you know, having a lot of fun meeting New York folks. I remember some of them came from New Rochelle, you know, not just the city but a lot of Harlem folks and Brooklyn folks, and that was a lot of fun.

[00:10:09]

Parties again, always, and my parents had parties they were going to. Mom liked to play bridge, there was a bridge club and what have you. And so we would have guests out there also. A lot of times, we'd have folks to come and visit us and stay with us.

So jumping back to Pratt, again Pratt is a two-year MFA program, and this is the summer in between those two years, I'm out there, I have a job at Guild Hall in East Hampton working in the theater in the box office, okay. They had no real jobs for the gallery, not for someone who was in college anyway; there was just curators and guards, you know, that was it. So I got this job working in the box office, lots of fun because of course, I could see the mounting shows, I could go to the offices where the curators were, see what was going on, I was nosying about.

And this particular time, they were preparing for a show. I do not remember the show, okay, but I said—you know, I asked, "Can I come to the opening?" and they said, "Of course," you know. So I came to the opening, a lot of fun, you know, just very festive and all. And I believe my brother-in-law and sister were with me, they were out staying with us, and by golly, there's another Black person in the room, one other, that's all, big, gorgeous, strapping Black man. I go over to him, and he comes. He sees me and so we're kind of going to each other because he wants to know who I am too, what's going on. And I said, you know, "My name is Nanette Carter, who are you?" He said, "I'm Al Loving," and I said, "Oh, wonderful," I said, "You know, I'm working here, I don't work in the—in the museum here, but I work in the box office. "And he says, "Well, I'm renting with a bunch of friends and we're in South Hampton," and I said, "Well, you know, I'm an artist," you know, and he said, "Oh, I am too." And he said, "Listen, we got to stay in touch. Tonight we're having a party." Well, you know, that lit my ears up, party, hey, the party gal that I am. And I said, "Okay, where are you?" He gave us the place in South Hampton. They were renting, this group, which ended up being this Sullivanian group, this group had rented a theater. I have since been to that theater, I have since actually shown in that theater, that theater has turned into a gallery space, and by golly, I will have to look it up in my resume to give you the name of the space, but it's now gallery, but it was a theater. It was an abandoned theater at that point, and this group had rented it to put on shows but also to have space for some of their artists to paint and everything else. So they were putting on shows, they were putting on—um, they had art stuff going on, whatever.

My brother-in-law, my sister, and I go to this party, and they're dancing and having a good time. The drinks are flowing, there's food, you know? There maybe two or three other Blacks, I don't recall any females, they were all males. I didn't really understand what this group was about at the time and—but we were having a great time. And Al was just the most jovial and kind and wonderful person and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: So well named, right—

NANETTE CARTER: —and just—and loving—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —loving.

NANETTE CARTER: He really just—

CHERYL R. RILEY: The perfect name—

NANETTE CARTER: —the man grew into his name.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —he was loving.

NANETTE CARTER: He clearly, clearly. And you know, just something connected. Again, it's another situation where the universe had just placed us at this opening at the right time in my life because I was just really beginning to do these abstract pieces while at Pratt. And, you know, still kind of getting—trying to get my sea legs there and trying to figure out well who else is doing this stuff, you know, and by golly, you know, I connect with this guy and what is he doing? He's doing these huge, gorgeous, abstract pieces and at the time he—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_2of4_sd_track01_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —was just beginning to get into those fabric pieces. Somewhere around that time, he was doing those big, big fabric, you know, the cut-up canvas pieces that he had painted and tie-dyed and whatever else he would do to it and sewing them. He had a big sewing machine. I remember visiting him in his studio in New York where he had one of these industrial sewing machines and to see this big, Black man sitting behind an industrial. That thing would make more noise, and he's moving this thing around and get—because his pieces ended up—they were mammoth, they were, you know, eight feet in height and long. He worked large, he loved working large, but what an amazing time.

And that next summer—oh, so with that connection, he begins to introduce me to other artists in New York City, and it's through Al that I met Bill Hudson, Ed Clark, Howardena Pindell. He literally just opens this whole door to me of all these brilliant, absolutely brilliant abstract artists. Jack Whitten—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And you already knew Frank Wimberley.

NANETTE CARTER: Frank was down the road from me. Oh, and I should talk about that. I'm glad you brought up Frank, Cheryl, because for me at the age of 14, again this is about the time my parents finished building that house, and we started to go out there in earnest. Frank lived down the street from us, and he had a son that was maybe two years older than I was, so, you know, that was like, ooh, and he was a good-looking dude, handsome young man, Walden. And so when I went to the beach, you know, I met him and ended meeting his crew and all. And I'll never forget this, one day we were on the beach, and Walden says, "Come to my house tonight, the old folks are having a party at my house," and I had not been to his house at this point. His house was, kind of, situated—it was interesting, it was really in the woods. They had bought so much property and built the house, kind of, deeper in the woods, you kind of had to know how to get there, you know, but it was still in our area, it was still in the Sag Harbor Hills area. And so he said , "Yeah, come on by my house, they're going to party, there'll be some food, maybe we can—" you know.

Now, I get to the house, it's dark, I get to the house, and the house has got all glass windows. So we're laughing at them dancing because we can see them inside the house dancing, the music is good, you know, and we're just laughing, having a good time, and talking about people, how they dressed and just laughing and joking. And he's—you know, he's going to go in and sneak out some wine for us or whatever; now again I'm about 14, 15. But what I noticed is that there's all this art on the walls, and it's abstract, you know, ain’t a figure in the piece. And the pieces—I'm looking—and these pieces are just—and they're large and they're just colorful and gorgeous. I said, "Walden, what—what is all this art? My God, your folks are serious collectors." He said, "No, that's my dad's work, he's an artist," I was flabbergasted, an artist right here in our community, who is this man, I—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And doing—

NANETTE CARTER: —want to—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —abstract.

NANETTE CARTER: —meet this man, and doing abstract art, who is this guy? So of course as days go by, and again, you know, we were, kind of, new there, you know, I get to know him, I

go by several times, I meet him and his wife Juanita.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And she's a teacher, right?

NANETTE CARTER: And she's a counselor in—in, you know, I think one of the schools there. They were living in Queens, Corona, Queens. They raised their son, and they lived there, and his studio was in the house in Queens, not out there. I think he did some sculpture out there outdoors. But he opened up my eyes also to collage, and this is a Frank Wimberley here. My parents bought this at one off the Cinque shows that was out there in Sag Harbor, one of the fundraisers that they had. But he was doing collage the way I had not seen before, and I just fell in love with his collages. So I was really seriously looking at his work, and he was getting shows out there. He had a show in Bridgehampton, I cannot tell you the name of that gallery [Peter S. Loonam Gallery –NC]. But I remember going to that show on my own and looking and really examining these collages that he was doing. They were just stunning and his use of color and the way he uses the edge of the paper, the torn paper and all.

[00:05:06]

I learned so much looking at where he was taking collage and then, of course, Al Loving and where he took collage, you know, and again, seeing how everyone is developing their own style and structure and way of thinking in their own worlds. This were—these are different worlds to walk into, you know. This one actually reminds me of a map of the United States possibly, but anyway. I'm sorry, we're looking at a Frank Wimberley here in my house. My parents again bought this Wimberly at Cinque Gallery when they had one of their fundraisers in Sag Harbor. My parents would always—my parents bought several pieces actually from Cinque during the course of the years, but back to this point in time.

So I go back to Pratt my last year, and I have my thesis show, and I sell my work at my thesis show. You know, it's very interesting because all I remember—I kind of remember, and it's very faint, I think Bill came to my show, I'm trying to remember if Al was there.. You know that we always had like a nice little opening for the graduate thesis shows. Anyway, let me just say this. I ended up at Pratt, my last year at Pratt. Again after seeing Al's work, Frank Wimberley and all, I ended up tearing up my prints. That's what this piece is here that you see. I was—ended up tearing up my aquatints and making them into collages.

So before you have your thesis show, you have to present the work you're going to have in the thesis show and get the okay from all the professors. All the professors would walk around. Now you're not there when they walk around, okay. So, in other words, there's no repartee between you and these jurors so to speak, these professors, and these are painting professors and whatever, you know.

So, I didn't have prints, I had collages of my prints torn up. So the printmaking teacher was like, "I'm ready to fail her, I don't think she should be able to graduate. She hasn't got a print in this show."

CHERYL R. RILEY: But you did. You had torn the prints up; they were prints.

NANETTE CARTER: No, not edition, darling. Look, this was back in the day—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —where everything had—

NANETTE CARTER: —wait a minute, I'm going to tell you, at Pratt, had to have 15 in your edition. You could do more, but you could have no less than 15. In other words, they want—when it was class time, okay, and you had a critique, you laid out your 15 prints, and I swear —

CHERYL R. RILEY: They better be—

NANETTE CARTER: —they walked around—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the same.

NANETTE CARTER: —with a magnifying glass—

CHERYL R. RILEY: They better the same.

NANETTE CARTER: —to look to see if the damn things were the same, 15. I was bored, after

two, it was like please, I'm ready to put some color in this or do something else with it—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Let's expand this concept, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —you know? Thank you. Come on, I think I was—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Let's take it to the next—

NANETTE CARTER: —so pissed at that—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —level.

NANETTE CARTER: —I was so pissed at that, I'm going to tell you, I think that's really what definitely had me tearing them up. I was enraged. Fifteen? Well, the professor says, "Well, what, she ain't got a print in the show." Now, luckily, the first female professor in the graduate school at Pratt happened that year, my last year at Pratt, Phoebe Helman. And I'll tell you, she was a ticket, she was wonderful, she was brilliant—

CHERYL R. RILEY: She had—

NANETTE CARTER: —Jewish woman.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —to be to get that job.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. But you know what, her husband was running the painting program in the undergrad, so the professors in the graduate school felt she only got the job because of her husband [Jack] Sonenberg, okay. That's right, they gave her hell, and I think she saw what they were putting me through, and she fought for me. Do you know I had a breakdown? I went to the art store, I had heard I was—you know, they were—it was dubious, they had gotten back to me. I went to the art store to pick up some supplies. This was Dick [ph] something, may have been the guy who started [Dick] Blick, I'm not sure what.

[00:10:02]

Anyway, I went to this art store, it was on—it was near NYU, and they used to have really beautiful papers there. This is before New York Central seemed to come. Anyway, I'm there getting some papers; I literally had a breakdown in the store. They got me a cab, I got home to Brooklyn, they called my parents, my parents came over. I was just in a tizzy, but I had these pieces that I thought they were absolutely—I'm sorry, they were great, they were phenomenal. I have slides of this stuff, I have it, you know? How dare they not—Phoebe pulled them back and said, "Listen, she's in graduate school, not undergrad. If this is where her research has taken her to tearing these things up and making something new, by golly, we have to respect that, okay."

CHERYL R. RILEY: Of all the people—

NANETTE CARTER: She fought—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —to be too orthodox—

NANETTE CARTER: Thank you.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —artists?

NANETTE CARTER: —you know, oh please, no, but this was back in the day. No, printmaking was—it was another thing back then, I'm telling you, it was deep. Printmaking back then was like, yeah, you had to have that edition and all that stuff, it was another day. Now, it's loosey-goosey, but back then, no. Now we're talking—I finished Pratt in '78, no, no. She made these men feel like shit. She said, "Wait a minute, this is not undergrad, okay, this woman—look at these pieces, these are powerful pieces." I was so happy when I had that show—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And you were trained.

NANETTE CARTER: —and that show looked great, and we sold work. It was like great, good, let these professors see this, okay. Not only does this show look—and I brought my people in, they were there to represent and to support me. And we sold work, and that was the talk

because, you know, very few people—we sold some pieces, okay. I didn't sell the big pieces, big drawings, I didn't sell, in fact, I still I actually have them.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And good.

NANETTE CARTER: And I will be holding on—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's good.

NANETTE CARTER: —to that.

CHERYL R. RILEY: When you have your retrospective—

NANETTE CARTER: I will be—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you don't have to beg—

NANETTE CARTER: [Cross talk.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: —anybody for—

NANETTE CARTER: And then we will, the prices will go up on those but anyway.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And you had the joy of having them—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —all this time.

NANETTE CARTER: And I actually have slides of—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —of the work.

NANETTE CARTER: —the installation of the show also at Pratt to document it. But I was just—you know, Phoebe, again the universe placed this woman, I feel like, in my life just at the right time because those males were not going to have it, they were not going to have it. And what's so amazing, and I'm going to just jump right now just because of this story, what was so amazing was that in 19—no, no, in 2000, I got a call from Pratt. This is the chair of the art department. Now at this point, the chair takes care of the graduate school and the undergrad, okay. The chair calls me and says, "Would you come and teach full time?" And you know, of course, all that stuff was rehashed in my mind about not graduating me back in the day. Now at this point—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But they did—they did graduate you—

NANETTE CARTER: Of course, I graduated on time. Phoebe came in my defense, I had my show on time, people came through, and we sold, yes, everything was on time. I wrote my—you know, you also have to write a thesis paper—my 20-page, I did it all and talked about these pieces and how I came—how these pieces came about, you know, the development of these pieces. So I just had to chuckle, and I said, "You know what, the only way I'll come back is to teach part time. I don't want to teach full time."

At that point, I had been living off the sale of my work 17 years; I had not taught for 17 years. Pratt approach me in 2000, I started in the fall of 2001. So I'm sorry, it must have been—I'm sorry, it must have been the spring of 2001 that they called me because I started in the fall, which of course was 9/11 when the buildings came down. That—I was going to Pratt, you know, when them buildings came down. But I said, "I will only come if I can teach part time because I need to have to be—I have to be in the studio."

CHERYL R. RILEY: You're a practicing artist.

NANETTE CARTER: And I had these galleries at that time. You know at that time, I had George N'Namdi, June Kelly, you know, there were just—things were lined up for me. George had two galleries at that time, he may have even had three. At one point, George had Detroit, Columbus, Ohio, right near the Columbus Museum, and Chicago. He was on Huron Street in Chicago his first time.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And June is—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_2of4_sd_track02_m.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: —here in New York.

NANETTE CARTER: And then June, you know. And so I was busy with shows, and I said, and they said, "Fine." What I found out was that Manuel Hughes, the only tenured African-American in the fine arts program undergrad or graduate—and I may want to take that back because I think—I'm sorry—the graduate school. He was the first tenured Black in the graduate school—was retiring. So their one Black is leaving—

CHERYL R. RILEY: They needed—

NANETTE CARTER: —wanted another—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a replacement.

NANETTE CARTER: —one Black to come in because that's the way they roll, okay? One at a time, and they do that in the art world, only one at a time, please, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: It's changing now but we'll see—

NANETTE CARTER: In terms of abstraction I don't know.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —we'll see how long.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, but to say because right now—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Right, it's still figurative—

NANETTE CARTER: You know, Julie, Julie Mehretu and Howardena, those are the only two that I know of abstract that are getting any kind of real play, any real play.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Everybody's figurative. It's—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. Julie was it, Julie Mehretu changed that. So I said, "Cool." Again like I said, I find out Manny Hughes who was there when I was there and then—when I was in graduate school at Pratt, he was there then, you know, okay, he was retiring after many, many years of being there full time, he was there full time, they wanted me to come. And in graduate school, I was going to take his place. No, I did not want. So I got undergrad because I was going to do part time, they needed a—they wanted a full-time person for graduate school, they prefer a full time for grad school. So I ended up going and teaching in the undergrad part time, and I, you know, back at Pratt for 20 years, taught there for 20 years. And, oh, boy, just amazing how the world works and things can change.

But just having retired last year, I think it was timely. I need to be back in the studio full time, it feels great, but I also appreciate those years at Pratt at the—you know I went through the dot-com debacle, I went through 2008, you know, that financial debacle also, this whole idea of the—what—savings and loan, you know, and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —Wall Street.

NANETTE CARTER: —Wall Street and these pumped-up, uh, crazy mortgages and ballooning mortgages and all that stuff. I—you know there were a lot of things that happen and certainly after 9/11. I can tell you June Kelly, all of them had to close up, my gallery was closed for a couple of years, June was not functional, she was downtown, all those places. And New York lost a lot of galleries, people closed, people closed up. SoHo changed, and anything below Canal Street had gotten that dust, it was dangerous—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's what—

NANETTE CARTER: No one wanted to go down there. I had friends who had lost spaces down there that were—you know, trying to clean them up and sell them because they weren't going to go to down there. They were raising children down there.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And they were right, it's turned out that—

NANETTE CARTER: They were right, yeah—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that a lot—that there was a lot—

NANETTE CARTER: —it was dangerous—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —of—

NANETTE CARTER: —yes, people dying now—

CHERYL R. RILEY: A lot of poisons in that area.

NANETTE CARTER: —all from cancer, that's right, lung cancer, everything else, prostate, everything else. In fact—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's why Chelsea took off after that.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. Well no, no, Chelsea didn't take off—yeah, Chelsea began. You know what, Chelsea was basically—what—Matthew Marks and who was—what's the woman's name? Oh God, I wish—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mary Boone?

NANETTE CARTER: No, no. Oh gosh, this other one, she was like the first one to open in SoHo. Oh God, this is terrible. She and Matthew Marks moved to Chelsea but that was—it was probably soon after, it probably was, it was probably soon after. But I know what happened with her—and again her name will come to me [Paula Cooper –NC]—her lease ended and they jacked it up because SoHo was becoming so damn popular, and that's what happened. A lot of people couldn't renew their leases and they jumped—like Matthew Marks too, he jumped over to Chelsea.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But also they could have so much more space in—

NANETTE CARTER: The space—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —in Chelsea—

NANETTE CARTER: —was great.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —because those had all been factory, a lot of factory builders, so they had —

NANETTE CARTER: Well, there were factories—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —big space [ph].

NANETTE CARTER: —down in SoHo, too. Oh no, there were huge spaces in SoHo now, oh yeah, and that's why people were moving down there and living down there because the loft spaces were huge. But there were—those were factories, that was not an area people lived in. At night, early in SoHo's life, no one was there, you know, and you wanted to know why people wanted to even live down here.

[00:05:03]

The artists were coming down there, but rats—oh yeah. No, it was nothing going on, you know, after six o'clock, everything shut down. But—so the timing, again the universe worked on my side. I needed this job because the sales dried up for a couple of years. George was the only one who was, you know, really doing anything because he was in Detroit and what have you.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And the economy was still good there.

NANETTE CARTER: The economy was good, people had good jobs, you know, the Ford place, the plant and all, they're $17 an hour. They've been making big money in years, you know, that's why those Blacks there could own homes, and they owned homes there, boy, they had serious middle class but—

So, yeah, jumping around just a bit here, back to Pratt now. So Pratt, my last year—that summer after my last year at Pratt, we had a big fundraiser in Sag Harbor for the Bridgehampton Day Care Center, which was a day care center for Black children. It was in the Black community of the Bridgehampton, and when I say the Black community, these were sharecroppers almost, yeah, these were people working on the land and some of them work in the mansions too. But these were people who sometimes even had seasonal jobs, but in the summer, they'd come up because of the potato farms. Potatoes were big in Long Island, duck farms, duck was real big out there in the Hamptons, corn. So you would have these migrant families and all, and they had children of course, but there was a Bridgehampton Day Care Center for the children, art classes, you know, take gym thing, you know, phys ed stuff. And they were always in need of money.

So we—when I say we, there was a Black woman in Sag Harbor—gosh, and her name escapes me now [Dorothy Woodie –NC]. She was an artist, she was a fiber artist back then and of course getting no respect as a fiber artist, a fabulous fiber artist. She had her loom, she was weaving, and she took it seriously. She didn't care, she took it seriously, but she decided let's have a show. We have so many artists in this community, you know, and at that time, I had introduced everyone to Al, you know. You know, that summer that I met Al, I just—I—you know Frank said, "You got to meet—" you know, I was just introducing him to people and he loved the community.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Of course.

NANETTE CARTER: When he found out we were—oh, he didn't know anything about us over there, he was like, Whoa, and he ended up renting there for many, many years. But anyway, there was another woman who was a little bit older than I was, went to NYU, Roselyn Letcher was out there, she was a painter [living in Sag Harbor –NC]. Um, oh gosh, I'm forgetting names now and I—I may come back, you know, and have to give you some of these names later on. But there was just, you know, amazing community of African American artists out there, and she decided, this woman decided this—this fiber artist, let's go on and do a fundraiser, you know, for the Bridgehampton Day Care Center, and we had it at Dick Clarke's house—now Dick Clarke, Richard Clarke had a home in Ninevah. Ninevah had a bit of a hill that then overlooked the beaches. His home was at the top of this hill that overlooked the beach, and he was on the board of the Studio Museum at the time, and he was quite the collector of Romare Bearden's work. And he had a business that was the first of its kind even for New York City, a Black man running this. He had a headhunter's business only for corporate. Everyone would come to him for Black, educated men primarily looking for corporate positions. I'm talking people who were lawyers or who had their MBAs, business majors, um, secretarial work for corporations. This job—this—he was—like his office was, you know, like in prime area, he was a bigwig, bigwig, buying art, befriended Bearden, ended up becoming very close friends with Bearden. Because of that was helping a little bit with Cinque Gallery, that kind of connection was happening, Bearden was getting some folks with some money to help out, you know. And—but he was on the board of the Studio Museum.

[00:10:10]

And so he had this lovely home, and we approached him to have the sale at his house, and he was game. And so again, this is the summer that I've graduated from Pratt now. So I pulled Al into it, and of course, all the artists that were there were involved in the show. Donnamarie Barnes was a photographer who ended up working at *People* magazine. She was the photo editor for many years at *People* magazine; she just retired recently. She was there, Donnamarie Barnes, she had her photographs, Carl Shealy had his photographs. So anyway, we had—there was a wonderful a group of people out there that were making art. We had the sale, and we made some money for the Bridgehampton Day Care Center; it went just fine. And Dick Clarke was very happy, the community had a great time, it was a time to come together, you know, to help the Bridgehampton community also at the same time, and it was lovely. You know, we had a little bit of food, a little of this, drink and all, work sold. We were able to write a check for the day care center.

The following summer, we did it again, but we did it at the day care center, but—oh, before we go to that year, let me just say that this show at Richard Clarke's home, Al wanted this guy to be in the show, and I didn't know who—he gave the name, and "Who's this guy, who's this?" Well, he said, "I haven't introduced you to him yet because he just got back from France," and we're like—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Dave—

NANETTE CARTER: —"So who's this guy? Who"—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Is it David Hammons?

NANETTE CARTER: —what do you mean?" No, no, no. He said, "He just got back, he's been living in France for a year." We said, "Well, who—what is it?" He said, "No, he's an abstract artist, and I want you to get it on, but he's got a small piece we can put in the show." "Okay, we'll put it." Basically we wanted people who were out there, you know, that kind of community, but it's Al Loving and he wants to do this, okay, all right. So he brings him out, it's Bill Hutson. Bill Hutson had just come back, he hadn't been here in years because he had gone to Nigeria. He lived in Nigeria and then from Nigeria because he was speaking French, he went to France. Actually, he may have gone to France, then Nigeria, then back to France but he speaks French fluently, right? So anyway, I meet Bill for the first time. He brings him to the opening so that's how I met Bill.

So okay, so now, I've graduated from Pratt—I'm jumping again—back to that year after graduating from Pratt, we have it, the show. The next year, we have a show at the day care center and then he brings in another artist, gosh, and I can't think of his name now, damn. Okay, another abstract artist, John Chandler. I meet John Chandler who's actually not doing very well right now. And I think it was soon after that that I met Ed Clark was next and then after Ed, I think it was Howardena and then Jack Whitten, but this is how I began to meet these folks. And Howardena is very good friends with Emma Amos, and of course, they're talking about this whole idea that women are not being shown at all, not—yeah, especially Black women. I remember talk about that, and—oh, you know what, I have totally—there's so much, oh gosh.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You've had a full life.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, God, I just totally forgot about this other thing that happened. Okay, right after Pratt, now this is—it's the same time. Right after Pratt, I got hired to teach in Englewood, New Jersey, because of Clare Romano, this teacher who I was helping. She lives in Englewood, they—this private school goes to Clare Romano because she lives there, "Who can you send to us because we want someone who's—can teach printmaking?" Now this a private high school, they had a painting teacher, they had a photography teacher, they had a—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_2of4_sd_track03_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —sculpture room with a sculpture teacher, and they had a printmaking room for a print—this is a high school.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But this is why you send your child to a private school because they had—

NANETTE CARTER: Woo—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —more resources.

NANETTE CARTER: I'm going to tell you, we had an electric press. Now, I didn't even know how to work an electric press. All the schools I've been to are manual presses. They had an electric—a parent had donated an electric press.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Like I said.

NANETTE CARTER: Okay. So I'm like, Oh, wow, let me apply, yeah. I told Clare, "Definitely put my name in the docket there." Now mind you, she had two other people she sent, there were maybe three of us, three women in fact, the other two were white. I have to go over there for an interview, I'll never forget going over there, driving over there for this interview and seeing this private school, which looked like a campus that any college would have, the Dwight-Englewood School. Now both—no, one of her sons went there, I think the other one went to public schools, one son went to this school, Clare Romano's son. And they've got a whole house that's an art department, you know, and I'm just flabbergasted. And nary a Black person on campus, I'm the first Black to even come to teach there, maybe two Black

students in the whole campus, and this is high school. I'm sorry, this is junior high and high school, yeah, this is junior high and high school, and I swear there were about two Blacks on the whole campus, okay, on the sprawling hill, beautiful hill, you know.

And one of these situations where the headmaster has a house nearby that's a mansion, okay, and I'm like, This is just a whole different world, you know? And growing up in Jersey, I really had not gone to Englewood. I've been to Teaneck, you know, Blacks live in Teaneck, no Blacks lived in Englewood too, but I had only been to Teaneck, I didn't really know Englewood, but they have some estates there also. And so, you know, I go over for this interview, and I'm thinking, Oh, there's no way, and I even have to see the headmaster, okay, not just the—they had a chair of the art department. I had to meet him but I—then he took me over to meet the headmaster. So I'm thinking, Oh, this is—this isn't going to work, this isn't going to happen. And by golly, I get the job, and I get the feeling that they want to get some Blacks, I mean they got some middle-class Blacks in Englewood and Teaneck and all around, shoot, you know, so okay.

CHERYL R. RILEY: What year—around what year was this?

NANETTE CARTER: I started right after Pratt and I graduate—so it was the fall of '78.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I was going to say it's after the Black power movement and all of those things.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And awareness was high.

NANETTE CARTER: And the deal is there are some Blacks that can actually afford the school because it was a very expensive school.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], but they can't have their kids walking through and not seeing any Black teachers at all.

NANETTE CARTER: No Black people at all. So they hire me, and I'm a female so that makes it easier too, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], they kill two birds with one stone.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, plus and maybe a little easier to work with her because, you know, Black men, eh a little scared of Black men.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And probably don't have to pay you as much as they do—

NANETTE CARTER: Well, they didn't—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —with women.

NANETTE CARTER: —pay any of us, okay, not just me. I'm going to tell you, they didn't pay any—it was seriously. You know, I took the job knowing that I had to make art because when I look at the paycheck, I think I started out making like 13,000 a year, full time, okay—

CHERYL R. RILEY: So it's just a little—

NANETTE CARTER: —how about that?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —over—

NANETTE CARTER: I was there—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a thousand dollars a month.

NANETTE CARTER: —five days, okay. No, I don't—well, it was a little bit more only because I don't teach in the summer, I didn't teach in the summer, I never taught in the summer. I had to sell, I had to sell but anyway. And what was so interesting too is a lot of the women, Cheryl, came from money who taught there. Their husbands had big money, and this was just something for them to do because they had—you know, they knew French fluently or they lived in France or they were French or whatever the hell, you know, that kind of thing,

so you had that too. Now you had some poor teachers like me, but you had some that lived in the mansions that we were all, you know, near, yeah. And I mean some of these kids were chauffeured to school, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: And were you poor or middle class?

NANETTE CARTER: Okay, I was poor. Compared to these people, please I was jacked up poor. It ain't nothing—no more than that, please. I was not middle class. It was a little bit I was making, you know, in terms of selling art, no. Compared to these people, po, not even -O-O-R, P-O.

[00:05:05]

So, [they laugh] you know, I get over there, and I don't know what it is, but I just—stuff starts to happen, so much so that this very wealthy woman whose husband had just died who was an architect, her husband was an architect had attended the school years ago and says, "I want to build a new art department." Listen, I had these students doing installations back in 1978, [19]'79, and onward. I was teaching drawing and printmaking. We had—in this house that was the art department, there was what probably was the living room, they had actually made it into a gallery. These students had—we could show the student work in a gallery, a bona fide gallery. What did I do? I took over the gallery for two weeks, and we did a huge drawing on all four walls, everyone, a collaboration. The students did a drawing where when you walked in, there were trees, you felt you were outside, all in pencil, no color, all in pencil. And that just shook up, people were coming up there like they had—you know, how it is.

CHERYL R. RILEY: They had never seen anything like that before.

NANETTE CARTER: Well they no, they—some of them never even came up to see the shows, you know, the student shows. Teachers were coming up, stuff was happening. Then, then—now, this was a situation where our department got $16,000 a year for supplies; I'm making $13[000], and they getting $16[000], okay, for the student supplies, okay. So what do I do? I have them do these beautiful drawings, colored-pencil drawings and prints, and I have some money set aside, and I said, "Listen, let's frame these pieces and put them in the offices of the headmaster, assistant headmaster, you know, all the different people. Let's also put them in the registrar because parents come in there. Let's put them up in the library, okay." My students had artwork, and they loved it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Of course.

NANETTE CARTER: They were like—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And their parents did too—

NANETTE CARTER: —and the students are going, "This is—a student did this? Oh, my God." We had pushed so hard, I was able to get models to come in, I tried to get nude, they wouldn't let me, but we—they could wear leotards, so I asked them, "Please don't wear any underwear under the leotards." [Laughs.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: So we can really have your body.

NANETTE CARTER: Listen, those drawings were in the offices, these half-nude women, and parents are like, "What?" We had a skeleton, you know, students loved skeletons, they loved to draw the skeleton, we had this—you know, all the prints, everything.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But that helps you really understand the body—

NANETTE CARTER: And you know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —when you draw the—

NANETTE CARTER: —what—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the skeletons.

NANETTE CARTER: —the students loved it because their work is up everywhere. They're telling, "Go to So-and-So's office—" you know, so everything is a buzz. Then I had them—

someone I had seen do this with the—because you know, I had—I was actually teaching. Now that was the other thing that happened to change too while I was there come to think of it. You know, art was like a little elective on the side, you know, I mean it was there, and again it had a presence. In your junior—oh, okay, seventh, eighth grade, you had to take art. Everyone had to take art seventh, eighth grade, you know, like you had to do gym and everything else. Then it became an elective in high school, ninth through twelve, so you got to grab them in that seventh and eighth grade year, okay. Even if they're not interested in being artists, it's just you got to grab them. So what did I do? I had these kids to lay out on these—I got these rolls of paper, lay out, do the outline—contour outline and then draw inside and make yourself into whatever it is you want to be, and it was colorful and crazy and wild. Those big, life-sized drawings went all up in the library, and it was like, "Damn, this girl's taking—" Oh, my God, they loved it to the point where every, "Are you doing it again this year? Are you—?" you know, the librarian—

CHERYL R. RILEY: It became the buzz—

NANETTE CARTER: —"What else you"—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —on the campus.

NANETTE CARTER: —you know, "What are you doing, what's going to happen next?" So what do we do? We push—I told them, you know, I came up in Montclair High School, a public school where you could major in art.

[00:10:06]

It met five days a week just as long as any—we didn't have—we had the same length as other classes, okay, at Montclair High, but we were able to push it at this Dwight-Englewood School while I was there. We pushed it, so it ended up being a lab like a science lab, so the students were there for an hour, they were there for an hour and a half.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Then you could really get some stuff done.

NANETTE CARTER: My students got to—went to Yale, they went to Syracuse, they went to all these schools, you know, majoring in art, okay. I ended up teaching an afternoon class, and this was an elective too, of one- and two-point perspective. I had these student designing homes in two-point perspective, okay. I have three architects living right now out there somewhere, one of them actually passed, and she was brilliant, Rose Mendez, oh gosh, Hispanic young lady. She had come down with a terrible cancer. Anyway, you know, parents were like, What in the world is going on, you know? The drawings are coming back, and it's like, oh, my God, and the students are loving it, you know, designing a house, designing the interior or whatever. So this woman comes up and says, "Listen, I want to just build you a bigger program here, I'm going to build you a place that"—you know. you know what this thing we had, we worked with the architects, and I loved that too, I enjoyed that. My room was about the length of this whole apartment with skylights. I had my electric press, we were doing silk screen, we were doing—because I was printmaking and drawing, and this is when I was able to get the model to come in, the gallery. Listen, I had Camille Billops to come over and show in the gallery. I was bringing Black New York artists to come and show and to talk to the students about being an artist. They couldn't believe the stuff. We had evening openings so that the parents could come, okay. It was like a whole 'nother can of worms, you know. And so, it just—it was—yeah, it was incredible. I got them to keep me full-time pay but only come in four days a week.

CHERYL R. RILEY: All right.

NANETTE CARTER: Okay? That's right. I got that because they did not want to lose me. What happened was—I'm trying to think of the year and I'll come back with that exact date—I got the—this residency with Cinque Gallery [Residency, 1984 –NC] where they were going to pay me money to take off from school from teaching for a semester. And that was it, man, I—that was my first time ever having full time, not going to school in the studio, you know. And at that point, I guess I had been there at least five or six years, and like I said, they were getting scared that I was going to leave. Now, they let me go for that semester just to do my work and deal with—you know, be with Cinque. Now with Cinque, it was interesting because they did get money from the New York State Council not NYFA but New York State Council. And at that time, Richard Clarke was on their board, this guy was connected, he was very interesting man, amazing, brilliant man. And he ended up being the

first Black I believe to be on the board of the Metropolitan Museum too.

But anyway, let me just—because I'm going too many places now. I had that semester off, and they said that they would only let me take that semester off if I ensure that I came back at least for one more semester, and I signed something saying that. But then, as things went along, I was able to get them to let me come in just four days a week because again, they didn't want to lose me. But it got a little tricky because the other art teachers were a little upset about this as you can well imagine.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I'm sure it was more than a little.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, as you can well imagine.

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_2of4_sd_track04_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —and I think I came back for one more year and then that was it. And that's when I quit teaching and then I didn't teach for 17 years. I had built up enough galleries, you know, that I felt—

CHERYL R. RILEY: You could support yourself.

NANETTE CARTER: —that I could maintain myself, but I can tell you my mother was not happy.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because she liked a steady job.

NANETTE CARTER: She actually did something, I couldn't believe she did this, she told my sister. This is like two years into me living off of the sales of my work, she told my sister that I had been borrowing money from her. I would never borrow money from her. She wanted my sister to tell me that I needed to get a job. I knew what it was, and I know she meant good, she meant well, but it was—I told my sister, "My mother hates—let me—she had sent me no money," and I'm still paying for my graduate school in fact.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh wow.

NANETTE CARTER: You know, it took me a while, yeah. I didn't have a lot of money, I mean, you know, I'm just paying $100 here and there, it was [$]100 a month or whatever you know. I had to pay for my—I was still paying off my graduate school. And I was like, I can do it, I know I can do it, so I did it. I mean and, you know, I think Dwight-Englewood School thought that I would come back. We went through the dot-com bust, I think, you know, the dot-comers, remember people were getting people's money, but there was no product, folks were losing money and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, I was living in San Francisco at that time—

NANETTE CARTER: You know what I'm talking—

CHERYL R. RILEY: So I totally know—

NANETTE CARTER: You know exactly—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —what you're talking about.

NANETTE CARTER: —what I'm talking about. So, you know, I made it through that, you know, and that was another time where people were holding their money back, "I'm not buying any art until I know what the hell is going on here," you know, "Something is up here." No, I was not—I was poor as a church mouse, but I just—I did not want to teach, you know, I just didn't want to do it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: It takes a lot out of you—

NANETTE CARTER: And again you have to manage—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and the bureaucracy.

NANETTE CARTER: —you have to manage—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and the bureaucracy—

NANETTE CARTER: —your money.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —around it is also so hard.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, no, it's very hard, making sure you're doing your taxes, you're doing your estimates, you know, no one is taking the money out, you have to do it yourself, you know, doing the estimates, keeping your books. But again, I go back to my mom, I saw my mom taking them books, dealing with them books, you know, handling it and all that, yeah, um, and the quarterly estimates, all that stuff for taxes, yeah. So that's how I got to that point, just, you know, not teaching and then, you know, meeting all these wonderful artists who—and many of them were teaching, now Jack Whitten was teaching.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And the teaching is the issue because of how much time it takes—

NANETTE CARTER: It's the time.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and the bureaucracy you're having to deal with—

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, that's right—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —right?

NANETTE CARTER: —the politics can be very ugly.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And it's hard—

NANETTE CARTER: And it did—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —for you to keep your head—

NANETTE CARTER: —have some hard times.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —to keep your head and your creative self when you're having to deal with that element.

NANETTE CARTER: It really is, and you bring it home to the studio, and it kind of messes with you, and you have to somehow learn how to divorce yourself from all that, which can be very difficult. You're sitting there doing something, it's like, oh, I got to tell Rosemary she's got to—you know, and all this stuff—a child, you know, you're concerned about a student or whatever or something someone said to you that, you know, some higher-ups said something to you that wasn't right. And I did have issues, there were some issues that I had at Pratt, you know, along those lines. And it was actually made very clear and to the point where other people saw that there was a gentleman that just had issues with me, you know. And to his—it was really his problem, it had nothing to do with me, I'm going to move on.

In fact once again, and I have to tout myself, I'm sorry I have to do this, but I did the same thing that I had done at Dwight-Englewood School, I started a program at Pratt. We had drawing as a major, and it was being run by a gentleman who wasn't really very creative in his thinking about how to incite folks to come to his area. Everyone's going to painting and sculpture, and I noticed the head of the sculpture program, boy, he was coming up with lots of ideas. He had a sculpture club that was very vibrant, and they were inviting people in to speak and giving students critiques and doing different things. And I'm looking at them and, you know, I decided, well, you know what, you know, I'm trying to get tenured here also, I'll be very frank, I said I'm going to go on and start a drawing club. By golly, the same time I'm starting a drawing club, there's a gentleman in painting who's going to—who's starting a painting club, so we started the very same year.

[00:05:05]

And this drawing club got people looking at drawing, and there were a lot of students who were taking painting who were really drawing, but you take painting because it's painting and painting is the higher—

CHERYL R. RILEY: The god, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —on the—that's right—on the ladder. And—but we were going to see drawing shows, we went to Boston, we went to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Contemporary Museum and the Gardner Museum, which is right near the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. We went to Washington DC, we went to see—actually, there were lots of prints there too. We went around to see several of those museums, the American—all those museums in the complex, we went to Philadelphia to the Philadelphia Museum.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Philadelphia has some great museums.

NANETTE CARTER: Great museum shows. And, um, oh, I'm trying to think, was it Cy Twombly was there? And I'm just—you know. So we were taking—I had this club. Pratt gives the clubs a certain amount of money, no one was told this, people kept this down on the down low, we pulled it out, we got this money, and we started traveling, we would take trips. And what I found was so interesting, it was the students, usually the foreign students who really wanted to come because they got a chance to go see some other cities too and to see these museums, you know?

It got to the point where graduate students were coming, and so we opened the club to graduate students. One year, we were able to get like $5000 just to rent a space in Chelsea. We had a show in Chelsea, the drawing club of Pratt. The graduate school hadn't even done this; no one had done this, okay. We had a show, these kids the first thing on their resumes, I'm going to say, that they showed in Chelsea, and again because of that, graduate students were like, What? And prior—actually prior to that before that, the first show we had outside of Pratt off-campus was at FiveMyles gallery in Brooklyn, and she's wonderful, the woman who runs that is fabulous [Hanne Tierney –NC]. And she said, "I've always wanted to make a connection with Pratt, I'm here in Brooklyn," you know. We had a show there, and graduate students, that's when they started coming in was that show. I forgot that. That was our first show off-campus, FiveMyles gallery, worked out great, beautiful show, I have photos of that. And then the next year, we went to Chelsea, and people were going, "How did you get the money?" I said, "Look Pratt has it there, you just have to write the proposal, and you've got to have a team, you've got to have a president of the club, you have to have the officials and all that." So we were doing some amazing things. We did an exchange with The Glasgow School of Art, we did a show where our work showed there and their work showed at Pratt. Nothing like that had ever happened at Pratt, there had never been an exchange outside of this country.

So, you know, I—wherever I go, I like to make my mark if I can, but I also want to expand the students' horizons too, and that's what this is about. Oh, so it's really again for many of them, they can put down FiveMyles gallery, you know, and that they showed in Chelsea or that they showed in Glasgow, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Exactly.

NANETTE CARTER: It's starting their exhibition life and to get them excited about that. You know, it's so interesting, I would ask my students, "How many of you want to teach?" Maybe one hand would go up. I'd say, "Well, I know you-all want to show an exhibit, how many of you would like to have a gallery in New York?"

CHERYL R. RILEY: Everybody's hands—

NANETTE CARTER: Two hands. No, two hands. I went, "Well wait, what are you here for? What do you mean you don't want to have a—well, do you want to have a gallery somewhere else? What is it?" "Well, I don't know, I may just do Instagram and sell on," or "I don't know if I want to show. I'm not sure or—" "What are you here for, why are you here in art school? Don't you want to create and have other people see what you're doing?" "Well, I'm not sure because, you know, maybe—I don't know." "And You don't want to teach? That's one way. Once you leave here, it doesn't mean that you're going to start selling right away to live off of, you know. How are you going to maintain yourself if you want to stay in New York City, which is probably one of the most expensive cities we have?" And they just—it was like they weren't even thinking about their future, you know. So I wanted to instill in them that, you know, there is life after Pratt.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And the business of being an artist.

NANETTE CARTER: And the business side of being—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —of being an artist.

NANETTE CARTER: —of being an artist, that's right.

[00:10:01]

CHERYL R. RILEY: —which I think is a real loss in schools that they don't have business classes for the arts.

NANETTE CARTER: Do you know they do now—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because it's—

NANETTE CARTER: —at Pratt?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —it's not like the students are not smart enough to learn this stuff.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But there is some reason—

NANETTE CARTER: And they need to know.

CHERYL R. RILEY: This is why they had this whole thing about the starving artist because they don't really teach the business of being an artist.

NANETTE CARTER: No, but you know what, what I found, Cheryl, there are actually professors and people who feel that that's not why they're there. That they're there just to teach—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Technique.

NANETTE CARTER: —art and therefore—that's right—that's all we should do, that's all we should be about. We should not—but I disagree, I disagree, I think that, you know, if this is something that someone really feels they have to do and they really want to do this for the rest of their life—

CHERYL R. RILEY: They need to be able to support—

NANETTE CARTER: —how they maintain it—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —themselves.

NANETTE CARTER: —thank you.

CHERYL R. RILEY: They have to support themselves.

NANETTE CARTER: And they're going to leave Pratt, they're going to go off, what are they supposed to do, you know, so anyway.

CHERYL R. RILEY: We'll get back to the bio.

NANETTE CARTER: Back to the bio, we've got to move on because there's so much, my gosh, I have to do so much. So—all right, so I'm jumping around a little bit. Pratt, going from Pratt to—okay, the 17 years when I wasn't teaching. You know, I had a gallery [Louisa McIntosh Gallery –NC] in Atlanta, Georgia, right across from the High Museum, I was showing with Alitash Kebede in California. George had, you know, the gallery in Chicago, he moved to the West Loop, which was a really hip area there of Chicago where a lot of the galleries were moving to. He moved to a couple of places. Now back up, let's see, he was in downtown Detroit at first, Jazzonia was the name of the gallery. He flew—1981, he flew all of us, he had only New York artists in the inaugural show, and that was the ploy. He did not want to have Detroit artists.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Local, local.

NANETTE CARTER: And there was a woman, a Black woman who was showing local artists at

the time. He decided I'm going to have a big—he bought what was a very large—he didn't buy it, he rented a very large restaurant in downtown Detroit. He called the gallery Jazzonia, which we were all against, but let me just quickly say how I met George. McArthur Binion who's also doing very well right now. McArthur Binion knew George, George told McArthur his idea of having only New York artists, abstract artists—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —in the show.

NANETTE CARTER: —in his gallery, in his stable, and that he wanted to enlighten Detroit people into abstraction, get them to be comfortable with abstraction. A lot of folks had been buying Bearden there, Bearden in particular, yeah, Jacob Lawrence and that was it, not even Catlett, I mean you saw Beardens, you know, when you would go to someone's home. He felt that this was going to be an area no one else has touched first of all, and he really felt that he could get white clientele also, and just this idea of African American artists who don't do the figure was so unique. So his first show, the inaugural opening was what he was planning for, and his idea was to fly all of the artists in for this show, but he didn't know anyone. All he knew of was Al Loving. McArthur Binion—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's a good foot in the door.

NANETTE CARTER: It was a good foot in the door, but McArthur is out there in Detroit still, the way I understand it. He was still living in Detroit, Al was here. McArthur says, "I know"—

CHERYL R. RILEY: the artists.

NANETTE CARTER: —"a bunch of them," right, so MacArthur says, "I'll take you in." So they go to, you know, Jack Whitten, Ed Clark, you know, of course he saw Al's work too. And it's when he goes to see Al and Bill that he keeps hearing from them, "Wait a minute, there are two women you got to go to, Howardena Pindell [Associate curator at MOMA –NC] and Nanette Carter." McArthur did not tell him that, I don't think McArthur even knew who I was, he knew Howardena possibly.

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_2of4_sd_track05_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —but it's—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because she may have done the show at MoMA at that point.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, she was a curator at MoMA, that was her—for her job, you know, after Yale, she came in, and she was a curator there. I don't know that she was showing.

CHERYL R. RILEY: She did have—

NANETTE CARTER: She showed—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —she wasn't—

NANETTE CARTER: —at Lerner-Heller—

CHERYL R. RILEY: She—

NANETTE CARTER: That was her first gallery.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But she—remember that video piece that she did that was really kind of groundbreaking?

NANETTE CARTER: I think that that was even after 19—this is like around 1980 because he opened the gallery in [19]'81. Yeah, this is 1980, and I don't think she started to show at Lerner-Heller until around 1980, [19]'81. See—oh and I didn't talk about that yet either, shit.

But let's stay on N'Namdi right now. So N'Namdi finally on like a second trip comes to visit me and Howardena and says, "Oh yeah, definitely" and then he changes his mind and says, "Okay, the space was huge, but there was also another kind of like—" It was almost like an atrium kind of thing. There was another section to the gallery on another level that looked into the bigger gallery, and he decided I'm going to have photographers there. He had Van

Der Zee, and he had—and he had actually Candace Hill-Montgomery who was doing stuff that had a little bit of figure but abstract at the time. And so anyway, so okay, so now he's got his group, and he doesn't really say that we're in the stable yet, I think he just wanted to see how things panned out.

The show basically sells out, the whole show, and he got a good-sized piece from everyone. I don't think Candace had a big piece, but I don't think she's making big pieces then, and her stuff was really kind of conceptual too back then. But anyway, the big piece he had of mine I'll never forget was a tryptic—it was probably about almost six feet in width or something, so anyway, and then there were some smaller pieces, the whole show sold out. Of course the Van Der Zees went [snaps fingers] that night of the opening, they went fast, but everything sold. Big Ed Clarks, you know, his prices of course were higher than any of ours and Al's also, all of it sold.

So George from there decided who would be in the stable, and Candace wasn't in the stable because Candace really wasn't doing abstract, she ended up doing photography and other stuff, so anyway that's how that started. So that's 1981, but around 1982 is when I get my first New York gallery, which was a white gallery. Um, and let me just see here. My first solo show in New York, of course my first solo show really was that Pratt show I guess in Brooklyn but it—you know, real serious outside-of-school—

CHERYL R. RILEY: In New York City.

NANETTE CARTER: —show, yes, was the Ericson Gallery in 1983. Now, let me just set the tone for that, very interesting. I'm teaching in Englewood, New Jersey, the chairman of the art department says to me, "Nanette, there's a gallery in New York on the East Side, I really think he'd like your work, can I introduce you to him?" and he did, and I went in to see a couple of the shows to see what was up and then the dealer Takis Efstathiou, he was a Greek man, said, "Bring in—" he liked the slides. He said, "Bring in four pieces, and let me see if I can sell them." I brought him in four pieces, he sold one to the museum up at Cornell and the others sold.

CHERYL R. RILEY: To private collectors.

NANETTE CARTER: He put me—actually did put me in a group show. I think two of the pieces ended up in the group show or something. Anyway, all of four of them sold so then he signed me on. And so that was my first New York solo show. Now this was East 74th Street. The Whitney is on Madison Avenue, right?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: This gallery—now the Whitney is on like the corner of 75th and Madison. This gallery was right on 74th Street, okay. So the Whitney is here, 74th Street going towards the park, right close to Madison Avenue is the gallery, Ericson Gallery.

[00:05:04]

Across from the Whitney is the Lerner-Heller Gallery where at that time, Howardena was showing. That was her first New York gallery, and I went to one of the openings. I remember—I met her mother who died soon afterwards. Her mother was in a wheelchair, she died young, her father lived until he was like—in his late 90s, had his mind, everything, and I would see him along the years. But I met both her mother and father there at that opening. Down the street is Randall Gallery, the first I believe Black gallery run by a Black man in New York City. Nobody talks about that. Randall Gallery was on the East Side, and he showed Ed Clark, and I went to several shows there for Ed at that space, and I remember seeing Randall. He was sort of this sort of *Bon Vivant*, you know, this man of the world, Black man, and he gave you—he almost had this sense of like a Gordon Parks. You know, everything was impeccable, impeccably dressed, his hair was just right, kind of salt and pepper hair, good-looking man, very attractive man. And a little later on, Monique Knowlton opened up her gallery and brought in Betye Saar. So we were the Blacks on the Upper East Side, and I was the youngest of that crew, these were all older folks. And it's right around that time that SoHo begins to, kind of, build up.

June Kelly came to my solo show at Ericson Gallery, saw my work, really liked the work, she bought a piece. My first show, again my parents came over, it was a horrible snowstorm. I was so frightened, I didn't think they were going to make it, and the New Jersey crowd, you

know, they would come, and all and they made it, and they almost had an accident, and it was really precarious and all, but they got there. Michael Kenny who you know bought one of the large, long pieces, which is in his bedroom now. We basically sold the show out.

But when the show came down after that month, I got to thinking, damn, those were all my people. I came on the East Side to be introduced to a whole new array of folks, okay. So—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Who did the gallery—

NANETTE CARTER: —a year or two go by—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —bring in for you?

NANETTE CARTER: Exactly, and when I thought about—none of the—I didn't see a lot of white folks at the opening, so did he send out invitations, you know? So a couple of months after it seems, I don't know maybe it was even a year, I approached him on this, and I said, "You know, I don't think I've made any sales since that opening," and I believe I said to him, "You know when I look back, Takis, um, we had no white folks to attend my opening and all my connection—"

CHERYL R. RILEY: [Cross talk.]

NANETTE CARTER: —bought and the show sold—I have none of those pieces, and they always tell you keep one piece from that series, I didn't keep any, everything was sold. He got upset like you know, this Black woman coming and getting hoity-toity with me. I said, "But I came here in hopes of meeting"—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a new audience.

NANETTE CARTER: —"a new audience, a white audience from the East Side, and in the meantime, I could've gotten all that money and had the damn show at my house with my friends." Well that did it. He was closing the gallery at the time we were talking, it was six o'clock and I never—I'll never forget it, you know, as he's shutting things down, we're talking, and he now is getting—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —hot.

NANETTE CARTER: —really loud, and now, we're screaming at each other. And as we leave the gallery, we're now cursing at each other and now we're on the corner of—

CHERYL R. RILEY: You, cursing?

NANETTE CARTER: —Madison—I know right, I've done a lot of cursing. We're now on the corner of Madison and 74th yelling and cursing at each other. Of course, it wasn't until the day afterwards, I thought, Nanette, if a policeman came by, you would've been in the jail, okay, and who knows what that white man would've said.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And you would've been—

NANETTE CARTER: He's doing—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —beaten—

NANETTE CARTER: —me—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —up by the time—

NANETTE CARTER: —she's, you know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you got into the jail.

NANETTE CARTER: —or he would've—the white guy would've—Takis could've said, "She's beating me up or some—" you know? You know, all your imagination goes wild. Of course that happened the day after, but I'm there and it was like, "You know, Takis," I said, "That's it." Oh, one of the things he said to me, "Oh, you're not going to amount to anything anyway."

[00:10:06]

I said, "Why did you sign me on?" I had signed a five-year contract with this man. Listen jumping back just a bit, I signed this contract with this man, and he took me to the most expensive restaurant in New York, and it had a big name and it's—it was known for its steaks and stuff, and it was right in that area, it was right nearby. You know, I was only Black in the damn restaurant. We had champagne, I signed a five-year contract, I felt good, there was no talk about me being Black or anything, it was about the work. And then here he is now saying I'm not going to amount to anything. I said, "Why did you bring me on? Why did you had me sign a contract for five years if I'm not amount—?" Well, that made him even more mad. This Black woman is out you know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Questioning me.

NANETTE CARTER: —rebutting me like this, how—you know? I said, "Fine, listen, let's just"—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —tear up the contract.

NANETTE CARTER: —"tear the contract up, let's end it right here and now because I see we can't move further. Oh, this is not going to be good, you know? Let's, you know, void the contracts and end it right now." Cheryl, I was so—my only—my first gallery, and it end like this because of some crazy stuff like this. And let me just say Takis looked like things were going to happen. He opened a gallery while I was with him because I didn't get a show right away, you know, I was in some other group shows with him after the contract. I ended up just having the one solo show, but during the time I was with him, he opened a gallery [in Amagansett, LI –NC], and I was showing out there, you know, and selling. And so I thought, Oh wow, he's going to expect, this is great, you know, *pssh*, everybody wants that.

CHERYL R. RILEY: The more audiences, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —you know, and then also out in the Hamptons, I know the Hamptons, I've got, you know, so my friends my are coming. He ended up losing the space, okay, and never was able to open up another one, and that's a whole another story too, but anyway, uh, that's how that went, okay, but that was my first.

So, I'm bawling, I'm calling Michael Kenney because Michael's my lawyer, you know, he bought this piece. He's—he was there at the opening, he knows what went on, he saw that, you know, only Black person. And I said, "Michael, I can't believe this man, I can't believe, but I couldn't stay with him, I had to go." You know, "What am I going to do? I want to—?" I think because Al Loving had just joined June Kelley, Al had contacted June, and June came by. Now, she had gotten a piece, she liked my work, you know. She came by, and she said—you know, and this is probably about a year after that whole episode. So that year, I was just, you know, oh God, I was beside myself, did I do a foolish thing, was it—? No, I couldn't, no, I didn't do anything foolish, no. This man was in the wrong, I'm sorry, all the way through this, you know.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You could tell by how defensive he got—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh yeah, oh, ugly—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that he was.

NANETTE CARTER: —exactly, so—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Like he didn't have anybody there that was from his roster of clients.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh please, I swear he must not have even sent down an invite—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Maybe he didn't have any contacts—

NANETTE CARTER: —you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I don't know.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, he has got, oh, no, no, I've been to his openings. Prior to me signing the—I had gone to several of his shows. I got to know, this is one of the artists, I mean I got to know the other artists that were there, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, no, no, I had done my research, I looked, and I felt like this was a great contact. I could see where again the chair of the department over there Dwight-Englewood School would have me come to this guy because my work fit just fine with the rest of his work, with his aesthetics. So anyway, all I could do was just—it was so good to have June and then of course SoHo was becoming SoHo.

CHERYL R. RILEY: The spot, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: That was the spot, and she was on Broadway at the time. She was the only person of color down there. I was—and, you know, Al was there, and I was just feeling like okay, this is going to work, this is good stuff. And that's a whole another story too, it just goes on and on and on.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, so what—yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: I know. There's so much, there's so much.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I know, it's a big life—

NANETTE CARTER: It's a whole lot—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that's why we getting it all recorded.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh gosh. So—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_2of4_sd_track06_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —you know, Dwight-Englewood School, I'm teaching there at that time, again that's '83. I jump out of Dwight-Englewood around 1987, I'd been there nine years. You know, now I'm—George has expanded, you know, I'm still with June. I'm very upset with June, June is only selling during shows, she's not selling, you know, two years in between—nothing's going on, but I'm in New York and I'm in SoHo so I ain’t saying nothing, you know?

There was some other issues too with June that I had, um, but I'm going to stay on. I ended up staying with June for 16 years, I was there for 16 years. And I really—I didn't leave until George came to New York because I wanted to keep a New York gallery. Now mind you, I'll be very frank, those last five years of being with June, I was looking for another gallery too, okay. I’m going to say it, I'm going to tell you. I just felt there were certain ways that she was approaching customers and things that were going on in the office, I just wasn't very happy with. And there were other people that were that weren't happy, and we were all looking, you know. And then, of course, Al left, because there was a terrible thing that happened between them. What she did to Al was not right, and I will not go into that because that's Al's story. But that just really kind of—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That was the final—

NANETTE CARTER: —did it for me—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —thing, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: It was like, ish. I've got a look, I've got to look, I went, you know, but I—you know, they always say, wait—it's like with boyfriends, get yourself another one before you quit that one. Anyway, George now says he's coming to town, and Chelsea's Chelsea, and June ain't moving to Chelsea, you know. And people—there's a grand exodus as we know out of SoHo to Chelsea and to have done it early on is probably the best thing because things were a little bit cheaper then now—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Properties were very cheap.

NANETTE CARTER: —astronomical.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh please.

NANETTE CARTER: Okay. And she signed—you know, I'll never forget that day I came in, and she said, "Well, I just signed—" She was celebrating, "I just signed another five years here," I'm going like, "You had a chance—your lease had ended and you didn't even think about going to Chelsea?" you know, not forward minded enough and business minded in that way, you know. And now she's like, what, a lone star down there, right? She's the only thing down there. No one's going—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Well, I think people are kind of coming back, like Jeffrey Deitch has a space there, like there's some things that are happening—

NANETTE CARTER: Okay.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —but that's not his main space. It's just—

NANETTE CARTER: No, he's got a bunch of other things going on, just a bunch of other things so anyway.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But it's not definitely what it was.

NANETTE CARTER: I left when George came to Chelsea, and I wrote her a letter, June Kelley a letter and I stated—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —your reasons.

NANETTE CARTER: —what was happening, and I thanked her and her husband Chuck because I knew Chuck.

CHERYL R. RILEY: He backed—he's the backer.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh yeah, good guy, okay, loved him some June and a good man and was always very kind and very good to me, okay. And that man made money on his own, okay. I had to go pick up a check once from his office on Park Avenue, and it was no sneeze, all right. This guy was in the consulting business and had his—this was his business, oh yeah. So I had a lot of respect for him in terms of his business sense and all, you know, but he was just—he was a good person. So I wrote them both a letter, and she wrote back saying basically, "Listen, I understand, you've been with him longer than you've been with me." Again, I've been with George since, you know, '81, and, you know, like that. So then we—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And what year is this now?

NANETTE CARTER: —severed ties—oh, this is around 2004, 2005.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Okay, good because I know they're going to want to have dates and things.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, no, you're right, thank you for asking. And so I have my first solo show with George in 2006. The gallery opens but he—you know, he showed Al, and he had a couple of other people before me, you know. Was there a group show? There may have been a group show that I was in, but then I had my solo show in 2006. I go to a fundraiser, June Kelly was on the board of Pratt Institute, she's on the board of trustees. I go to one of Pratt's galas, this is some time in 2000, like probably around 2006, 2007.

[00:05:06]

I go to the gala. June has not been sending me invites to the shows, okay, so I hadn't seen Chuck in a while. I saw Chuck, and I walked up to him and just thank him, you know, and I said, "I guess you read my letter, you know, I hope you read my—" "Letter?" I said, "Yeah, I sent you and June a letter when I was, you know, saying that I was going to leave the gallery because George was coming to town." He said, "I never saw a letter." My heart broke, June did—I—the letter was addressed to June and Chuck, to June and Charles. I was like I—I was flabbergasted. I said, "Please ask June for the letter, I wrote you both a letter thanking you for all that you had done." I was so upset, I was so—she did not show this man. So he thinks I just picked up and left? I would never do anything like that, that's not professional. So I said, "Chuck, please ask June for the letter, please read the letter, and again, thank you for all that you have done, 16 years, you know."

[. . . –NC]

NANETTE CARTER: There are several things that are happening in terms of grants and things like that that were really instrumental in making me feel like, okay, Nanette, keep moving, keep going, you know, you're in the right place, you're doing the right thing. Okay, so 1981, I get my first real serious grant, I'm around 27 years old at that point, it's the National Endowment for the Arts. I also got a Jerome Foundation grant. Now, the Jerome Foundation grant, I had, I'm calling it, a solo show at the Studio Museum of Harlem. There were maybe four of us that had a show at the same time, but I had a room. It was Leon Waller, Janet Henry, Albert Chong, and myself, so it was four of us, and there was a catalogue, and we all had our own spaces. And the Jerome Foundation grant was giving me money to frame my work for that show, okay. Again that was 1981, so that show was in 1981 at the Studio Museum of Harlem.

Then, I got that Cinque residence I was talking about earlier where I was still teaching at Dwight-Englewood School. That was '84 was the residence. Right after that, I had a solo show at Cinque Gallery. So in between the show that I had at Ericson Gallery in '83 and my first show at June Kelly's, which I will give you in just a second, I did have the solo show at Cinque Gallery in New York. Now Cinque at that time was on East 70—no, West 72nd Street right diagonally across from the Dakota. Okay, so that was—and the June Kelly show, my first June Kelly show—wow, there's a big jump here. Was it—no, that's grants, Nanette, oh shit, I'm sorry, hold on, I have to find this, I have to go to the solo shows now. So my—okay.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I don't know about you, but your resume is probably 20 pages or more, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: It's—it is. So—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, mine is—

NANETTE CARTER: —we're 20.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —24 by the time you get this age—

NANETTE CARTER: —it's over 20—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —age. yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh yeah. So okay, Ericson Gallery, yes, was 1983. My first solo in N'Namdi gallery, although I was there in that initial show in '81, wasn't until '84. The Cinque show was '85, okay. So the residency that I had with Cinque was '84, so after the residency, I had the solo show, that was '85.

[00:10:04]

'86 was N'Namdi in Detroit again. Montclair Art Museum, I had a solo show in '88. N'Namdi—June Kelly was actually—oh, not till 1990, wow. So my last show in New York had been Cinque Gallery in 1985, and my first show with June was—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —1990.

NANETTE CARTER: —was 1990, yeah, and then I left like around 2005, so that was 15, 16 years, yeah, 15 years with June. And I had several shows with her, you know, over the years, my gosh, let's see, what do we have here? So at least four or five. Let's see, maybe more than that, one—it's kind of hard to see this, it's so damn small—two, anyway, three.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And what about the gallery that I've been to with you in Chelsea owned by an African man?

NANETTE CARTER: Skoto.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Skoto, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Skoto, I—you know, and we're jumping around a bit here, but Skoto, let me just say—

CHERYL R. RILEY: When did you start with it?

NANETTE CARTER: I had shown with Skoto when he was in SoHo, a group show. Skoto was

in a small space, ground floor, SoHo, off just a bit kind of from the beaten path there, but SoHo nonetheless. And he was having some fantastic—he had a with Sol LeWitt, he'd gotten, you know, Sol LeWitt, he'd got—but he was showing, I would say at that point, primarily African Americans along with Africans, you know. And I was in this group show that was curated—and I got it there somewhere—and people can look at my resume, which, you know, they have also. I was in a group show there that was curated, and I'm trying to think of who that was. I think it was an African American, anyway, and we sold all the pieces, I think I may have had, you know, two or three pieces.

So I had gotten to know Skoto and his wife Alix then years ago. When George—now jumping now back to 2006, my show with George in Chelsea, another show, we sold it out, small and large. I had a nice array of prices, small pieces, you know, those were all gone basically. Delroy Lindo comes in and buys the largest piece there, which is now in his home in Montclair, I've seen it in his entryway along with a medium-sized piece. The embassy in Togo buys a piece, a piece that's probably like about five feet by three feet or something. Anyway, so it goes great, we get a review, *Art in America* with a photo of one of the pieces, you know, the whole thing, which was great.

George is doing really well in New York. Things are selling, the gallery sold, but for whatever reason, he wasn't getting to New York, he wasn't coming in as often as I think he needed to. Jumaane wasn't coming up as often he needed to. Jumaane now is running the Chicago gallery.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And Jumaane is his son.

NANETTE CARTER: —his son, yes, I'm sorry, that's right. Jumaane N'Namdi. thank you. You keep me up now on this—

CHERYL R. RILEY: It's okay.

NANETTE CARTER: —that's right. Jumaane is his son who's finished Morehouse School of Business there, you know, and is helping to run the business. He's running the Chicago gallery, George in Detroit and in New York. And so we were hoping that, you know, one of these two men would be coming through New York and taking turns. They have a young lady there who was running everything, Alaina, Alaina did everything, okay. She worked her tail off, she was very good, but just everything. They had an apartment, you know. We just knew that this was it, this was, you know, great, Chelsea it's just great. You know, June hadn't moved over, I left June, she's still in SoHo, I was happy, everyone was happy. And then after 2006, after my show, you know, we had a couple of other shows, and it seems to me it was around 2007, I mean he just wasn't coming in the city at all.

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_2of4_sd_track07_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: Jumaane wasn't coming and then he tells us he's going to close, no rhyme or reason. Again they were selling, it wasn't a thing of the lack of sales. I don't—to this day, I'm not really that clear.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —on what happened.

NANETTE CARTER: —on what happened. I have my own thoughts, and some of these thoughts I'm going to keep with me. So now, I don't have a gallery.

CHERYL R. RILEY: In New York, uh-huh [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: You know, I left June to go to George, George is closed up, I want to have a New York gallery, I'm in New York, you know, and I do have some collectors here. And—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And who would that gallery be if you had a top-three list?

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, God, back then? Oh my goodness, back then, who was it back then? I think I had begun to look at Sikkema Jenkins, Sikkema, Sikkema Jenkins. I think they had opened by then—

CHERYL R. RILEY: They had a nice roster.

NANETTE CARTER: Back then especially, a lot of folks have left. I'm trying to think of what I was thinking about back then. Anyway, so I'm without a gallery, here it is 2007, and I don't think it was until around that time that Skoto moved to—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Chelsea.

NANETTE CARTER: —Chelsea because then he showed El Anatsui, and that really helped Skoto, put Skoto—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Put him—

NANETTE CARTER: —on the map.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —on the map, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: Sold that whole show out.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Of course.

NANETTE CARTER: Newark Museum came in, bought those pieces, everyone was looking at this stuff, you know? And at that time also, Skoto and Alix had decided that they really wanted to center on African artists. They—oh gosh what's his last name—Noah, Noah Jemison—oh, I'm so bad with names—Jemison. They had an African American painter who was there in the stable, and he was reaching out to other folks. I know he had Sumayyah Samaha who is from—originally from Lebanon, so it was a colorful roster, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: And he—he had some white folks too but primarily African artists. He really was going.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh, the Black—

NANETTE CARTER: But a great—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —African—

NANETTE CARTER: —market. Yeah, Black—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —Black African—

NANETTE CARTER: —African artists I should say, that's right. He was really looking at the market, and it was clear that they were not being shown here, and it was a very smart move on his part.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and good timing.

NANETTE CARTER: Good timing. And so I approached them. I don't think I approached them —what is this now? This is 2021, that show was '20—I didn't approach them till late.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I mean I knew Yulack [ph] was showing with him too during his lifetime, you know there?

NANETTE CARTER: Uh-huh [affirmative.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: He had some really interesting shows and—

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, yeah, and actually still, this show that's up right now is really quite strong. Boy, like Osi [Audu]—oh, I'm so bad with names—the show up right now. So with Skoto, it was funny because I actually approached him with my *Bouquet for Lovings*. He came up here with Alix to look at *Bouquet for Loving*, and they did not like them, and they told me, they said, no, they weren't interested, very interesting. I mean it was very nice and all, but they came and they told me right then and there, no, not interested in showing this work. And I respected their—you know, yeah, okay.

CHERYL R. RILEY: They're upfront.

NANETTE CARTER: Okay, that was it, they were upfront, yeah, no, let's not waste time, you

know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Raise hopes.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. This is not going to happen. I'm just looking, it was amazing because, yeah, it was the *Aqueous* show in 2006 with N'Namdi, that was my last show in New York with N'Namdi.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And I just love that series.

NANETTE CARTER: And that show also more because I had—that was a large series, it also showed in Chicago, and I took a few of those when I had my solo show in Damascus, Syria, the solo show in Damascus. And then I had my last—let's see—oh, and then I began to show in Tokyo, 2016. So things were happening, but I still didn't have a show—a gallery here in New York. So this new series started to come up, and this was the *Cantilevered,* and I had Alix and Skoto back up to see this series, and they liked the series a lot.

[00:05:09]

So that's when I had my show. My show for Skoto, I'm going to give you the date here if I can just find the darn thing, oh gosh, it wasn't that long ago, was it? Oh, my goodness. You're going to tell me I don't have this in here?

CHERYL R. RILEY: It's—I'll tell you it's a thing—

NANETTE CARTER: Where—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —to keep up with that.

NANETTE CARTER: Here it is, here it is, I'm sorry, 2018. Okay, 2018, I had the show there. We sold that out at the opening basically, and again I love Delroy Lindo—came and bought three pieces, another one of my collectors from Jersey came—oh, there's a woman who came in and also bought two pieces, one of Skoto's clients bought two pieces. What we didn't do, we had—I had two large works, we did not sell the two large works, but it worked out well and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: They're waiting to go in a museum collection.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, actually someone did end up buying one of those, and that was at the Fridman Gallery, a show that I had there.

CHERYL R. RILEY: We have about less than 10 minutes on this—

NANETTE CARTER: —On this one?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —disk, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: All right, I can close this out soon. Let's see, what should I say? So basically, yeah, 2018 then. So there had been a hiatus in terms of New York. I mean there was a long period there I had not shown in New York. I was showing but not in New York.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And why is it so important to show in New York?

NANETTE CARTER: For me, as a New Yorker, I feel that because it is still the mecca of the art world on this planet.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Well, at least in America.

NANETTE CARTER: I—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —think everywhere.

NANETTE CARTER: —I think everywhere. I think that—I don't think there's another city that has so many galleries in it, so many venues, see. That—I'm looking at numbers as opposed to maybe just quality or something. I'm looking at the number of places one can have that chance to show.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Well there's the Lower East Side now, there's like—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, my God—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a lot of—

NANETTE CARTER: —yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —good places.

NANETTE CARTER: —and you still have the Upper East Side, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: I mean that and 57th Street, which was—used to be it. When I was in high school and college, I only came to 57th Street.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And there's still a lot—

NANETTE CARTER: —you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —of that galleries there.

NANETTE CARTER: —they're still there, that's right. And then also, there are just so many darn museums and then of course we had the museum of American art, the Whitney. So you a certain, what I feel kind of, educated community who I think is probably a little more open to abstract art than may be in the Midwest or the South or even West in this country. I think that people's vocabularies in terms of the arts are vastly different in New York than anywhere else—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —in America.

NANETTE CARTER: —and I'm going to even say the world.

CHERYL R. RILEY: The world, okay.

NANETTE CARTER: Okay, in terms of Conceptual art, minimalist art. I mean you could take a minimalist piece and take it somewhere and they would like think you were crazy. What is this, Conceptual art, please, you know. So I just feel—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Video art.

NANETTE CARTER: —that this is—the art world is still very much—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —centered here in—

NANETTE CARTER: —centered here.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —in New York.

NANETTE CARTER: Yes, it is. And so who doesn't want to be in the center? I mean what person would turn down a show in New York? No one. And again, I live here, this is my home, you know, this is my home. So maybe we should end that one, and what time is it now? Oh, it says four o'clock. Are you able to stop it? It's still going on?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Uh-huh, I have—I had—I turned it off on the side here and—

NANETTE CARTER: Well, I'm going to go—

[00:09:03]

[END OF TRACK carter21_2of4_sd_track08_m.]

[Tracks carter21_3of4_sd_track01_m and carter21_3of4_sd_track02_m are blank.]

[. . . –Ed.]

NANETTE CARTER: Okay. Yeah, the last session, our first session ended in 1985. I had covered my experience at the Ericson Gallery, and I think I even spoke about Cinque getting the—what they called their residency, it was their first residency. And again Cinque Gallery

was founded by Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, and Ernie Crichlow back around 1969.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And Romare you said.

NANETTE CARTER: I said Romare.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, okay.

NANETTE CARTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But that was actually started in 1969. So it was around this time 1986 that I had my first solo show in Detroit with—no, no, second solo show, I'm sorry. I'm looking out in my resume. 1984 was my first solo show in Detroit with George N'Namdi, and my second was in 1986, and it was the series *Illumination*. I don't know if I talked about *Illumination* and going to—

CHERYL R. RILEY: You have not, you have not.

NANETTE CARTER: —Rio de—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's new to the—

NANETTE CARTER: —Janeiro? Okay.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And I don't feel like I've seen those pieces, have I?

NANETTE CARTER: That's an *Illumination*, this one right here, mm-hmm [affirmative]. I had gone with a very dear friend to Rio de Janeiro, I had never been to South America, never been to Brazil. And what really transpired through the whole trip was just this whole idea that clearly, the enslaved people in Brazil in particular were able to hold on to a lot of their cultural—you know, uh, culture in terms of music, in terms of dance, in terms of art, and even some of the religious aspects were still held on. It's interesting because I think a lot of the orishas were, sort of, connected with the Catholic saints in some way. They had some of the same powers and abilities, so they were able to, I think, appease the slave owners by making these connections.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And I think that happens in a lot of cultures.

NANETTE CARTER: In a lot of—but that didn't happen here in North America in terms of the enslaved people.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But I think we were not doing the Catholic so much here in America.

NANETTE CARTER: We—

CHERYL R. RILEY: They were—

NANETTE CARTER: No, that's true too.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —Protestants who came here.

NANETTE CARTER: More Protestants, that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: So there were no saints—

NANETTE CARTER: There weren't, no.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —for them—

NANETTE CARTER: —to connect to.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —to attach to.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. But also drumming was allowed in Brazil whereas the fear of drumming in North America by the enslaved people would say, they're speaking to each other. The talking drum, I mean that was that whole, you know, idea, that term but—

So it was an illumination, it was illuminating for me to see how the—you know, they were able to retain so much of, again, their culture and their religion. And so the series *Illumination* really came out of this idea of again not understanding the differences in how,

you know, slave owners handled slaves differently in different parts of the world. But also what really excited me was just this real festive manner of the street life. Music was everywhere, and I recall getting on a bus, and a young boy, you know, probably around seven or eight, just started singing, and all of a sudden, the whole bus was singing the song. And people were clapping [claps hands], and it was syncopated, and it was like, oh, my God, I felt like I was in a magical land, it was another space and time. And then I had a friend who had already gone to Rio, had met this artist Ernani de Silva [ph] who is now in New—you know, come up to the States, he's in New York, he's married an American woman, anyway, he spoke very good English. I hooked up with Ernani [de Silva –NC], he took us all around, we went up into the hills to the samba schools, and it was just amazing. Now, the wealthy people live down near the ocean, and the poor people live up in the hills. Now in this country, the wealthy people would be in the hills with the view and the poor people would be down on —

CHERYL R. RILEY: No, and they would—

NANETTE CARTER: —there.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —on the coast.

NANETTE CARTER: They'd be on both.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And then we would be in the middle.

NANETTE CARTER: And we'd be in the middle, right, or some other little land area that, you know, was—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, no, we wouldn't be having the beachfront property.

NANETTE CARTER: Exact—no, that's true too, that is true, not on the ocean.

[00:05:02]

But we went to the samba schools, and that was just incredible. So, you know, it was just very enlightening, I love the art that was there, a lot of sculptors, quite a few sculptors. So anyway, all of this was illuminating for me, and I came back, and I started this series, which was really oil pastels on Museum Board or Black Arches paper, and I love the color on black because it just jumped out, and it was very—so colorful. The black really becomes deep space, and the color is just, sort of, jumping out at you there.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But I see your collages already emerging—

NANETTE CARTER: Almost beginning, the shapes themselves.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —in there, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. And shapes which has still, you know, remained in my, you know, lexicon, shapes, textures, all that, the sense of movement, I think is still there.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Color.

NANETTE CARTER: Color is very integral, I'm very much a colorist and—but the textures that you see in this series, which have this almost staccato-like marking—I can tell you there's something rhythmical about making those marks—is also talking about the stone that I saw there along the beaches. And, you know, that whole idea of Sugarloaf is—would—almost is this big piece of stone that just, sort of, comes out of the water. I know there is—there's some greenery on there, but it's just this texture of the stone was just incredible. So anyway, I'm trying to give you the sense of also a metronome rocking back and forth, keeping time, again the musicality of it all, and it was very important. I really wanted to display that in this series. The series, I believe there are about 50 pieces in this series, and it's probably one of my largest series actually at—from the—at that particular time, we're talking 1986. I went to Cuba—Cuba, I'm sorry. I went to Rio—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Brazil.

NANETTE CARTER: —in '85 and so the series started when I got back home. And in fact, the Cinque show in 1985 and the Detroit show in [19]'86, I was showing that series *Illumination.*

CHERYL R. RILEY: What months were those?

NANETTE CARTER: That I don't know, but these are two different—the '85, you know, again two different years, the Cinque was '85, George N'Namdi was '86, and again probably, you know, knowing the way I was working back then, this series probably went on for three years. If there are 50 pieces, it probably went on for three or four years. Large and small, the largest piece, I recall, George showed the largest work, which is probably about eight feet in width.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Wow, you were working at large scale—

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, large scale—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —even then.

NANETTE CARTER: —then, yeah. Bringing several sheets of this black paper together to do that. And in fact, it was soon after that I remember that Golden started to make the black gesso. So there were—you know, there was a limitation in terms of size, the size of black paper back then. So I was taking this large, white paper and gessoing it with the black gesso, so I was starting to do that also to deal with the scale that I really wanted to do. Let me also say that in all of my series, I have small works and large works. I love playing with scale, and sometimes the small works will take just as long as the large works, um, but I love playing with scale. I love working small, medium size, and I do love working large also, and I love the physicality that it takes to make the large works where I'm climbing up on a ladder in order to, you know, take care of whatever is happening, the nine-foot, you know, piece—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Up in the air. yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —in terms of height. And I enjoy—I enjoy all of that. So this is also at a time where I can recall, and I may have talked a little bit about this already, going to Bill Hudson's studio, and that was, kind of, where we met. There used to be this thing where almost every weekend, we would meet at Bill's. When I say we, it was Al Loving and early on Judith Wilson, the writer who ended up writing for the *Village Voice*, writing about art for the *Village Voice.* I think she's now on the West Coast, but Judith and Bill Hutson were dating at the time, and another woman that I met was Dorothy White, and I have to say Dorothy White really reminds me—you remind me of Dorothy White.

[00:10:04]

Dorothy White just passed last year. She was probably in her 80s, but like yourself, Cheryl, she was so instrumental in helping a lot of young African American artists including myself and introducing me to other artists also. But also, she would curate exhibitions, and there was one space that was almost, sort of, given to her to curate, and it was very exciting because it was on West End Avenue in this beautiful, large apartment. There were two women, Elaine Simpson who was involved with fashion and was collecting art, and her friend, oh my gosh, a South African woman, oh, my goodness. Oh, my gosh, and I should be writing these names down prior to doing this. I'm going to have to come back to her. Her brother was the musician, South African musician Hugh Masekela, Barbara Masekela. Barbara Masekela at the time was teaching at Rutgers, and they decided because they had this large apartment that they would do these art shows. They loved art, and they had Dorothy White to curate the shows because Dorothy knew the well-seasoned artists, and when I say well-seasoned, I'm talking Ed Clark and, you know, Al Loving, Bill Hudson, Jack Whitten, but she was also really trying to connect with younger artists also, so she would bring us all together in these shows. So I began to show with these guys, and in the building was Quincy Troupe who would come down and buy art, and I remember his first piece was I think a nice Al Loving and—that he's got quite a collection now of course. But they had a connection with a lot of middle-class Black folks in New York who would come to the openings, and of course, sometimes Hugh Masekela would come through when he was in town, and, you know, he'd bring friends, and he would collect also.

But Dorothy White, they kind of allowed her to be the curator of the shows, and there were printed invitations. Of course, this is prior to, you know, any of this, you know, technology and what have you, so everyone was sending out, mailing out invitations. And normally, it was a theme, there was a theme to it and then the list of the artists on the invitation, and sometimes, they'd have maybe a musician that might come and play during the reception. But anyway, that was a really exciting time, and again, this is a time where African

Americans were not being exhibited. Diane Brewer soon after that opens up her place up on —in Park West Village. That becomes a real—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Now Diane Brewer—

NANETTE CARTER: —hub.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —is an African American woman—

NANETTE CARTER: African American—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —as well?

NANETTE CARTER: —woman who later on ended up dating Al Loving, but she became a hot spot along with Peg Alston. They all kind of started in their apartments at the same time, and —

CHERYL R. RILEY: And Peg is still—

NANETTE CARTER: —Di—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —going?

NANETTE CARTER: Peg is still going, she's the only that's really still going. You know things happened with Masekela and Elaine Simpson. I think Barbara ended up going back, uh—well, this was later on, this is—actually Mandela assigned her as the cultural minister when he was in office and then soon after that, she ended up actually becoming the ambassador to France for South Africa. But she was wonderful, Barbara Masekela was one of these people, she could get up and speak off-the-cuff and just eloquent. Now, she was teaching at Rutgers, I believe she was teaching creative writing, but the sister was so just warm and gracious and just wonderful; I remember really looking up to her. So I was around some really amazing Black folks at the time who were saying, "Hey, listen, they're not going to show our work, that's fine, we've got artists here to show, we're going to show it, we're going to make sure that African American folks can collect this work."

CHERYL R. RILEY: My friend Tom Berrel [ph] is one of them.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Household full—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —of that work and actually—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh my gosh, yes.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —made his apartment—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_3of4_sd_track03_m.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: —so that there wasn't light coming in on the works—

NANETTE CARTER: —on the works, so he knew—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —he created, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —keep it. And Tom had—actually bought a big piece of mine from George N'Namdi, which is now in the Perez Museum [Miami, FL], but that—because, you know, he donated quite a few of it when you downsized, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: But it was—you know, as much as we were angry that we weren't being seen in the museums and galleries, it was a lot of fun. You know, it almost takes me back to what I was talking about earlier, growing up in this African American community in

Columbus, Ohio, I had fun. I had no sense that I was getting any less—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —or that you were inferior?

NANETTE CARTER: —or inferior and any of that because my community bolstered all of us. We were thought of as great individuals that have great promise, we were young people, smart, you know, creative, and the possibilities were all in front of us. So, you know, back to New York, you know, again, we would gripe, we'd get together and we were pissed and what can we do to—but we just kept on moving, nothing was going to stop us. Everyone was making art; it was a fruitful time.

A little later after that was a real high point for me. I know I stopped teaching at Dwight-Englewood School, that private school I had been talking about earlier, and I stopped there in '87. And it was right after that that I had a solo show at the Montclair Art Museum, which of course, is the town that I grew up in. And I call it—it was actually a two-person show, but I call it a solo show because the other person was a sculptor, so he had the interior room, you know, but I had all the walls, and again that was in 1988. And I guess this is my third show with George N'Namdi, ah, he has now moved to Birmingham, Michigan, this is 1989. This is around the time—it's probably the late '80s that I started to date Bill Hudson. No, no, it's actually earlier than that. Come to think of it, I was still teaching at Dwight-Englewood School, so I started dating Bill I guess around like '85, '86. It went for maybe two, no more than three years. It was very tricky, two artists together. There was some jealousies and things that were happening that weren't very pleasant, and it was best that we just be friends. But certainly, you know, hanging with this older crowd, I learned a great deal, and Bill imparted a lot of good business sense in terms of making sure that I took photos of all my work, understood where pieces were going, you know, consignment papers, contracts, things like that, I remember learning from him not from Pratt Institute graduate school. Back then they didn't—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And it's never—

NANETTE CARTER: —do it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you're never going to learn those things from the schools and it's—

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, they have it now, they do now—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, I'm happy to hear that because—

NANETTE CARTER: —and because people—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I've done classes—

NANETTE CARTER: —fought for it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —called the art of business—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —because of that very reason.

NANETTE CARTER: —they don't have, that's right, exactly.

CHERYL R. RILEY: They'd show artists how to even create—

NANETTE CARTER: —how to do—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a—

NANETTE CARTER: —tax write-offs.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —even now, I still sometimes have to show artists—

NANETTE CARTER: And talk to them.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —who have MFAs how to do their invoices to me.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, that's right. So, again, it was really a fruitful time for me, a

real learning experience. So Birmingham, Michigan, George moves out of Detroit proper to Birmingham, Michigan, because this is where all of the real, you know, chichi sort of established Michigan galleries were. Birmingham was an extremely well-to-do area, and it's either right there in Birmingham or near Birmingham that Cranbrook, the school is and just I mean, estates, you know.

And so going there, I would say things changed in terms of sales. There were many more white folks that were coming and buying the work. When we were in Detroit, it was primarily African Americans buying the work. So it—what he found was that the African Americans would drive out to Birmingham, which is a neighboring town from Detroit, and then you would have the white community there too. So Blacks were still coming out. So that worked out well, but this is the time that really things began to open up for me. I—in the early '90s, Sande Webster in Philadelphia took me on. I was showing with Alitash Kabede. Alitash, I showed with her in Los Angeles in 1992.

[00:05:04]

CHERYL R. RILEY: I've shown with her once or twice as well.

NANETTE CARTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And then Sande Webster, my first show was—with her was in 1993. So I had gallery representation, you know, in New York, Detroit, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and I also for a short time had a gallery in Atlanta, Georgia [Louisa McIntosh Gallery –NC], right across from the High Museum. Never had a solo show, but she took me on, and I was in a couple group shows, and we were getting ready for a solo show, and she ended up retiring, and she had not really apprenticed anyone. And I'm trying to think of the name of her gallery, and it'll come to me.

So, again, the early '90s, again I had quit teaching, I'm really, kind of, needing all these galleries because hopefully, you know, a check is going to come from one of them. I'm with June here in New York and then it's around the mid to late '90s, um, you know, I'm having three and four solo shows a year because of all of these spaces and then also showing—for instance I showed at the University of Lynchburg, that was a solo show, you know, so I'm having shows also. Oh, and Hodges Taylor, oh my gosh, Hodges Taylor Gallery in North Carolina, in Charlotte, North Carolina. These were two white women, um, I was in a group show there, and they had such a large space, and this is on Fort Tryon, which is the main street in Charlotte. They had such a large space that they had a separate room for shows that were being curated by this woman, her name was Noel, African American woman. And Noel had seen my work at Hodges Taylor. I had a show there, a solo show in 1997, and later on in the early 2000s, Noelle started her own gallery. I'm seeing in 2004 I had my solo show with her. She jumped off and just got her own, so.

Now again, these white women had this extra room, which they allowed her—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —to curate.

NANETTE CARTER: —they apprenticed her, really did, you know, knowing that she's going to jump off but just got her started, which I thought was awfully nice. And, of course, she was showing primarily African American artists, which was very interesting. You don't see that kind of thing happening.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Not back then.

NANETTE CARTER: No, indeed. So that this was all good. Some of the series—I just want to talk now about some of the series that were going on during this time, there was a series called *Fire, Water* where I was really talking about these two forces, but the similarities of these two forces.

CHERYL R. RILEY: How did you embody that concept? What was the—

NANETTE CARTER: What was it?—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —fire and what was the water? Was it color or was it texture—

NANETTE CARTER: It was really about—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —or shapes?

NANETTE CARTER: —the sense of movement, the fear of these, the—the possibilities of them, the need for both of these elements, but also the power and how they can be used in terms of rituals also because of the power. Just these two natural elements that again are so fluid in nature, you know, just the way that they looked, the fluidity of it, and I was just—I'm just in awe. I can sit by the ocean for hours, I can sit by a pond for hours, I can sit in front of a fire in a fireplace, which we did have in Montclair, I love the fireplace for hours and just looking, just, you know, mesmerized and almost a meditative kind of aspect to fire and water. So I was really thinking about all of that.

CHERYL R. RILEY: The elements.

NANETTE CARTER: The elements, and, you know, this is a period in time where nature and landscape was really playing a key role. I can tell you even with the series *Illumination,* there was this sense of mountains and against Sugarloaf Mountain and all that too, so nature plays a—played a very important role in these earlier pieces. In fact, I see I had a solo show at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, that was 1992, and I got that show because Bill Hudson moved down there and became a professor there, and he began to pull all of us down there for these solo shows. And the title of that show is *Nature's Theme*s. So nature was really—you know, going out to Sag Harbor, being in a part of the world where you have the four seasons or truly you have the four seasons and the changes and all, I was just taken by all of that.

And so couple of the other series that were going on at the time, and again now we're in the '90s, I had another series, it was called *Window View: Scapeology*. There's no such word as scapeology, but I coined this term. And I was literally looking out my window and abstracting what I was seeing, and I did deal with the seasons, the four seasons, and so I was a—I felt as though I was dealing with scapes. And the works not only took the feeling of landscape, but sometimes they were underwater-like, and sometimes they appeared because of that black background to be outer space.

CHERYL R. RILEY: So now were these paintings or collages?

NANETTE CARTER: These were actually works on canvas that I would collage. *Window View* were canvas pieces. *Window View,* not a lot of collaging going on, but I think still this sort of almost a look of collage, you know, in terms of shapes and forms, but the changing of the seasons, just sort of the mystery of nature was really what I was trying to put forth in this abstract vein and in my own way. But sometimes you could look at one piece and you would see, you felt as though you were underwater, but then you'd look at it again and maybe it felt like a nighttime sky, and you might come back again, and you might see grass and an aerial view of land masses. So I really liked that kind of trilogy, this whole thing of, you know, water, land, and then outer space, and pooling all of this together on one platform, in one picture plane.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Have you kept works from those series, all of those series?

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, yeah. I've got some pieces that I'm holding on to, those canvases, oh yes. And some of them were quite large, some of the canvases were, you know, again around eight feet in height. A lot of them were really quite tall too, some were—you know, like I work now, some would have a vertical thrust, some had horizontal thrust.

CHERYL R. RILEY: It takes a lot of physical ability to do such large-scale—

NANETTE CARTER: —yeah, large pieces.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —works, does it not?

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, yeah—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Is that why—

NANETTE CARTER: —it really does.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Isn't that why—

NANETTE CARTER: And I—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —so many—

NANETTE CARTER: —love that.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —of the big works are done by men because it does take some—

NANETTE CARTER: It takes—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —physical—

NANETTE CARTER: —a lot, yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —strength to do something.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, but—you know and woman could certainly do it too. I think—you know what, I think this whole thing of energy comes out of just this necessity to create. You know, you can gather up energy you don't even know you have, you know, until something just says this is necessary. I want people to be engulfed in this; I want them to be in awe of nature in the way that I am and to be respectful of it. And again I think climate change and all of this is really frightening, especially for young people as they see their environment changing in front of them with rising seas, the storms coming through, the fire—

CHERYL R. RILEY: We're at the tipping point.

NANETTE CARTER: —all of that—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —we're at the tipping point—

NANETTE CARTER: —all of that.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —now, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —you know? So I really think—you know, I'm—again, you know, George N'Namdi, I'd say June Kelly in particular, those two sold quite a few, and I guess Sande Webster too, I would have to say, in Philadelphia sold a lot of those pieces, but I did hold on to them. Because again I'm working in a series, and the series normally would go, you know, anywhere from 30 pieces on up.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and it's so important for artists to hold on to—

[END OF TRACK carter21_3of4_sd_track04_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —I think so too.

CHERYL R. RILEY: They're examples of the different phases of their own careers and their works.

NANETTE CARTER: I think you're right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I think it's really—

NANETTE CARTER: I think you're right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —important.

NANETTE CARTER: I agree with you, yeah. And moving on through the '90s, I see that after *Window View*, and again this is still working on canvas, I did do a series, it was called *Point-Counterpoint,* and there was this clear division, there was an area that was black and white only and then there was a section of the canvas that was color. And this *Point-Counterpoint* really came out of all the different wars that were going on, and, you know, this idea of, you know, different nations seeing different ways of, you know, moving forward and or trying to expand or whatever.

I also began to see, I guess at that point, just how much of an empire the United States was also, and as much as we don't call them our colonies, they were still countries—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Essentially, essentially—

NANETTE CARTER: —that are—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that's what they were—

NANETTE CARTER: —basically, yeah, under our thumb and—but yet different cultures, you know? And I think this is at a point in time, too, where I really began to think about creating works that were dealing more about political, socioeconomic issues, and I began to leave, you know, the nature and this whole mysterious kind of quality of nature and then the powers of nature. I kind of left some of that behind, although I think some of the visuals still had some of those elements there, I mean, you know, it's still Nanette Carter. But *Point-Counterpoint* probably is the beginning, and then after that, we're at the end of the '90s getting ready going to go into 2000, I did my largest series yet. There are 107 works in the series called *Slightly Off Keel.*

Now *Slightly Off Keel* is very different from being off kilter. Off keel is a sailing term, and that's when your sailboat is moving at a clip, it's tilted drastically, you-all have to go to the other side of the boat or you'll spill over but you're moving. And my feeling was I had just bought my first computer, which was one of those bubble Apple computers, I got a blue one. And it was perplexing me, it was like, my gosh, what are we getting into here, but I've got to —I've got to keep up. Being on a boat that's moving at a clip, you got to hang on because if you don't—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And you got to be—

NANETTE CARTER: —hang on—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —in touch with nature, otherwise you'll fall off—

NANETTE CARTER: You fall off—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —or something—

NANETTE CARTER: —you've got to get your sea legs, that's right, you've got to—because if you do fall off, it's not like a car where you stop and you can, you know, reverse and go back, no. They have to change the sails over, you have to—you know? Oh, my gosh, there's so much involved, and by then if, you know, you haven't—don't know how to swim or tread water—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And hopefully no other boat—

NANETTE CARTER: —you maybe—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —has hit you—

NANETTE CARTER: —you may go under.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —or no—

NANETTE CARTER: That is right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —other boat has hit you or something, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: I mean just it's very complicated. So my whole thing with *Slightly Off Keel* was positive. It's not off kilter where you're going to fall you know? It really is a positive gesture, but you're trying to hang on, trying to stay on top of it. The world is moving at a clip, and you want to be along with the party. So there, again there about 107 works in that series, and that series started around 1998, and again, I'm not teaching, you know, around—I think around '97, '98. And I'm looking here now, I showed that series in—oh, so now, George has the gallery in Chicago and Detroit. So 1999, I showed the series in Chicago, I showed it with him in Birmingham, Michigan, I showed it with Sande Webster in Philadelphia, and then in 2000, I showed it with June Kelly. So again, there are over 100 pieces, so I'm able to, you know, divide these up—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Distribute them, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —yes, through these galleries.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And when you're doing that, Nanette, are you thinking of a certain market or that gallerist when you're choosing which works to consign to, which gallery or which—?

NANETTE CARTER: —what part of the country and all that kind of a thing?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], mm-hmm [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: What I normally think about first is the gallery space. June's gallery—I guess actually of those three galleries, Sande's was the smallest, so I knew I couldn't give her my large scale. Again in each of these series, I always have large-scale pieces and I always have small works. So I really thought about it in terms of the size of the gallery itself. June's was sort of a medium-sized, but George's gallery was the large space, so I knew I could really give him the bigger pieces. So that's the way I was thinking in terms of divy-ing or dividingr—

CHERYL R. RILEY: It was about the space—

NANETTE CARTER: —rather dividing things up. It really was about the space not so much so much that, oh, I think Detroit people will like this or—no, it really had to do more with scale. One of the things that I really enjoy, I have to say, and I enjoyed this even as a professor is I enjoy hanging shows. People think, oh, you know, you just get some work and you plop it up on the wall and—no. It is—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Those conversations—

NANETTE CARTER: —an art.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —are very important.

NANETTE CARTER: The conversation, how do you space these pieces from each other so that you can see each one individually. You're right, the conversation is so important, what is that dialogue between the works. And so I'm always thinking of how I want the stuff to be orchestrated. Now mind you, of course, each, you know, dealer had their own way of wanting to put the work up too, but sometimes just because of the scale of the work, the dealer has to put it in a particular space because of that scale and so I would scale the work knowing that this is where that piece has to go, you can't do anything, you know, and so that was my way of controlling in some ways.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And anchoring, and anchoring the show, right?

NANETTE CARTER: And anchoring the show too, exactly. But I also recall hanging the show at Pratt where there were 80 people in this show, and it was a show Pratt had never done, undergraduate show that I did. I put it together, and it was staff, Pratt staff because a lot of the secretaries—they were artists, but they wanted to be around the arts, and they needed a job, they had families. We had staff, faculty, students, and alums, and the alums had to ship their work and ship it back, but we had alums, okay. It was a mix, it was a beautiful—boy, trying to hang that show, oh, I loved it. It was a puzzle, it was difficult, but boy, and I got more comments from faculty that's—you know, students they don't quite—faculty who've been out there seeing shows, people were saying, "Boy, you hung a show." I love hanging shows, I love—

CHERYL R. RILEY: You know, and some people—

NANETTE CARTER: —I love that.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I've seen create models of the gallery and—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —do small—

NANETTE CARTER: Galleries—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and then—

NANETTE CARTER: —they do that now—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they'll lay that out.

NANETTE CARTER: Museums do that now.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And, now of course—

NANETTE CARTER: —that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I'm sure there are software programs that you can do that, that's much easier.

NANETTE CARTER: That also—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —but I can remember seeing people—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh yeah, maquettes—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —make maquettes, and they would actually, yeah, scale to scale—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. To scale off the pieces—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the images of the pieces.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And they—

NANETTE CARTER: —exactly, the scale—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —lay about—

NANETTE CARTER: —move it around—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —like that.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, exactly. So interesting, I was talking to this gentleman—oh, we need to move on. I could segue, go off to so much. Let me get back to my resume because that's the only way I can figure this stuff—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's—

NANETTE CARTER: —out.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —keeping you on track because you've done a lot.

NANETTE CARTER: Yes it is.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —over a lot—in a lot of places, over a long time.

NANETTE CARTER: A long time. So *Slightly Off Keel,* um—and let me say that it was after the *Point-Counterpoint* series. Again, now *Point-Counterpoint* was on canvas, okay, and it was at that point, and we're talking the late 90s, that I began to experiment with Mylar. Now, I had Mylar on my brain since 1984—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And why is that, Nanette? What is it about—

NANETTE CARTER: Because I—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —what were you drawn to about Mylar?

NANETTE CARTER: —I went to a Frank Lloyd Wright show. You know, at one point like I said earlier, I wanted to be an architect; Frank Lloyd Wright was one of my first loves. They had a wonderful exhibition at the Cooper Hewitt museum here in New York of his students from Taliesin, and these were pieces from the '50s, drawings from the '50s, and I went. I wanted to see what the students were doing, and a lot of the drawings were on this Mylar surface, which I had never heard of.

[00:10:06]

And I'm looking at the description card, and it says Mylar, and I was like, "What is Mylar, what is this?" What I did notice was that the pencil drawings looked so different from pencil drawings on paper. And the way that I love to describe it was this black pencil on the surface

looked like poured black butter, it had a buttery quality to it. It didn't have a hard edge to it. It was almost like a drypoint line that catches in the burrs of the, you know, dry point, the ink and so it's not, you know, a hard-core end of the line there, it's just this fuzzy. It was gorgeous, it was so rich, so much so that I knocked on the door of the curator's office. I didn't know her name, I didn't know, it just said curator on the door. I knocked on the door and a very nice woman came to the door and said, "Can I help you?" And I said, "Yes, what is Mylar?" and she said, "It's a plastic," you know, "Dupont had started this, and the architects love it because they can still do their overlays"—

CHERYL R. RILEY: It—transparency, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —"but it's not tracing paper, which of course when you go to the site can tear because of the wind, it's so delicate and all that. It's tough stuff, you know, it's plastic, it's going nowhere." So I said, "Well, is this easy to find, can you get this in an art store?" She said, "Oh yeah, it comes in sheets," okay, back then you got it in sheets. And in 1985, I went and bought Mylar, and I cut this sheet. The sheet was maybe like 18 by 24, you know, regular size, but I cut it up, and I did these small drawings on it, which I still have. And I said, you know, one day, I'm going to come back to this. I was still—you know, I was working then on canvas, and I wasn't stretching the canvas. I was working the canvas as though it was paper, and I really liked that—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And what does that mean?

NANETTE CARTER: You know, I was a paper person. I majored in printmaking at Pratt, you know, so I was so accustomed to not having something on a stretcher bar, that taut kind of feeling. I really—I liked tapestries also, I like this idea of—it felt like it was alive as opposed to man-made and stretched. I liked the sort of sense of this living, breathing thing, which actually, you know, paper and canvas is, you know? It's—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Your natural art—

NANETTE CARTER: —cotton you know, and so, and hemp or whatever, you know, linen. But I wanted that physical quality to show; I didn't want it to have that taut, tight feeling.so anyway, you know, I was working large, I was gessoing it like I said with the black gesso, which I loved, and I was happy, you know. But I liked this, I liked the Mylar, I love—the first drawings are like, you know, very soft pencil, you know, so that it was very dark, you know, and then white—a white pencil, a white—you know, a colored pencil, a white color. So it was the black and white, and I was getting these grays but it was just—it was so much fun, and it was—the smooth surface just felt—you glided, you know? It was a sense of gliding and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, there's no grain to that.

NANETTE CARTER: No grain. It's just—you know, it's very fine. There's—because I do use the frosted, but it's not like the paper that, you know, it doesn't have that tooth to it, that that real physical tooth, it's a very fine kind of flavor to it. And it's at that point in 1985, so I did these small drawings, I stored them away, I said, you know, I'm going to come back to this, I wasn't ready right then and there. And I don't think it was until—again that was 1985, it wasn't till the late '90s that I went back out and got some more Mylar, and I'd been doing monotypes, I love monotypes, and I decided, you know, the whole deal with monotypes is that you're using paper, the paper is also because it's porous, it's drawing in quite a bit of the paint. What happens when it's not porous, when it's Mylar and it just—? So the amount of paint you put down is very important because a lot of that is going to smudge out. You have to know just how much to put down, you know, the viscosity of the paint and all that kind of stuff is very integral. So I started to do—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_3of4_sd_track05_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —and I have a few of those still, monotypes on Mylar. And I loved the way they looked, I loved what was happening and then it was after that I began to paint on it. And again, just the way that the brush would glide across, and you saw some of the painted imagery that I just started to do this, blue that's going to go on to this other piece—

CHERYL R. RILEY: It's beautiful.

NANETTE CARTER: —and it's just—oh, but it's just—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —because it stays on—

NANETTE CARTER: —glides.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the surface.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, because of the—again it does have that frosted, you know, surface to grab onto, but just that brush gliding over it, it just—it's a wonderful feeling.

CHERYL R. RILEY: So you could get so many—

NANETTE CARTER: —very sensual—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —textures too—

NANETTE CARTER: —feeling.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —right?

NANETTE CARTER: I get a lot of textures, and some of the textures that I'm achieving, Cheryl, are from different monotype processes, and some of them I have discovered, and I have my own recipes for, which I don't divulge but—[laughs]

CHERYL R. RILEY: But you've written them down so that—

NANETTE CARTER: I don't have to write—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a conserver—

NANETTE CARTER: —them down, no.

CHERYL R. RILEY: A conserver in the future may want that information—

NANETTE CARTER: —well, and maybe I should write them down, but right now, no, I have to be—

CHERYL R. RILEY: You don't have to share them.

NANETTE CARTER: No, I mean—[laughs]

CHERYL R. RILEY: But you should have them maybe somewhere.

NANETTE CARTER: Somewhere so someone else could pick them up at some time. I'm being very selfish about some of these. My feeling, and this is the way I taught also, was when you work with materials over time, you're going to find their limitations, but you're going to find these possibilities, and it's up to you to come up with new ways of painting, of drawing, you know? And I always think of Bryce Marden who would take a stick, a long branch from a tree, dip it in ink, and then draw with it. Unlike working with pen and ink where your hand is close to where that line is being made, that branch is far away, you don't have as much control, and it's this wonderful frenetic line that he achieves, but he came up with that. Now maybe someone else had done this years ago, I know there's not much new under the sun.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Maybe a caveman.

NANETTE CARTER: Exactly, a cave woman or somebody was doing it. But, you know, it took—and people began to look at these pieces and thinking about again, you know, the possibilities. And so that's what I wanted to instill in my students was each one of you can find—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Can be an inventor—

NANETTE CARTER: —something that can—and invention is so important for me, I tell you, it really is, and I think the idea of working on Mylar, I don't know anyone who's worked on it as long as I have, anyone, seriously.

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's not an architect—

NANETTE CARTER: —in terms of painting, that's not an—thank you, that was the next thing I was going to say, exactly, because they were the first to really use it. And let me just say also, I did do my research because again I fell in love with the surface, but the question was what's the archival aspect to this?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Absolutely.

NANETTE CARTER: And I actually connected with—people don't realize this, but there is a small museum/ kind of gallery at Columbia University, which is attached to their architectural program that had been, you know, collecting and handling some of these works since the '50s, since the beginning of Mylar. So I called them, and the woman was very nice and very open about it, and I said, you know, "What's the best way to store it, do you find that the pencil or," and sometimes they were using the rapidographs, you know, "is the ink sticking to the surface over time?" And again at this point, it's probably been in the '90s so that, you know, they've been handling these pieces for 40 years or more, and she said, "Yeah." She said, "The best thing to do is to keep it flat. If you have to [phone rings] roll it—" Lindenhurst, okay. Oh, I don't know what this is, and I can call them back, the number came up. I said, you know, "Well, can you roll it?" and she said, "Yeah, but don't store it rolled for any period of time." She felt that the best thing to do was to keep it flat.

CHERYL R. RILEY: So you could transport it rolled but not—

NANETTE CARTER: But, yeah, don't—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —yeah, store it—

NANETTE CARTER: —really store it away—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —store it flat.

NANETTE CARTER: —for years. She said, "We had not done that, so I don't know what would happen. Everything we have, we have stored in flat files." And so I took it to heart and, um, yeah, and then just—I guess it was really this series I was talking about, *Slightly Off Keel* that was it. I took to this Mylar, the whole series is on Mylar, and I have not gone back to paper or canvas since and—

[00:05:02]

CHERYL R. RILEY: And Mylar had changed in the years too, hasn't it gotten bigger sometimes?

NANETTE CARTER: You can get a—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I can remember when—

NANETTE CARTER: —a really nice—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the sheets—

NANETTE CARTER: —gauge—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —were very—

NANETTE CARTER: Yes, you can. You can get a thick gauge. In fact, I found an outfit in Alabama that will make it however you want it. Some mine is, you know, 52-inch width and then I have them print—yeah, I mean make this as long as—I go into like, you know, 40 feet of it. It's kind of heavy; I have to tell you when they deliver this stuff, it is heavy.

CHERYL R. RILEY: It's on a roll?

NANETTE CARTER: It's on a roll just like canvas, it's on a roll. So 52 inches by sometimes 30 or 40, you know, 50 feet, and they will do whatever you want to do. Feet, no, it's not feet, I'm sorry, yards, I'm sorry.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Wow.

NANETTE CARTER: Let me get this straight, yeah, yeah, and that's why—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's really deep—

NANETTE CARTER: —so damn heavy, oh, it's heavy. But I need it because I'm working large, I'm using it all the time. So I'm using it for everything, for drawing, printing, and painting, you know, unlike, you know, most people would use canvas and then they draw on paper and da, da, da, or print on paper, no. I'm using it for everything.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And it sounds like it's archival that is—

NANETTE CARTER: It is archival.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —good.

NANETTE CARTER: I mean again it's plastic, it's going nowhere, it's why they want you to recycle plastic because it's going nowhere. So I found this place, and again, it will deal with different gauges, you know, and that works out just fine. But it was this—this is a really important series for me to—for one thing because, you know, I was so enthralled with it, and in this series, I know I went for maybe four years to do 107 pieces, again large and small.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You were excited about the material and—

NANETTE CARTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CHERYL R. RILEY: —what it opened up for you in new ways—

NANETTE CARTER: And—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —of painting.

NANETTE CARTER: —at the same time, I'm doing monotypes too not in that series but monotypes on the side, yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Is that informing the other work? Do they—

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, it does—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —have conversations—

NANETTE CARTER: —help.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —with each other too?

NANETTE CARTER: Oh yeah, oh definitely. And again, I'm achieving these different textures by doing these monotypes, finding out different ways of obtaining different kinds of textures and things.

CHERYL R. RILEY: So you'll work in different mediums at the same time on series sometimes?

NANETTE CARTER: You know what, I usually now, I'm basically working with oils and then with the drawings, I'll use pencil, colored pencil, and they have now archival markers, you know, oil-based markers. So that—those are really the only implements that I've—yeah, it's the only thing I'm using right now, yeah. And I'm really hoping at some point to get involved with sculptural pieces, I really am hoping.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Wow.

NANETTE CARTER: I think the work kind of relates to sculpture anyway.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I see them sometimes—

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, I think natural—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they look like models for sculptures—

NANETTE CARTER: —yeah, sculpture, that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you know, or two-dimensional—

NANETTE CARTER: Or something—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —rendering—

NANETTE CARTER: —relief even—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —of what could be—

NANETTE CARTER: —pieces—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But you could see them expanding into three dimensions.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah. So I'm hoping at some point to do just that.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Would it be wood or metal or—

NANETTE CARTER: I think it would be a combination—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —plastic or—?

NANETTE CARTER: —of things. Knowing me, it's going to be a bunch of materials, oh yeah, and new, old, found—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —Formica or Corian?

NANETTE CARTER: —whatever, whatever I could find.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Check out Corian, I bet you would love it because it comes in so many great colors.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, colors.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And I think they have different thicknesses of it as well.

NANETTE CARTER: Also. Yeah. So, you know, I'm—you know, I'm going to be open to everything and anything.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I can—absolutely, that's the—that's the—

NANETTE CARTER: —definitely right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the key to being a great artist is being open.

NANETTE CARTER: Being open. I'm looking here now. Around 2005, this is after—oh, wait a minute, oh, wait a minute, I'm jumping, okay. I did an erotic series of drawings that was called *Picante,* which is saucy, kind of hot, yeah, and those were shown here in New York at a small gallery in Harlem. And *Motion Cleansing*, oh, I did a small series, I guess there were probably about 30 or so in that series called *Motion Cleansing,* but my whole idea was that maybe through water, we can wash away some of the mess that we have out here. It was just a way of, you know, getting rid of the craziness of the time. And I think some of it like *Slightly Off Keel,* you know, coming into this new millennium, people were coming up with some strange ideas. Things were beginning to percolate in terms of folks.

[00:10:03]

I think they were scared that, you know—what was it—Y2K that the banks weren't going to have everything situated that these—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, that power was going to out with it.

NANETTE CARTER: —power and all this stuff, some people were moving down to Florida because New York was supposed to be messed up, and it was just some crazy things were beginning to happen, you know, in this country—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And none of it happened—

NANETTE CARTER: —and all over the world, you know? It never happened, everything worked out fine. But this idea of cleansing some of the—you know, even the historical

questions about this country, you know. And I—I say questions only because we've never really fulfilled any of these ideas that are in the constitution and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because the time they were being written—

NANETTE CARTER: Well—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they were being written by people—

NANETTE CARTER: —white men—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —who were doing the opposite.

NANETTE CARTER: —that's right, had slaves, exactly. And fornicating with the slaves and having babies—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But at the same time—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —saying they're not—

NANETTE CARTER: But—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —not—

NANETTE CARTER: —you know, they're not—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —full humans.

NANETTE CARTER: —real people, no—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they're not full humans—

NANETTE CARTER: —no, exactly, and in the meantime they got babies—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But—

NANETTE CARTER: —running around—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and I just haven't seen that happen—

NANETTE CARTER: —the estate, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —where gorillas could have a child with a human, you know?

NANETTE CARTER: Well, no, no—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —like so I don't know.

NANETTE CARTER: No, and it talks does everything and things and everything else, that's right. But anyway, you know, so anyway, that was—I know that was a series. And again *Motion Cleansing,* that's 2002, then another series was *Fluid Borders.* I think I was really looking at—and it really was, kind of, the beginning of a new kind of migration that was going on throughout the world. Folks, you know, not being happy in Central America, in South America, Mexico. You know, I had a Mexican student who told me, "I am so tired of the people in the US talking about America, America." And he said, "And I know they're not talking about me, but I live in America, and there's a South America too," you know. We took on this idea of Americans as just being US—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the United States.

NANETTE CARTER: —yeah, exactly. Canada is a part of the continent, you know, and it was just that kind of frame of mind, the way that we think about ourselves, you know, and the way that we name things about our—you know. We again are this empire—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Well, yeah, I always had this issue with Africa being spoken of as a country and—

NANETTE CARTER: Shh, no.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and—rather than as a continent.

NANETTE CARTER: —a continent. These are nations, different nations—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That they really could pretty much hold all of the continents on the earth in Africa.

NANETTE CARTER: It's huge.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But you—they'll say—

NANETTE CARTER: Different languages—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that went to Virginia and Africa.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you know?

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, I know, exactly, yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Like they're the same thing.

NANETTE CARTER: But that's what we do, isn't it? I don't know, you know, this—and the gall, you know, of saying—so anyway, this idea of *Fluid Borders,* which of course even today we're seeing even more of, and the question as to, you know, how do we deal with these borders.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Why do—do we need—

NANETTE CARTER: Especially—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the borders.

NANETTE CARTER: —with COVID now also, do we test people before they come in, can we test people—can we do it, can we—? Is it enough that you're leaving your country because of gangs, gangs for what—gangs that are dealing with narcotics and fentanyl and—that we're purchasing, you know? Of course, they're running away from that, you know. Your children end up being soldiers for these gangs, you know, but who's causing all this? The United States, we're buying, we're purchasing the drugs.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And if people had no other—

NANETTE CARTER: It's crazy.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —options to make a living—

NANETTE CARTER: —to make a living and to live and to live—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —then you—

NANETTE CARTER: What do you do?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they're going to have to—they have to eat.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. That's right. So, all right, let's see, moving on here. Yeah, I'm going to come back to some of the travels because there's a lot of traveling that's going on all through this, and I have to say traveling—

CHERYL R. RILEY: You notice, it's one of the things.

NANETTE CARTER: Yes, it's so important, I'll tell you because it really does feed my—not only my ideas and themes but also my textures, my colors, my everything—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Absolutely—

NANETTE CARTER: —you know? And—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_3of4_sd_track06_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —it's such an amazing planet to behold and it just—I really feel, Cheryl, if everyone could travel—

CHERYL R. RILEY: It would make a difference—

NANETTE CARTER: —it would be a different planet. If we could all go to Africa and meet these people, just brilliant, beautiful people—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But travel and be out in that world.

NANETTE CARTER: In that world.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Don't go to—

NANETTE CARTER: No, no, the hotels—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —some reserve—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and you're—

NANETTE CARTER: —exactly—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —like—

NANETTE CARTER: —and that's it. You know, meeting the people—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you know, yeah, really—

NANETTE CARTER: —seeing—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —actually—

NANETTE CARTER: —the people, getting into the culture. I'll never forget this woman said, "Oh, you know, we have the ballet and da, da, da, da, da, but poor Africa what got—?" Dancing is so integral in Africa, what are you talking about? No, it's not called ballet—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Music, music.

NANETTE CARTER: —but my goodness, dance and movements, and look at what the young people are doing now, all of it is literally just taking right from Africa. The African movements now are now our dance the movements; they're the movements all over the world.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Weren't they even when we were younger—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh my God.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —remember there was a dance called the Watutsi—

NANETTE CARTER: Watusi—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —like the—

NANETTE CARTER: —that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they were always—

NANETTE CARTER: —that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they—it's always—

NANETTE CARTER: —that's' right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —been in there, Africa—

NANETTE CARTER: In the African community—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the—that part of the West Africa has always had a huge—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh boy—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —influence in America, the foods—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the music, how people dress, everything comes from that—

NANETTE CARTER: But now Watutsi, actually I think those are—those were around Rwanda, so they were over on the east side. You know, Watusis—Tutsis, the Tutsis were of course were in Burundi but—and Rwanda. But so, yeah, traveling, again, we'll come back to that. I'm just—I'm going to try and move on here in terms of my—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Travels is—

NANETTE CARTER: —my work.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —one thing that I see happening a lot, and water comes up a lot for you, Nanette—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh yeah, it has—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Water in so many ways from the sailing to—

NANETTE CARTER: —the cleansing—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the cleansing to even—

NANETTE CARTER: —*Fire, Water*—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —some of the names of your—the series.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that you've undone.

NANETTE CARTER: No, water has definitely been—

CHERYL R. RILEY: The influence—

NANETTE CARTER: —instrumental—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that it's had on you, you know? Being on a boat on water, swimming—you—I know you're a big swimmer, you spent a lot of time on beaches—

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah I love the beach—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —in your life, you know?

NANETTE CARTER: But—and I'm also an Aquarius.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh okay.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, so aqua, water is in there, it's always been in there. You know, again, I just—I keep on thinking about, sort of, the power of some of these elements and the power of water. You know, and I think of dams, and I think of the water rising, Louisiana and just, yeah, the surface of this earth is water—we're water, we're, what, 70 percent water, just it's in us, it's something that we need to cherish, make sure it stays clean. I mean that's another thing that's a real big to-do here—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Survival—

NANETTE CARTER: —with the climate and the environment.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And we’re kind of at odds with ourselves in that we're doing so much of

the water and plastic which is—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh boy—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —polluting the water—

NANETTE CARTER: —horrible, horrible.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you know, to—in order to have clean water, you know, right, so—

NANETTE CARTER: Now and the plastic, what people don't realize is how that plastic does leech into the water especially—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's what I'm saying.

NANETTE CARTER: —in hot climates—

CHERYL R. RILEY: It'll affect the water.

NANETTE CARTER: —especially in high climates.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, and it's not good.

NANETTE CARTER: It's horrible, horrible stuff but yeah. And I think this whole idea of just sort of the liquidy quality, I will try to, you know, obtain in my surfaces, you know. You had mentioned this—a piece here that I just finished, and there's I think even this sort of liquidy flavor there also. And then, of course, we come to this body of work called *Aqueous.*

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's what I was thinking about.

NANETTE CARTER: And *Aqueous* is starting around 2005. I had discovered that there was no clinical name for the vaginal lubrication during lovemaking, uh, and not just during lovemaking but during the excitement and what have you from the female. And when I asked my gynecologist—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —what is it called?

NANETTE CARTER: —"Please give me the clinical name that you know," and he stopped what he was doing, he was giving me a Pap smear, he stopped, my legs were all, you know, up in the sun—

CHERYL R. RILEY: In the stirrups.

NANETTE CARTER: And he's like—his jaw dropped, this is a white man, and he even said, and he probably wanted to say this to himself quietly, but he said it out loud, "I have to go back to my school days," and I'm going, Oh shit, if he's not—I said. He said, "Well it's a lubrication," I said, "I've got lubrication in my car, I got lubricants in my car, I got, you know, lubrication."

[00:05:05]

And, you know, we have pre-seminal fluid, and we have semen. We have the—a name for the fluid to make sure that the acid in the vagina is taken care of so that the semen can get to the egg, but we don't even have a name, a clinical name, so I was appalled. And then it was around that time that I had read that they had not been taking women in their research on the symptoms before a stroke and a heart attack. They were only dealing with white men not even Black people who, of course, have high blood pressure who probably had very different symptoms than anyone else. They had not looked at women. So women were going to doctors talking about how their arms were tense, and come to find out, that's the beginning, you know, of a stroke. That can actually be a symptom for a woman, all these different—you know? And that usually with women, "Oh, just go home and take some aspirin and you'll feel better, just you know, the children have probably got you going and you just need to"—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —just get some rest.

NANETTE CARTER: —"lay out, get rest, you got anxious, you know, whatever, this, that, and

the other. So—

CHERYL R. RILEY: There was a prescription—

NANETTE CARTER: —I come to find out—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —here's a prescription for a pain killer.

NANETTE CARTER: They don't even have this for white women. White women don't even—you know, yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: For women, period.

NANETTE CARTER: Women, period. But wait, wait, wait a minute, you know? Their own women, you know, which they hold up as princesses and queens, you know, okay, that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: *Comme ci, comme ça*.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, you know, and that's what the southern gentleman always said though, our white women, you know, that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: As long as they stay in their place.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, stay right there and raise them babies. But anyway, so I got to thinking, You know what, I'm going to do a series and I'm going to name it, I'm going to put a name to it. And I was looking through my thesaurus and everything else trying to come—and I saw, of course being again a, an Aquarius, I wanted something that talked about the fact that this was a liquid, and I found this Greek term—I know most of the terms are Latin, for clinical names, but I found a Greek term that was *aqueous* that meant containing fluid, you know? And I loved the sound of it, I just thought, *aqueous*, I just—it's rich, it's, you know, and I decided okay, I'm going to do this series called *Aqueous,* and I'm going to make the, you know, labia and the clitoris and all. It's going to be huge, it's going to be abstracted, but when you know what I'm talking about, you're going to look at it and you're going to see all that's going on, labia minor, labia major, you know, all of it. And so I started, you know, this series in earnest, and there are probably—I think there are around 60 or 70 in that series—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Wow, I love—

NANETTE CARTER: —again large—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that series.

NANETTE CARTER: —and small—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I love that series.

NANETTE CARTER: —large and small. And some of the vaginas are actually coupled together. Some appear to be dancing, some of them—I always felt that the dancing ones were—might be, you know, our climactic time. I have one that actually has a little bow, it looks as though there's a little bow in the hair. So I—you know, I've just—and there's some that appear maybe a little angry, you know, in terms of maybe the line work that's in it. And I have some that are jumping rope [they laugh] literally. So it's—you know, I just decided I was going to take this vagina and have these different characters in each one of them. Some are really very pretty, some are very delicate, some are extremely strong, some of them are fierce, and so I just—I had a ball—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Just like women—

NANETTE CARTER: I just—yeah—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —just like the female, right?

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, exactly. I had a ball making this series, *Aqueous*—

CHERYL R. RILEY: and what years were they you think?

NANETTE CARTER: But when I would talk—

CHERYL R. RILEY: They still—

NANETTE CARTER: —to people—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —are you still making them?

NANETTE CARTER: No, no, no. When I would talk to people about where they came from, I'll never forget I was in Detroit, and this was a couple. The woman was a gynecologist, a married couple, collectors, Black collectors, and the husband was a lawyer. And when I began to talk about it, they both—kind of, their faces kind of went into kind of a, oh what, you know? And I just couldn't understand.

[00:10:00]

Some people cringed when I talk about a woman's vagina.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But we love nudes, we love female—

NANETTE CARTER: It's amazing—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —nudes—

NANETTE CARTER: —but you don't—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —but you don't want to see that.

NANETTE CARTER: —see that vagina, that right, and you don't want to talk about these liquids that are so important to not just lovemaking but to producing, you know, humans, and this what's been going on since the beginning of time, I mean, clearly. So I just—I think it's actually not as bad today as it was then, again I'm talking 2005, but I was just amazed to see how uncomfortable adults, married adults were. And so I felt like a like in a way, okay, that needs to be normalized too. I mean this is nothing—this has been—you know, every woman's got one, you know just about, I mean—you know. And so that was very interesting to see, that was an education for me, but again I felt—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And none of us—

NANETTE CARTER: —I felt—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —could've gotten here without a vagina.

NANETTE CARTER: —without one. But it all went back to the same idea too though, Cheryl, that women, unlike men, were not even in research material for different areas and very important areas of—

CHERYL R. RILEY: How diseases affect—

NANETTE CARTER: —strokes and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —us differently—

NANETTE CARTER: Exactly—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —than men.

NANETTE CARTER: —all of that. None, you know, and then not to actually have a clinical name for this, you know, you're an ob-gyn, no one ever thought about this? And even we've gone through the feminist movement, no one even—no one—you know, none of this came up? And I just felt like, okay, Nanette, you've got to, you know, this is it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Explore it.

NANETTE CARTER: You've got to name this, and you've got to put this out there, and you've got to get people to think about women and their issues and needs and desires and importance. So that's what that series—it was about a number of things really that were going on in my mind but just being appalled and then also being frightened that, you know,

do we really know what goes on with African Americans and their bodies again, you know, a community that has issues—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because a lot of times, we're not included in the research they were—

NANETTE CARTER: But a community also that has a lot of issues around high blood pressure and diabetes, which can change your body and all of its, you know, nature and cells and all of that. So you need to be researched on the—you know, just by yourselves as Black men, as Black women to see how do these things take hold, what are the symptoms for you to look at, you know, for diabetes even, you know, for high blood pressure, what are the symptoms one should be looking—? Of course what your diet should be too of course. So anyway, it was covering a lot of bases. So again, now that's around—that goes—let see, yeah, you know, I've got to look again to see the number in that series, *Aqueous* but I see—I started at around 2005, 2006, I see shows.

Oh, New—the New York show, when George first opened his gallery in Chelsea, that was *Aqueous*, that series of show there. The whole show was *Aqueous*, and I see that I showed it in Chicago, at his gallery in Chicago.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I feel like I was at that show though. I couldn't—I just remember—

NANETTE CARTER: The one in New York?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —being so affected by your *Aqueous* series when you talk about it—

NANETTE CARTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative], probably the one here in New York—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and how they looked like—

NANETTE CARTER: —in Chelsea.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And I want to—I think that you are, kind of, a fully self-expressed female in your sexuality as well, you know? And I wonder if that has helped you in your broad mind thinking especially having something like this series come forward?

NANETTE CARTER: You know, it's interesting that you say it like that, you put it like that. I guess I've always felt in a strange way that—and I don't know if this is something my parents instilled in me or what, but I really felt like nothing could stop me.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You were what we called the liberated woman, right?

NANETTE CARTER: I really—yeah, and I think my parents, again I saw the way that they treated my sister who, you know, wanted to do several things before she made her final decision on what—we were always told that, you know, there's no limit for you. And hearing my parents' friends trying to—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —limit, exactly—

NANETTE CARTER: —limit their daughters, yeah.

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_2of4_sd_track07_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You know that's extraordinary—

NANETTE CARTER: And questioning—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that you had parents like that.

NANETTE CARTER: Yes, exactly. So I think this was something they instilled in me. I felt that, you know—I just felt limitless. I felt like I could do, you know, that I had the strength and the acumen and the ability to figure some things out. I was fairly independent anyway, and that nothing could stop me. And, you know, it's so interesting that we talk about this because I knew that this point in time was going to come, and I always said to myself,

Nanette, just hold on, just keep working, and maybe it's really better that it happens towards the end than at the beginning because if it happens at the beginning, maintaining that might be too much.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And you get pigeonholed sometimes—

NANETTE CARTER: You get pigeonholed—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —if you do something—

NANETTE CARTER: —or whatever—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —different, then people have a problem with that.

NANETTE CARTER: They go crazy. And—but to build, you know, to build on knowledge and—which is going to happen until you die because there's just so much out here and to travel and to take things in—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and meet different kinds of people—

NANETTE CARTER: —meet different people, see how other women are working their way through their lives, their journeys. You're learning from them, hopefully they're learning from you, and, you know, this reciprocal kind of attitude. I've always had a core of women around me also—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Me too.

NANETTE CARTER: And I saw my mother do it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Me too.

NANETTE CARTER: And I think—I don't think, I know that that has helped because these women are fierce women in themselves also.

CHERYL R. RILEY: We call ourselves a posse, I have a posse.

NANETTE CARTER: We call ourselves the Black Divas. We've had a couple of names, we changed it annually [ph].

CHERYL R. RILEY: A coven—

NANETTE CARTER: But—yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —at one point we were a coven.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, a coven—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Now one of my groups, we're the posse, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, yeah. And so when we do have those low points, we know where we can go.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Absolutely, absolutely.

NANETTE CARTER: You know, our parents are all deceased, you know, but we have like-minded women, and these are all women. They're not involved in the arts, not necessarily, some were actually involved in film in particular, but they loved the arts, and they collect art, and they go to the theater and museums. And so we have these commonalities that we can then talk about and, hey, go to this because I went to that—you know, got to see that or let's go to this together or whatever, and we grow together. And so I have that also, which is so important.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Your women friends—

NANETTE CARTER: My women friends—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and colleagues.

NANETTE CARTER: And I had a sister too who just, you know, and I think I said this earlier, my sister could've done whatever she wanted to do because she was just that kind of person. But it's so funny because although she had the ability to be a scientist, a doctor, a lawyer, she became a lawyer, you know, whatever she—she drew well, she still didn't know what it was she really wanted to do though.

CHERYL R. RILEY: She didn't know her passion.

NANETTE CARTER: She just—yeah, which is amazing because she could—again, she could've gone any avenue, she was just—my sister is really very, very bright, very intelligent, but she never found her passion—

CHERYL R. RILEY: She was older—

NANETTE CARTER: [Cross talk.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: —than you?

NANETTE CARTER: She was like three, four years older than me, yeah, and, yeah, never really found her passion. So I—you know, again I was blessed with that because I knew early on, it was clearly the—nothing else that I could do—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I find that our—

NANETTE CARTER: —yes, there—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —in our especially middle-class Black communities, the conservatism, you know, and she may have found a passion but may have been pushed a little bit away from that by the culture of what a girl could do. Or even though your parents may have been supportive of it, but the full culture of that time for girls was still limiting for women, period.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, I think the other thing that did it was once she had children too.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: And she just—you know, you got children, you got to educate them, and all that. I know at one point she—

CHERYL R. RILEY: The responsibility of it.

NANETTE CARTER: —the responsibilities. I know at one point she wanted to open up a theater that would show avant-garde films, you know. She needed to raise money, she needed capital, she needed seed money of some sort, you know? And I—so I heard her talk about some of these things, but then they seemed to die out, and I wouldn't hear about it anymore.

[00:05:12]

CHERYL R. RILEY: Raising kids is such a time suck.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, it is, it is.

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's one advantage you and I have—

NANETTE CARTER: And a husband—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —we didn't have children.

NANETTE CARTER: —we didn't have children, that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you know?

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, I tell people I'm wedded to my work, I really am—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, I mean—

NANETTE CARTER: —in many ways.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I love kids, and I have a lot of young people in my life that call me their godmother when I'm really not, but that's the best way they can describe our relationship.

NANETTE CARTER: Because you're so close and you're so helpful.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], but I wouldn't—I never wanted to take on that responsibility full time.

NANETTE CARTER: You know, I wanted to take on that responsibility only if my partner was someone who I really felt I wanted to be with for the rest of my life. I didn't want to do it alone; I didn't want to be a single parent. I only wanted to take this on if I had a partner who I felt—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —was going to be a partner.

NANETTE CARTER: —this was it, yeah, we were going to partner in this and was respectful of course and supportive of me as I would be of him, and I never found that, I just never found that. So—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, men aren't socialized to be that way. When you do find one like that, it's extraordinary.

NANETTE CARTER: Well it is, and, you know, we've talked about this before. I think sometimes—that's a whole 'nother—you know, let's not go down there. I'm going to keep on going because—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —we're going to talk about your career—

NANETTE CARTER: —time is of the element here.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —your art.

NANETTE CARTER: So how we've gone, okay, we're good—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Hour, we have, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: Excellent.

CHERYL R. RILEY: We have more than an hour.

NANETTE CARTER: So *Aqueous,* yes, I see 2008 was Chicago, I had *Aqueous* there and then, oh, things began to change. I remember distinctly this is around now 2010 or so, I knew I was done with *Aqueous*, I was ready to move on to another series and began to just, kind of, do smaller series here and there, but I remember one was called *In the Garden: The Animist,* and this I know I showed down in Miami. I opened Jumaane N'Namdi's gallery, this is George N'Namdi's son. I was his inaugural show in 2012, and I did show this group the—I had two groups. There was one that was called *Bouquet for Loving* where I was paying homage to Al Loving, and just this idea, and again this is at the time where a lot of this, um, white insecurity that we see really blossoming forth with Trump, these white males not secure in themselves, thinking Black folks are going to take over, frightened that we've got a Black president who's actually running the country.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And doing a good job.

NANETTE CARTER: He's smart and doing a good job, and he's got a loving family, and all is well in the White House, what's going on. And of course in the halls of congress, Obama is making one of his, you know, state speeches, and a white man yells out, "You lie." And it seemed to me that the language in congress changed, people were calling each other names, things began to happen that we had never seen before.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Civility—

NANETTE CARTER: Civility—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Civility was left behind.

NANETTE CARTER: —that was it. Civility was on the wane. It was sad, and it was scary. I

kept thinking, I just want this man to live, I don't want anyone to kill this man.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Every day—

NANETTE CARTER: Please don't kill this man.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —every day was a terror. Will he live—will he—

NANETTE CARTER: Okay, oh, my God.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —will he not be—

NANETTE CARTER: —his family, his—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —murdered.

NANETTE CARTER: —children.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Will his children—will his—

NANETTE CARTER: Because it was again white insecure males upset that this guy even carried through a health program that was helping everybody.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Them more than anybody because—

NANETTE CARTER: Their wives—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they are a larger part of the population.

NANETTE CARTER: —their children, thank you. And got voted in again, okay, 2008, he came in 2012, he's voted in again. So the *Bouquet* came out about, again, this lack of civility. Someone hands a bouquet to you, it's out of respect, it's out of love, it's out of, you know, understanding what you have done or accomplished.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But also I love that you are giving a tribute to Al Loving.

[00:10:02]

NANETTE CARTER: And then Al Loving—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —who—

NANETTE CARTER: —who—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —couldn't have been a better named person.

NANETTE CARTER: Who was again—

CHERYL R. RILEY: If he was nothing but—

NANETTE CARTER: —he lived his name.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —love.

NANETTE CARTER: He lived his name.

CHERYL R. RILEY: He had—I never saw him without a smile—

NANETTE CARTER: I tell you—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —on his face.

NANETTE CARTER: —and gracious and giving to everyone.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Never—didn't know you from anybody, you come up to speak to him, he'd stop and—

NANETTE CARTER: He was—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —listen—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —to talk to you.

NANETTE CARTER: And if you needed help and he didn't know you, he would find a way.

CHERYL R. RILEY: He was just a—

NANETTE CARTER: He would find—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —he was—

NANETTE CARTER: —a way.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a beautiful, loving—

NANETTE CARTER: He was a teacher.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —person.

NANETTE CARTER: —he was a teacher, he was someone on this earth that just helped so many souls all ages, all stripes, all kinds.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Beautiful person—

NANETTE CARTER: And—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —beautiful person.

NANETTE CARTER: —so it was a tribute to him, it was a tribute to the time and that—you know, that hoping that we would not continue down this path. Of course, we had the backlash with Trump, which just exacerbated it but we—you know, it felt like, boy, can we hold on a little bit and bring civility back? Of course, Obama was the most kind and civil person you could run into.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Competent.

NANETTE CARTER: Competent, brilliant man, spoke with knowledge, a sense of history of the country, understanding the history and the complications of this country, and his wife, brilliant—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Picked the—

NANETTE CARTER: Michelle—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —picked a smart—

NANETTE CARTER: —brilliant woman—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —woman, picked a really—

NANETTE CARTER: —brilliant woman.

CHERYL R. RILEY: She might be smarter than him.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, and he said that too, he said it, he said it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I've read their books.

NANETTE CARTER: And for a man—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —once—

NANETTE CARTER: —to be able to say that to the world, you know, you got to be secure in yourself to be able to say that, right?

CHERYL R. RILEY: I think him having grown up in different countries helped a lot, and I

almost consider Hawaii a different country, but he lived in Indonesia for a while with his mother. Like I think—

NANETTE CARTER: He moved—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —being—

NANETTE CARTER: —around—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —in different places—

NANETTE CARTER: —but again but we're talking—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —gave him—

NANETTE CARTER: —him being—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a different kind of—

NANETTE CARTER: —that's what traveling—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —world view.

NANETTE CARTER: —traveling, exactly.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —world view.

NANETTE CARTER: We're back to that again. Yes, it does, and to instill this in a child, this is the way you think possibly this is what everyone—no, not everyone is getting this, you know. But understanding that there are different ways and being respectful of all people, you know. That's what—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And being—

NANETTE CARTER: —he got.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —embedded in the cultures because people can travel to other countries and never really touch the country.

NANETTE CARTER: No, yeah, no.

CHERYL R. RILEY: They can—

NANETTE CARTER: And he—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they can be in their bubbles when they're in other countries.

NANETTE CARTER: And clearly, I mean they were very much involved in Indonesian people because his—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —his mother was—

NANETTE CARTER: —mother had—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —working at a nonpro—

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, but his mother also had a child there with—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Right.

NANETTE CARTER: So, you know, that was what was going on. And the animist part of it because I had that—see, this is again the inaugural show in Miami for Jumaane N'Namdi's gallery. I had the *Bouquet for Loving*, but I also had this series that was called *In the Garden*. Sort of revisiting some of my nature stuff but really trying to point out this idea that indigenous people all over the planet knew and respected and understood, and that is that every natural phenomena has their own life there to be respected, plants, you know, things that are growing especially, you know, the roots. And this idea of needing water and sun, they all imbue a spiritual quality, and that's what animism is about is that every natural

thing, a stone, a tree, whether it's the branches taken off from the mother tree or whatever, it still has a life and neurons and things that are moving and happening and a spirit within it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: With a genetic memory.

NANETTE CARTER: Itself. All of that exactly.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And they worked with nature whereas—

NANETTE CARTER: It did—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the other culture—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the European culture—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —culture seems to—

NANETTE CARTER: Went against tit.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —to want to control nature.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, exactly.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —which is not controllable, and when they tried to do that, what do we have now, these super—

NANETTE CARTER: Messed up.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —storms and things like that—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you know?

NANETTE CARTER: Exactly. Exactly. So that was that show, and I have to say talking about having a show in a particular spot where the work does have to do with the environment, I think the colors of the plants that was very Florida. It had a real Florida flavor to it so that worked out well.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You were in a nature-type phase right then, you know?

NANETTE CARTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CHERYL R. RILEY: You know, the nature of women with the *Aqueous* and then the nature of someone's energy and spirit—

NANETTE CARTER: —and spirit—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —with the *Loving* series and then you went right into—

NANETTE CARTER: —Mm-hmm [affirmative], the garden.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the garden.

NANETTE CARTER: —the animist, mm-hmm [affirmative]. So let's see, that's—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_3of4_sd_track08_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —2012, and, you know, all along, I'm getting—let me just jump back here to grants and things too. Let me just, kind of, talk a little bit, oh gosh, this stuff keeps—oh, it's so much.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah—

NANETTE CARTER: —it's too much.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you've been busy. How many pages is the full resume? I know you don't send anybody that one, but just to—

NANETTE CARTER: No, I don't.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —keep track of everything you've done, how many pages is it now?

NANETTE CARTER: I think it's about 25, yeah—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah, that's—

NANETTE CARTER: —I think it is.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —mine is 24, yeah, that's—

NANETTE CARTER: —yeah, I think it's—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —not surprising.

NANETTE CARTER: —about that. I'm trying to find—let's see reviews here, this, let's see, yes. So, okay at this point, and we're talking 20—we ended around 2012, okay, so at this point, I've gotten a National Endowment for the Arts, that was 1981, and I know why I got that. It's because they were beginning to put Black people on the jury, and that year, they put Bob Blackburn, and for the first time ever, the National Endowment of the Arts gave five awards to Black people. They had never given so many to Black people, okay, Bob Blackburn. That same year, I had gotten the Jerome Foundation, and I think I maybe did talk about that. I got a New York State Council on the Arts, that was the grant that ensured the residency for the Cinque Gallery, that's where the money came from. I also—let's see in '85, I've got a New Jersey State Council on the Arts grants—grant. In 1986, I won a poster design for a design I did—a poster that I did for jazz at Lincoln Center.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Cool.

NANETTE CARTER: 1988, 100 Black Women had a big exhibition in Connecticut curated by Kellie Jones, okay, who is now the head of the Black—I guess it's African American studies at Columbia University. Of course, she's a curator and worked for a minute at Jamaica Arts and a couple of places. Anyway, Kellie Jones was the curator, and I remember I won best of show. She also had decided which one was the best in the show, and I won that.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Cool.

NANETTE CARTER: 1989, I got a fellowship with Bob Blackburn's printshop. 1990, I got a NYFA. It was interesting, 1990 because I was drawing with the pastels and I was painting, I actually applied for both, and they allowed you to back then, and I got both. But they told me, "Could you please—because we can't give you both, okay, we can only give you one." They asked me, "Please if you would take the drawing one because we have so many painters that apply, we can at least get another painter in there," so I took it for drawing, but I actually had gotten both. And I remember that because I remember, there was also—they used to have gatherings of the winners, and maybe they still do, NYFA. And we met some—it was some gallery, we met and had a party and all, and someone came up and thanked me again for doing that because, you know, again, there was just—as usual, there's so many people who were applying in painting, you know.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because that's considered the top—

NANETTE CARTER: That's it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —of art—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —painting and sculpture.

NANETTE CARTER: The crème de la crème, that's right. Then, okay, that was 1990. 1991, I did the—oh, I went to Rutgers for the Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions for printmaking

there, that was amazing. Judy Brodsky ran that program and wonderful. I worked with a woman by the name of—I believe it was Elaine Conti, a brilliant printmaker, amazing printmaker. And then it was that summer I went for the Triangle Workshop. This was my first residency outside, you know, where you left the house, you know. The residency was Cinque, I was working here, and I wasn't teaching for that year, but here, I actually had to go up to Pine Plains and Rhinebeck, New York, and stayed up there with—and this was international. There were artists from— [there was an artist from South Africa, Russia, Spain and lots of Brits –NC]. That was a wonderful workshop that was started by—oh gosh, oh, and I love his work—sculptor, oh [Anthony Caro, the sculptor –NC].

[00:05:06]

CHERYL R. RILEY: Not Martin Puryear?

NANETTE CARTER: No, white—this is a white sculptor, a Brit who started this. Oh, gosh, I'm going to have to come back because I do need to give names, oh my gosh. All right, let me write that down because I have to do that. Oh goodness, gracious, I love his work, I'm having a senior moment here. That was 1991. Oh, and then '92, I went to Pondside Press, which was in Rhinebeck back up there for a resident—a fellowship. I was up there doing prints, got the Pollock-Krasner in 1994, and in 1996, I got the Wheeler Foundation Grant, and I had a residency at West Virginia Wesleyan College. This is a part of the Wesleyan group, you know, there are about 13 Wesleyan colleges I think across the country, and this was in Buckhannon, West Virginia. So I was given a studio, but I was also doing critiques for students, okay, but I was there, I think that was about two or three weeks for that residency.

1997, the Lower East Side Printshop, I was—I did some works there and then I also had a residency at Western Carolina University, in Cullowhee, right outside of Asheville, beautiful Asheville, which, as you know, is a real hotbed for crafts and what have you, an amazing place. Then in 1999, I was down in Philadelphia with the Brandywine Workshop, I did a print there and actually—okay, let's see, we've gone to 2005. I'm going to go on to this next one and come back then. 2007, I was a cultural envoy to Syria representing the USA in the Seventh Annual Women's Art Festival in Aleppo, Syria. And the state department secured a solo show for me in Damascus. I had a solo show at the Kozah Gallery in Damascus, absolutely incredible. They flew me to Syria, this is state money, this is, you know, everyone's taxes. They flew me to Syria and had me in the Four Seasons Hotel in Damascus, stunning hotel. I have photos of this huge picture window looking out from my room at the city of Damascus, incredible. The smells, the aroma, just—it just—everything was just so different and just permeated you and just—oh, incredible. People were respectful of me, I saw no one there who had dreadlocks. I saw very few people my complexion. I ran in the hotel to what was probably a very well-to-do African man who had about five women and several children, they were all there in the Four Seasons. They were the only people of any dark complexion that I saw, and no one stared at me, no one looked at me cross-eyed. I walked around, I felt so secure walking around by myself at night in Damascus in the city, respectful, you know, and had no issues going into stores and restaurants, just incredible. And the food was amazing.

And while I was there, they put me to work. Now, I got paid, they paid me, but, boy, they had a schedule that was tight. I was there to put this show up, and a lot of the works went directly on the wall, you know, but I had assistants. The gallery, I mean I could spend days on this because the gallery was in an old home in the Christian area of Damascus. Now back in the day, there was a Christian area, there was a Jewish area, and then you know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a Muslim?

NANETTE CARTER: —you know, most of the folks were Muslim. Most of the people were Muslims.

[00:10:02]

And they all got together, and they would tell you, many of the doctors were Jewish, the merchants in terms of stores and stuff like that, you had some Jews too, but many of them were the Muslims and the Christians, and everybody flowed. But you had your areas sort of of demarcation, they were delineated truly where you would live. But this, you know, movement—talking about *Fluid Borders*, this movement in between these areas was always going on. And so this was in the Christian area. Now at that point, 2007, there was no longer

the Jewish area. And someone told me there were probably fewer than, you know, 20 Jews living in Damascus at that point, very sad. And Aleppo was the same way. Aleppo had a lot of Jews, Aleppo, the city of Aleppo. Anyway, we have a lot of Jews in Brooklyn that came from Aleppo. When they had that grand migration, they came to Brooklyn, and they built their homes the way that there are there with the second floor juts out into the street. And the reason why they built it like that back in the day in Syria was so that you could see if your adversary was coming down the block. You could get your family and get out the back door or if the tax man or someone was coming, you know, and you didn't have your taxes. Anyway, that's the way they said it, now I don't know that—it may have been a joke, but that's the way they explained these extensions there on the second floor that come out. They're cantilevered out, you know, into the street. But I was treated so well.

So I'm putting up the show, the opening had—one of the news people were there, you know, the TV people were there, the *chargé d'affaires* because at that time, we did not have an ambassador, they had what's called *chargé*, *chargé,* oh, I'll get it, *chargé d'affaires*, I believe I'm saying that right in French. This is someone who, sort of, works in that capacity but is not really a bona fide ambassador. And he was a man of color from I believe Jamaica but, you know, grew up in the States, and he could not live in the ambassador's home, but he had the office, he did work in the ambassador's office. I went to visit him, and they had it so that I did two workshops at the gallery where they had university students to come along with some artists who wanted to learn different techniques for the monotype. The theme for me was that I was to bring new materials—

CHERYL R. RILEY: New ways of making—

NANETTE CARTER: —new ideas—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —art.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, exactly. And the workshops went over famously. I mean the students and the artists got so much from it and really enjoyed the monotype. When I went to visit the university, the university was very much like, um, you would sort of think of the, you know, Europe—European academy. You know, they were doing etching, but it was very tight and very—you know? So to do something that's so loose like the monotype, they just had a ball, so we did two sessions of that. I visited two universities in Damascus, walked around, and they toured me around, and all that. And they also took me to the top artists' studios where these artists were doing very well, selling in other parts of, you know, the—of the Middle East not just in Damascus. They were selling Lebanon, you know, Abu Dhabi, I mean they were—so you know, Saudi Arabia. These with their well-known artists—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Multinational—

NANETTE CARTER: —with big studios, incredible studios. And what was so interesting, Cheryl, was, you know, I went to maybe four studios. Again, they had me going, you know? But a part of this was to have this connection—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Exchange.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, this exchange, which was great. But when I go back to the Four Seasons, I—oh, there's—you know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That work up on the wall—

NANETTE CARTER: —Oh! His work is here and, you know, oh, they had bought, you know, their works were there. [I was talking about an unnamed artist that I had visited and his work was in the Four Seasons Hotel in Damascus –NC]

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because they're—

NANETTE CARTER: So they were—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the iconic—

NANETTE CARTER: —represented.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —artists.

NANETTE CARTER: They were the artists, they were clearly—

CHERYL R. RILEY: The iconic—

NANETTE CARTER: —the art.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —artists of that area.

NANETTE CARTER: Yes, so that was exciting. And then we drove—they drove me to—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_3of4_sd_track09_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —Aleppo, which was incredible to see the land, to go—you know again, you know, I want to see the people, I want to see the land, and we stopped in a couple of the smaller cities, and they had what was supposed to be the oldest water mill in the world. Because Damascus now, let's be real, Damascus is the oldest city in the world—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —on the planet.

NANETTE CARTER: —in the world, that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's interesting, older than the Aztecs and all of that too, all of those cultures—

NANETTE CARTER: Their city—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —all of those cultures.

NANETTE CARTER: —in terms of the city that's still in existence. Aztec cities are no longer—Mayan cities were lost, yeah—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Okay, all right, you mean that still exists?

NANETTE CARTER: That still exists. So it's the oldest city—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I hear that—

NANETTE CARTER: —you see—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —distinction, I hear it.

NANETTE CARTER: —which is incredible. So anyway, this was supposed to be the first water mill, not windmill, but water mill, which was of course was, you know, to deal with grain and what have you, and I saw that. And so the person who drove me there really knew where to stop to just give me a better flavor of the culture and the history, which was wonderful. Get to Aleppo, ah, which of course now I think it's just all been bombed out. I have these great images of Aleppo because I went to the Citadel—oh sorry, I went to the Citadel, which was their old city, which was on this mountain. And at the top of the mountain was what we might call the palace, and all around coming down where the people lived, and there was a moat that was still with a bridge to go over. The water was very—there was very little water there, I must say, but I'm sure during its heyday, you know, it was deep. And to go there and to see the structure because, of course now, the houses aren't there, but you could see. It's almost like going to—oh gosh, what's the place in Italy? This is terrible, southern Italy, Pompeii, you know.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Pompeii—

NANETTE CARTER: —where you're not seeing the—and sometimes you might see a structure that's still fairly much intact, but you know, most of it is—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Most is ruins, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —the ruins say. And so the mapping out of the rooms of their homes and all and how water would get to these homes because these are, you know, again very sophisticated peoples. And some of the wooden structures that were still there—for instance there's this huge door to enter the city that was still intact—oh my God, just, ah. And I'll

never forget being up on this hill, on this—the top of the hill, the Citadel and looking out over all of Aleppo, and you could, sort of, see the modern area the buildings were recently had just been built. But I'll never forget this, Cheryl, I remember hearing the children playing in the playground. It was the middle of the day, school was going on, they were out there playing, and just, you know, it wasn't a bustling city not the way we think of as a city, you know, but it was their city, you know. So low, low homes, nothing was tall, no skyscrapers or anything like that, but beautiful buildings, beautiful, old structures, and just feeling like life was good here for people, you know. I didn't see a lot of beggars, I didn't see—in Damascus, you see maybe a few, you know, really poor, and that's not to say that there weren't poor people there, but you know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And you may not—

NANETTE CARTER: —it looked like—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —have gone to that area. They may have chosen—

NANETTE CARTER: Maybe—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —not to show you those.

NANETTE CARTER: Maybe not—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —parts.

NANETTE CARTER: But I—you know, I think in Damascus I got—I got to a couple areas that were really very—that were down, and I got outside of Damascus where there were a lot of poor people. I went to visit—one of the artists that I went to visit actually was in one of those areas outside of Damascus but Aleppo, and, you know, and just the beauty of this place and the Citadel, which of course was very important to them and to maintain that spot like they have over these years. And then when all the stuff that happened in Syria, you know, where Assad, Bashar al-Assad had just—it was like to hell with my people, I'm going to stay in power. I don't care how many people die, I don't care how many people migrate out, you know, and become refugees. I mean, you know, Jordan took a bunch of people, I think a lot of folks went to Lebanon, Turkey took people, a lot of folks ended up trying to go to Europe. I always wondered what happened to those folks I met, the students that I met, the students that I did the workshop with. When I went to Aleppo, I went to the university that started the whole damn thing. These young people wanted to have a chance to get technology and to expand and to be open and be a part of the larger world. It started in Aleppo, okay.

[00:05:14]

I was there, I went to the student—I went—I had a two-day workshop with the art students there, you know. I remember going to the home of the professor, she brought me to her home, she lived in a—her husband had a very good job, she lived in what I would consider upper-middle-class area, beautiful home, you know, quiet, children, cats and dogs, just lovely life, you know, lovely apartment. They fixed food for me, very open, spoke English, impeccable English, most of the people spoke English. But I remember the students hungering for more, I remember them with me bringing—oh, and I brought Mylar for them to see, I brought oil sticks, they had never seen oil sticks, I brought magic markers. The state department gave the money and shipped some things there, the permanent markers, you know, some of these things I was showing my students here at Pratt, you know, the new, latest things, and they were marveling over this stuff, you know, wow. They wanted to experience all of it, and they were—and the fellow artists, the artists who were my age were up there just like, what, give me this, give me this.

Now the other thing that I did too in Damascus, I gave a talk where they asked me to present female artists of note in this country. And, you know, I had abstract, figurative, photography, I showed a bit of everything.

CHERYL R. RILEY: How did you find the artists?

NANETTE CARTER: These are artists here. They wanted to see the—I'm sorry, let me make this clear, these were US artists. Don't forget, I'm here on this art festival for women that's in Aleppo, okay, and I want to talk about that also, that's why I told you this could go on for days. I'm going to try and make this as succinct as possible. But one of the talks that I gave

in Damascus, they had asked me to talk about the female artists in this country and what they were doing and the themes and concepts, you know, that were behind the work, so that was something else I did.

But now going back to Aleppo, meeting with these students and the professors and all, it just—you know, it broadened my horizons. And I remember distinctly several of the female students who actually came to me and said, you know, "I'm not sure that my parents are going to allow me to become an artist, and my brothers come first in just about everything. I'm lucky to be here because, you know, my brothers had to be educated first." And I remember there was this young woman who did not speak at all, she was very shy, and the teacher did tell me that, you know, she comes from a very strict Muslim home. But this child could draw, and I just wanted to incite in her that she's got to keep this going no matter what because it was her outlet. It was one and—she didn't speak to other students, she just was—I don't know what had gone on in her home life, but this child could draw. And all I could do was to tell her, you know, "Listen you—you're you're on the right track, these are beautiful drawings, you have a real capacity here, and see just try your best to maintain it."

After these different sessions that I would have, the students—and I guess this is a cultural thing too—they would give me gifts. I have a couple of things that I'll show you that they gave me. Someone gave me a jewelry box, a big old jewelry box. I went, Oh, my God, how am I going to get this home. But they were just so thankful and—when I went back to Damascus because after Aleppo, I had to go—but wait, let's stay in Aleppo because I had the women's—I'm sorry, the—it was international. This women's show, and I want to make sure I get the right name for it, was—oh shit, let's see now, it was—it was actually just called the Seventh—it was the Seventh Annual Women's Art Festival in Aleppo, and again it was international, so women were coming from France, parts of Europe, you know, the Middle East, and course, I was the American.

[00:10:04]

We put our works up in this, it was a small gallery. I had these Mylars that went directly on the wall again trying to get people to see some of the different materials and things that are happening. And it was really nice to connect with these other women; it was really quite nice. But something happened, and I was never really clear what it was. There was a gay man who was running this, and towards the end of the opening, they were police, they were plain-clothes government men, and they were very distinct as they stood and didn't look at any art, they just stood at the door. This is towards the end of the opening.

Now the plan is that after the opening all of the women, of which they were maybe a total of maybe 18 women, we were to go out to dinner, and again the gentleman who was running this, you know, had reserved a place and all. We go to this place, we sit down, and these men have followed us there. So there—for the first time that I'd been there, I saw a police state that I've never seen in my life. And guy who was running this who spoke English said, "It has more to do about me than you-all," he said, "They've been following me," and he said, "I think as a gay man and what I've been doing here, and that it's international, someone has said that I need to be followed," you know. And I don't know if the fear was that all these international people might put some ideas in this guy's mind or that he was gay and this is like a no-no or if it was just a combination of all of that.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I'm—I'm guessing it was a combination.

NANETTE CARTER: Because again, I had an opening at the Kozah Gallery in Damascus, and I saw no men. I mean, again, that, you know, reporters were there and everything. I didn't see anyone standing and not looking at art and looking at everybody like, you know, examining; no, it wasn't until I got to Aleppo. And I don't know if maybe there were some student things that were beginning then too in Aleppo back then. But anyway, I do remember that, and I thought that was amazing. And we ate, and those guys just stood there at the door of restaurant the whole time. Left there.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Observing.

NANETTE CARTER: Observing, observing. Went to my hotel, they didn't follow me there, you know. Stayed there and again, I always—I had someone who accompanied me the whole time from the state department, there was another woman. It's so interesting because she was Jewish, and I was not supposed to say that she was Jewish so that she could move

about. So we go back to Damascus and I'm like, okay, I got to go to Palmyra. Palmyra is way out in the desert. It was the last spot for anyone who was going over to Asia. This was the last area you could get water and, you know, get your camel or adjust it and get everything ready. It was also a trading post. Palmyra is where Queen Zenobia reigned. So I said, "Listen—" They gave me one day off, and every day was filled with something, they gave one day off. I said, "I'm taking the day off, what do I do?" The Four Seasons Hotel said, "We can get you a driver and a guide who speaks English." It was like, you know, $50 for the day, that included my lunch and everything in a Mercedes Benz, I got to do it, I'm going to Palmyra, I want to see Zenobia, I want to see what's going on. We drive out there, which is like about a two-, two-and-a-half-hour drive. I'm back again out in the desert driving, which I love. I can see the land and see what's going on, see how people are living. We go to Palmyra, the graves are incredible, the structures. Now Zenobia had befriended the Roman Empire, so you saw a lot of Roman—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —influence—

NANETTE CARTER: —kind of influence—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —in the architecture.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh yeah, you did. But like Cleopatra, Zenobia could ride a horse, she could, you know, fight. They loved her, and the imagery of her was, you know, maybe even dressed in the, you know, fighter's gear or whatever. But she was fierce like Cleopatra, but her soldiers loved her and respected her.

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_3of4_sd_track10_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: But like Cleopatra, the Romans came in and did her in. Oh, that was her demise, that was, you know. But you almost had to befriend, that was the—you know, again the empire, you know, that was—

CHERYL R. RILEY: They had the power—

NANETTE CARTER: —it, they had the power. And—but seeing, and some of the sculpture even in Aleppo, the faces were destroyed because Muslims don't believe—they don't want any kind of idolatry, you know. It's Allah and you can't—there's no way you can show Allah but—and I guess, and I don't know what period this was, but, you know, there was clearly a time where they just—even when she was on a coin, they might destroy—you know, take the face out or something, but she was on coins. But of course I heard after this war, the Syrian war, this recent war, they ended up tearing a lot of that stuff up. And I do have pictures of that too; I have pictures of Palmyra. So anyway, that was wonderful. Oh boy, we're taking so long on this stuff, okay, we got to move on.

So now going back to the solo shows so that we can, kind of, figure this out. How are we doing timewise?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Well, we got about 40 minutes right now on this tape.

NANETTE CARTER: On this one?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

NANETTE CARTER: Okay. So I ended in 2007, and that was the Kozah Gallery in Damascus, my solo show there. Okay, right, so *In the Garden* in Miami was 2012, so. I'm just going to jump to 2016 because I have a solo show in Japan. And it was because of this residency that I had at Lafayette College where I met Curlee—oh God, here I am with names again, mm, oh gosh, and I may need to come back at some point to get these names straight because this is terrible—Curlee Holton who was running their—let me get the date on this—yes, Lafayette College. He was running the Experimental Printmaking Institute, which had been in existence for a long time. Anyway, I got a fellowship, there was a residency, and the way we did this was I would go out and stay maybe three or four days and then come back here and then go out. So I wasn't there the whole time just, you know, like a three-month time or two-month or two-week time. It was just me kind of going back and forth and doing these prints.

And Curlee had made this connection with this Japanese gallery in Osaka where he was sending his prints to exhibit in this gallery and selling the works. Now when I got to this printmaking workshop at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, Loïs Mailou Jones had been there, Mel Edwards, Al Loving, Chakaia Booker, I mean just an amazing array of Black folks over—oh Elizabeth Catlett. So he had their pieces because, of course, you know, with prints, you have multiples, they would keep some to sell to keep things going. They had a house for the residents and then they had this whole printmaking building where the students and the college would come to practice printmaking, but this was also where there was a small room on the side for the residency. And you had one of the professors who would help you in your residency and making your edition and so it was really amazing, and again, well known across the country. Curlee had really built this into a formidable atelier. And he had known Bob Blackburn, had come out of that existence, saw how he ran that and sort of brought that to Lafayette College and really had made a mark for the college there.

But he had been showing these prints and students' prints too in Mexico, he made connections with galleries in Mexico, and Japan, and I think other parts of the Americas.

[00:05:10]

But this Japanese connection when I was there working, he said, you know, "I think your work would do really well in Japan, and I want you to meet this woman," oh gosh, this is terrible and I probably should've prepared for this too—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But I can—

NANETTE CARTER: —with names.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I can see how Japan—

NANETTE CARTER: Yukiko, Yukiko, exactly—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —would be welcoming of your—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh yes, but—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —of your style.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, my first show, I mean we sold, and the biggest piece sold. I didn't think I'd sell a big piece, you know, they don't have a lot of—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —big spaces—

NANETTE CARTER: —wall spaces, but this guy bought it for the lobby of his apartment building that he owned, you know, and things like that. It went over really well. Yukiko], oh gosh, I'm going to get—oh gosh, I'm going to have to come back with names. And so that went over—so that was in 2016. Now again, I had this residency at Lafayette in 2015 and 2016 and my show, my first show in Osaka was 2016, my first time in Asia, I had never been to Asia. Kenny my partner went with me, he had been to Asia before but not Japan, so he was really interested in going, and we had a wonderful time.

We did a—I'll just talk real quick about this trip. I'm not supposed to talk about the trips just yet, but this was a trip where we went to—of course to Osaka for the opening, but we ended up going to the old capital, the first capital Nara, and that's where they have the Tōdai-ji temple. This is a temple I've been looking at since I was a child looking at *National Geographic*. That's where they have those—the huge Buddha, humongous Buddha, what they call the largest wooden, oldest structure on the planet is this Tōdai-ji Temple, this wood temple that's still there, huge, humongous housing this huge Buddha and all of these guardian figures all cut out in wood that are humongous, oh, my gosh. You know, you have the Buddha, the bodhisattvas on either side, you know, the lotus plant, all of the—and everything is huge in this wooden structure, absolutely to die for. So we went to Nara, had a great time there, and then we also went to Kyoto, which I fell in love with. Kyoto, I could do a residency there, I could stay for a period of time, Kyoto is a beautiful city, I gather a little expensive but you—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Japan period.

NANETTE CARTER: —yeah, yeah. Osaka is more affordable in terms of the cities. It's an

industrial city, it really is. It's—there's something a lot—a little bit hard and harsh about it, you know. Kyoto, they have so many temples, the silver temple, the gold temple, the that, there's temples all over the place, the food is wonderful. And then we went to Tokyo, we have to go to Tokyo and went to Blum. There's a—one of the galleries—oh gosh, what's it called—not Blumhalmen but Blum Poe, Blum & Poe. They had a gallery there in Tokyo. I went to as many galleries as we could and museums. The museum in Tokyo was wonderful, and again the food, you know, the food was just amazing. So we had a good time, it was a good time, but anyway moving forward. Oh, my gosh, it's 1:35, I think it's almost lunchtime too. When we stop this, we should eat.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Okay.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah. So that was 2016. 2017, I had a residency in Perugia, Italy, and this was actually in a gallery, Alessandro Berni Gallery in Perugia. Again, that's where I had lived when I was studying abroad my junior year, so I went back to Perugia. I hadn't been to Perugia in 40 years, ah, it was amazing to go back, I love that city, it's a gorgeous hill city. And that—that's a whole another travel thing too, which maybe I could go on and do real quick and then we'll take a break. That was—yes, the gallery was humongous, the ceilings were maybe, you know, 25 feet tall, and I worked in the gallery. My studio was actually in the gallery, and then at the end of the residency, I had my show, and this constituted my first solo show in Europe, again this is 2017.

[00:10:18]

And that year, that particular time, we did get to Venice, and we went to the Biennale where Mark Bradford was representing the USA in the USA Pavilion, and what a time to be there. It was just glorious seeing his work there and what he had done to the Pavilion, just brilliant. There were so many wonderful women that year. I think they had said that it was the first year where so many of the countries had sent women to represent—to represent them. Gosh, and I'm so bad with names, and I should've—okay. Then we went to Vienna, we took—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I think you're doing really great with names.

NANETTE CARTER: No, no, this is—these are some names. I would love to be calling out some of these women who—there was a wonderful woman from the UK whose work I really liked, sculpture. Anyway then after that, we went to Vienna, which was great, you know, I got to see of Egan Schiele's work and Bruegel's up close and personal and Gustav Klimt, and the whole gang there, which is absolutely incredible. And then we went to Prague, gorgeous city, we went to Bohemia and so it was—that a good summer. We did quite a bit that summer traveling, and that was 2017. And what do we have now? We still got a little more time, right?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, I had 27 minutes on here, and this one, it seems that—like I guess that's the time that has—

NANETTE CARTER: Where, which one?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —elapsed. But I'm—

NANETTE CARTER: I don't know.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —worried about this 12 minutes, seven, eight seconds is going up though.

NANETTE CARTER: I don't know.

CHERYL R. RILEY: So, yeah, anyway—

NANETTE CARTER: But you're hearing me—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I had given us—

NANETTE CARTER: —you're hearing me and so that's the main—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I had—I had—

NANETTE CARTER: —thing.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I had enough time, I mean period.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, you got it on there.

CHERYL R. RILEY: So yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative], okay, so it was 2017. Oh, and then, yes, 2018, I had this show at Skoto Gallery.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], I feel like I went to that.

NANETTE CARTER: —in Chelsea. You did, you came. And Skoto, I had shown with Skoto years ago when he was in SoHo, and I had approached him really two years before that because George closed his gallery. I no longer had a gallery in New York, I was very upset, and so I had approached him maybe during that time I was doing, yes, the *Bouquet for Loving*, and they didn't like those works. Skoto and his wife Alix did not get—they came up here, they told me, "No, not interested—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Not right for them.

NANETTE CARTER: —in showing." Mm-hmm [affirmative], very truthful, upfront. And I came back to them because I had the *Cantilevered* series, and they loved it. They came back up, took a look at the *Cantilevered* series, and said, "Yeah, we'd do it." So that was 2018. Now Skoto Gallery shows primarily African artists—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Or Caribbean I think—

NANETTE CARTER: —Caribbean but mostly African, and Skoto I believe is from Nigeria. Come to find out back when I was in Perugia, Italy, in college, he was in Perugia at the very same time.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Isn't that amazing?

NANETTE CARTER: We might have even run into each other, and I went to a couple of African homes because I had befriended. You know, just walking the streets and meeting people of color in Italy in Perugia, you know, a couple of the women invited me up to their homes, some folks were married with children, they were there studying in Perugia, and that there's a very good chance that I saw him.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, could've crossed paths for sure.

NANETTE CARTER: Or something, and the same year 2018, I had the show in Cuba. Now, did I talk about—? No, I didn't, oh well, okay. All right, let's focus on Cuba. In 20—in 2004 and this is one of my trips, in 2004, I went with Ben Jones and probably about—there were probably about 35, 40 of us went over to Havana, Cuba, for the Biennale—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Why am I not surprised that you were with Ben Jones?

NANETTE CARTER: Ben Jones was—

CHERYL R. RILEY: We would have him—

NANETTE CARTER: —was the only way—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —come over for—

NANETTE CARTER: —I could've gotten—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —dinner. And he would only—he would—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_3of4_sd_track11_m.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: —dominate the whole meal, the whole—

NANETTE CARTER: Talking about Cuba.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —about Cuba.

NANETTE CARTER: Of course. That is his—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —every time.

NANETTE CARTER: —love.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I mean he—

NANETTE CARTER: And he's been going there since, I don't know, he's been going there for years—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —clearly loves it. I mean—

NANETTE CARTER: —for years.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —he really—it was—and actually had finally coordinated—we have—we're going to have to go.

NANETTE CARTER: I know. [They laugh.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: Please, Lord, let us go to Cuba.

NANETTE CARTER: Cuba, you've got to go to Cuba. So I went in 2004, and it was interesting because I went with this artist Suzanne Jackson who's doing very well now. She's, you know, from Savannah, Georgia. She ended up teaching there at Savannah School of Art, and I didn't know her work that well then, but she had been around, and she ended up—she was in that show that was at PS1. They were showing artists from California back—from back in the '60s and '70s, and she was in that show, she was one of the few women artists. Anyway, she just received the Anonymous Was A Woman Award with me this year.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Wow.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, so I met her in this particular trip 2004 to Cuba for the Biennale, and what an eye-opener. I fell in love with Cuba too, I mean music is in the streets, every restaurant had a group that was performing.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And artists rule.

NANETTE CARTER: The artists are everywhere.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But—

NANETTE CARTER: Artists everywhere, and the Biennale was fabulous, absolutely fabulous. I've been to three biennials now, São Paulo, which I'll talk about later, and then Havana, Cuba, and Venice. And I tell you, this was just as strong, and at the time, it's very interesting Nari, Nari Ward was there representing Jamaica.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Wow.

NANETTE CARTER: Nari Ward was showing that year. I remember that Mel Edwards and his wife Jayne Cortez came over. It was a great group, there was a lot of artists, and Ben knew everyone, so he took us around, took us to the restaurants, it was wonderful. And I said, you know, I'm going to come back, I've fallen in love. Well, 2014, Ben Jones who'd been working on this project for years got the museum there, El Museo de Bellas Artes [Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes] in Havana, Cuba, the old museum to have a show of African American artists who work in the abstract vein. And the show then was targeted for 2014, and he had put together an amazing group of people. It was Mel Edwards, Bill Hudson, Senga Nengudi, Howardena Pindell, Willie Cole, Victor Davson, and of course Ben Jones.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Wow—

NANETTE CARTER: So this was a group show—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —what a lineup.

NANETTE CARTER: —great lineup, and 85 people went over with Ben on this show. He said

he never taken such a large group in his life. He had been taking people over, this was the largest, 85. So we were in three different hotels all very close to the museum. The museum gave us a big opening, and the lines, Black folks from all over Cuba, the Black Cubans were there. The line went around the block, the opening was from 4 to 7, they were lined up in the heat at 2 in the afternoon; the line literally went around the corner. The museum does not have air-conditioning, they could only let certain numbers in. As soon as somebody came out, they could let you in, you know? It was incredible, we were on TV, we were interviewed, we went to different artists' homes during our stay, and it was just—it was fabulous.

And the curator who Ben had really befriended and had gotten to know and really worked on the show with Ben—

CHERYL R. RILEY: In his charismatic way.

NANETTE CARTER: —Carlos Fernandez, that's right, Perez, he pulled me over and said, "Nanette, we want to have you back with a solo show," and I said, "For sure?" "For sure, a solo show, definitely." He said, "It's going to take a little to put this together, but we're going to do this," and I said, "Great." And I think one of the things that did help was that I was working on this Mylar that again went directly on the wall. They hadn't seen anything like this. People were crowded around the pieces looking and trying to figure out what's going on and that.

[00:05:04]

And I said to him, "We could do an educational component because that's what I do." And later on, I was able to get funding from Pratt Institute, it was a faculty grant, which not only paid for my flight there and some of the hotel but also paid for the supplies that I shipped over for me to work with the—of course the museum had, you know, an educational component, a program, you know. So I was working with the woman who ran that, and we had young people from the age of, I'd say, seven to 15 or 16 because the room I was in my solo show where—that I did eventually have and that was in 2018, that was four years later, you know, after this group show that was 2014. The room was large enough, we could set the tables up for the workshop to be in the room where my work was. And—

CHERYL R. RILEY: How wonderful—

NANETTE CARTER: —the students were there—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and how—

NANETTE CARTER: —and the students' parents came because they wanted to see what the hell was going on. I had the parents drawing, I had the students drawing. We had to bring another table in, it was a lower table, so we had the young people because they had to be on their knees, you know, the older people couldn’t—the teachers, the art teachers in the museum were there drawing. I had brought Mylar again, the oil sticks, the magic markers, but I had so much of this stuff—again this is all from a grant from Pratt Institute—a faculty grant that it was enough to leave behind even. You know, after they had done this workshop, it was enough for them to continue to work.

But now back to 2014, I also want to say that Ben Jones who is an amazing, organized artist here, he put together a beautiful catalogue, and Naima Keith wrote in the catalogue. And of course, she ended up going and becoming the head curator at the African American Museum in California, and now, she, I believe, is head of education at LACMA. But at the time, she was working at the Studio Museum in Harlem, so Ben was able to get her to do the catalogue. And we had Alejandro [Anreus]—oh, gosh, what's Alejandro's last name—oh boy I have to get back on that also—Alejandro who used to work at the Montclair Museum who is Cuban, American Cuban—Cuban from, you know, United States citizen. He wrote in the catalogue along with the female director of the museum. There was a female director of the museum there at the time. So, you know, we were all excited. The catalogue is beautiful; you know; we had to ship those. I think he had those done in Spain and so they were shipped to, you know, both Cuba and the United States.

So Ben had organized all of this, just incredible, and again organized for these three hotels to take 85, and these were—it was a mix of people. These were white folks that had come over, you know, all types of folks were coming, a part of this group. A lot of them were from university museums, I know we had a woman from Morgan State—you know, a Black college,

one of the HSBCC, historically Black colleges and university. She came from Morgan from their museum, anyway, just a wonderful array of folks. So I believe we were there for about, even from five to seven days, so it was a nice stay. And we visited—again, you know, 85 people, kind of hard to do this, but we visited different studios and all, which was great because people ended up buying a lot of the art too, you know, a lot of the Cuban artist's work. The opening was choreographed so that this other group that was traveling to Cuba—Ben knew this other group that was—so that they would be there at the same time, and I knew some people that were in that group also, some Sag Harbor people in fact, had come from that group, so the opening was great. Ben again flew some of American—a couple American musicians.

[00:10:07]

Steve Colson and his wife Iqua came over and performed in—outside the museum there. You know, there was food. There were some Cuban musicians that performed with them; they had to rehearse beforehand. I mean Ben just did an amazing job, just incredible.

CHERYL R. RILEY: He's—

NANETTE CARTER: He's incredible—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —incredible.

NANETTE CARTER: —incredible. So again, they asked for me to come back, we did this solo show in 2018, and I took about nine people over with me. Luckily, I had a friend who just moved to Havana, one of my collectors, lived in a penthouse, a beautiful apartment building right near what was the embassy, American—United States Embassy. At the time that we were there, no one was in it. Since then, I think they have begun to put people in the offices there but—although I think maybe Trump ended that, anyway. No, no, were there people there? Maybe there were people there when I was there. 2018, that was Trump. Anyway, he had this penthouse apartment, so we had a big party there, which was a lot of fun in this penthouse and went to the beach and did the whole thing.

So anyway, 2018, that show went really well, and again, a lot of the Afro Cubans were in the house for my opening, oh yeah. It was a great opening, the TV station was there, I was interviewed, the whole thing. I gave a talk at the museum, and it worked out, and Ben was there too, Ben did come, and Ben brought people too, you know, Ben always—

CHERYL R. RILEY: He knows half the Cubans, he—yeah, he knows half of the people there.

NANETTE CARTER: No, he brought some people from the States too, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: But he I mean just—

NANETTE CARTER: —and then he knows Cubans—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —he's—

NANETTE CARTER: —oh, no, no, that he does.

CHERYL R. RILEY: He got us into a lot of studios and things when we went there and museums and things, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, yeah, he's incredible. But we ended up staying because it took me a while to install that show. Kenny and I stayed for 12 days, but again this was late August, you know, the show was up September, October, I went back in November to take it down. So I've been to Cuba now several times, hooked back up with my friend who's living there, which was very nice. Yeah, and I would always go back, and, you know, when I get back into these travels too—Kenny and I after 2014, after that group show, we went back that very next summer in 2015, but we went to the other end of the island. We went to Santiago de Cuba—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], which is where the—

NANETTE CARTER: —which is the old—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —Black people—

NANETTE CARTER: —capital, oh boy—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and—

NANETTE CARTER: —yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that's where the Black people are, right.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, that's a whole another story.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And Matanzas also I think—

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, we didn't go to that area. No, we didn't go there. We—this—we flew in into Santiago, we didn't even go to Havana that trip, we flew into Santiago and stayed two weeks. Kenny doesn't like to go somewhere and just stay for three days, you know, and jump around. He likes to go somewhere. I mean we've—we moved around. But again brother Ben, Ben Jones gave us names and connected us—

CHERYL R. RILEY: He had laid out—

NANETTE CARTER: —oh my—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the path for you.

NANETTE CARTER: —God, he did and there was one woman in particular, she took us all around, and she drove us to the beaches, and just we met so many different people and did so many different things. We met a theater group, they had just built a new theater, and we saw one of their first performances, just, you know, amazing experiences. But Santiago is very different from Havana. It's actually—I—there were times I was actually a little frightened. It's heavily mysterious, there are things that are going on there you just don't know. Spiritual activities, things that—we went somewhere, we loved to walk—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because the African culture is still much—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh man—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —stronger there, right?

NANETTE CARTER: —oh my God, yes, oh yeah, you see more Afro Cubans there. You don't see as many, you know, of the Spanish Cubans. But we went to a party, and again, this was someone who, you know, connect—Ben connected us with. We went to this woman's party, and her mother was having like her 100th birthday or something, and we went. And the cab drove us, and it was just a straight line, it was a street with—we went to—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_3of4_sd_track12_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —call [ph] it red, you know, it didn't—

CHERYL R. RILEY: There we go.

NANETTE CARTER: That's it, yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You're so good.

NANETTE CARTER: All right, we ended around 2018, yes, we did. That was the Cuba trip and oh, I did go to Osaka, I talked about that. Oh, yes, so that was—okay, so the first time to Japan was 2016, but then the second time to Japan was 2019. And this time, I had a show at the same gallery, Gallery Ami-Kanoko, and it was actually Yukiko who runs that space, she's been there for many years. In fact, her parents, her mother ran the gallery first when she was younger, and so it's been there for a while. It was very interesting because it was in sort of the old section of Osaka, it was an old building. So I have a second show there in 2019, and that year, there was a gentleman who was a professor in Kyoto. It's so interesting. Oh, this was a dear friend of hers, that's right. Okay, so I should say this, I should tell you also that when I went the first time in 2016, I also gave a talk at the University of Kyoto, and this was Yukiko's dear friend. Yukiko ran the gallery in Osaka, her dear friend is a professor artist

who also knows Curlee Holton who again connected me to the gallery in Japan. They all know each other, and in fact, Curlee made sure that this professor—whose name escapes me right now, and I do have his book over there I can maybe get it—had this professor show at Lafayette. So anyway my first trip to Osaka, I did speak at the University of Kyoto where this guy has been the professor for many years, full-time professor, and I gave, you know, a talk, and he speaks wonderful English [Prof. Atsuhiko Musashi –NC]. In fact, he lived in San Francisco for a period of time, so he interpreted my talk. Again that was the first time in 2016.

So when I come back in 2019, now he's opened up his own gallery. What I didn't realize was that his father was a big realtor in Kyoto, owns a lot of land, owns a lot of buildings, he came from money, and I'm going to get his name because we need to have his name. And he with his new gallery, you know, he just opened a space, it was a coffee shop on one side and a gallery on the other, and behind the gallery was a studio. So he had an artist in residence, I had what was the first show there, he had just opened the gallery space, he just fixed it up. And so that was also 2019, so I had two shows at the same time in Japan, one in Kyoto and the other in Osaka. So Kenny and I went over—

CHERYL R. RILEY: How was—

NANETTE CARTER: —again.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —your work received?

NANETTE CARTER: Better in Osaka than Kyoto. I felt that—I'll be very frank, I felt that he did not do enough public relations. The opening was filled with his students, you know, I want some some adults that can, you know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Not—

NANETTE CARTER: —oh, no—[laughs]

CHERYL R. RILEY: —big buyers.

NANETTE CARTER: —you know. And then everybody went over to his café afterwards. He had a lovely spread, but you know, I think there were maybe two couples that came in and that was it, two couples that could possibly buy, you know, and that was it. But the gallery in Osaka like the first time I showed there, we sold, you know, we did okay. You know it took care of my trip and then some, that's always nice.

So that was again 2019; now we're moving up closer to today. My latest solo show right now that's up is at George N'Namdi's in the N'Namdi Center for Contemporary Art. He's back in Detroit proper because he had moved to Birmingham, now he's back in Detroit proper. He owns this building, it's a big building, a beautiful space, and he has a survey—30 years, a survey of my work. Now mind you, most of the work is coming out of his collection, and he bought my work all through this time period that I was there. And I must tell you, 2021, again I was in his inaugural show in 1981, that's 40 years ago—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Wow.

NANETTE CARTER: —all right 40 years ago.

[00:05:01]

CHERYL R. RILEY: Time's flown, huh?

NANETTE CARTER: It's amazing. So again, but this show is covering 30 years of my work. I think of the pieces in the show, of which maybe there were, I don't know, maybe a total of 19, four of them were actually for sale, and they were a part of the *Bouquet for Loving*, some of the larger *Bouquet for Loving*. When I say larger, they were about maybe five feet or so. I did go to Detroit recently to see that. And now of course I have signed this new contract with Berry Campbell, I'm getting ready for the show in 2022, April 28th. I also have a solo show coming up at the Hunterdon Museum in Clinton, New Jersey, called *Forms Follow Function* and then I have a two-person show coming up at the Towson University with the artist Robert Straight, both of us being abstract artists.

CHERYL R. RILEY: What's the date on that?

NANETTE CARTER: The date on that is January twenty-eighth.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —of 2022.

NANETTE CARTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative], of 2022. And the show that's up right now that will come down in a couple of days is at the—at James Madison University. And that's an interesting—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And where is—

NANETTE CARTER: —show—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —is that?

NANETTE CARTER: That's in Virginia, and it's called *Exuberance: Dialogues in African American Abstract Painting*, and it's again James Madison University. It's their Duke Gallery of Fine Art, beautiful gallery, great space. In that show is Lisa Corinne Davis, Rico [Gatson – NC] and—oh boy, it's just a slew of people, who else was in that? Lamerol Gatewood and, oh gosh, and I know I'm missing some names. Oh, actually and I've forgotten this woman's name, [Erika Ranee –Ed.] this is terrible. I didn't realize that Bill Cosby's daughter is an artist. Now she goes by a different name, and she does abstract work. She started out as a figurative artist, and her work is very strong. She's in this show also, some really beautiful pieces, I was so surprised. This is terrible, I'm so bad with names, but anyway, she's in the show too. So it's a nice sort of generational thing, there's a younger group and an older group, and, you know, it just works out great. So that's what's going on right now.

I wanted to just really quickly go back. I had talked earlier about Triangle residency up in Pine Plains, New York, and I was trying to think of the artist who started it. It was the British artist Anthony Caro, wonderful sculptor, and it was actually a group of—of artists, but I know he was certainly the main person. And his own property was right there in Pine Plains, and we did go to visit his home and his studio, he had a huge studio. He does these huge, welded pieces and, you know, the lifts and the pulleys and all that, but he has this property but also a property in England back in Great Britain.

I also had mentioned this catalogue for the 2014's group show in Cuba, and I was saying that it was Naima Keith that wrote in the catalogue and also Alejandro Anreus. And again, Alejandro used to be a curator at the Montclair Museum, I know he taught at William Paterson College and actually still might be there.

I want to go back just a bit again. There are a couple of other things I need to fill in that I think are really important. I was also on the board, I was on the board of directors for the Harlem School of the Arts from 2002 to 2006. Now of course being on the board, I did not have the money to donate every year, but what I did do was for their galas, I would have an auction, and the auctions ended up doing really well. We would make around 25,000 at the auction. And I had people like Vincent Smith, I had Whitfield Lovell, Helen Ramsaran. So I was getting a lot of my friends to—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —donate.

NANETTE CARTER: —put—to donate and, you know, they didn't really donate because what I would tell them, you know, New York has this law here, you know, when an artist donates, they're supposed to only get the cost of materials. Now who knows how much the materials are that went into a—you don't know. You're not sitting there adding up, you know, so much blue or crimson this is—you know, and nobody is doing that.

[00:10:05]

So what I would tell people to do—and maybe I shouldn't say this, maybe it's—I would tell, "It's coming out of the collection of your parents, and they can write off," and that's what I started to do as I was giving pieces. Because as an artist, you cannot write it off, you cannot do that. And I know that that's what several of the people did do, they had relatives and all just saying that it came out of their collection.

But I just wanted to say that also we had probably the last big outing for Gordon Parks. We decided to—each year, we would look at an artist whether it was a musician. Of course, you know, the Harlem School of the Arts, the students there are dealing with photography,

painting, theater, instruments. They have, you know, music rooms that have one-on-one lessons, ballet, I mean it's just—it's amazing, it's all the arts. So each year, we would honor a particular living artist, and one year, I said, you know, "Let's honor Gordon Parks, I know he's up in age, I have a connection, I know who—someone who lives in the building with him, a very dear friend. I think I can do this," and we did it. And—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's a big catch.

NANETTE CARTER: —it was wonderful because it was his last big foray out. But what was so amazing, Cheryl, was not only did he attend and dapper and gorgeous as he could be, you know, that gray hair and that dark skin—

CHERYL R. RILEY: He's such a gentleman.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh man, lovely person. He said he wanted to play the piano. Well, who's going to stop Gordon Parks from playing the piano?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Why would you?

NANETTE CARTER: So he got up and played this beautiful song, you know? And then soon after that, he got very weak and very ill and then he died, but it was like—you know? And I think he really enjoyed knowing that he was helping these young people from Harlem by being there and what have you. And then on top of it, a dear friend of mine Fern Logan, wonderful photographer had put this amazing anthology together of all of her photographs of artists that she had taken of which the one she took of me I think I was the first artist she took in fact, I was like in my early 20s. But she put a book together, and Gordon was in the book, she has Candida Alvarez, Dawoud Bey, Al Loving, Adger Cowans, Ed Clark, Howardena Pindell, just amazing, John Pinderhughs, just amazing, beautiful photos, black and white photos of these artists, Barboza, Anthony Barboza, just amazing. So I got her to donate the books, which we could actually give her, you know, a write-off for that, and I had as many of the artists as I could to sign these four books that we then put up for auction. And of course, I had Gordon Parks to sign his right there at the performance. So we auctioned those off, which was great, you know. But I just—you know, I was very pleased to be there.

I had to get off, I really—it was taking a lot of my time, they actually at that point 2006, they were really in arrears, it was really getting bad there, and I think it was two or three years after that that they almost had to close. And there were a couple of folks that stepped in, actually Bloomberg being one. I believe Bloomberg gave them a half a million to keep it going and then other folks, kind of, stepped in, and they got a board that was a wealthy board, a well-connected board, a board that's connected to corporate life and just—or just had money and so they've been able to maintain. In fact they've got a wonderful director there who's really seeing things through. And so I'm just—I'm pleased that they're still there, it's a beautiful thing and they just improve, they just built onto it. So they've expanded—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That's fabulous.

NANETTE CARTER: —they've expanded, which is great. So I'm pleased with that. The other thing I just wanted quickly, kind of, go back on was this past fall—actually, it was started—really, we started working in the fall of 2020 and this went on into 2021—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_4of4_sd_track01_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: The Art Students League approached me after I was on a panel for the Romare Bearden Foundation. The panel was about Cinque Gallery, and what people don't realize is that over those years again starting 1969, and they went on into like 2004, 37 years or something, or maybe it's—whatever, they showed—they actually showed over—that we could call, that we could actually bring to light because there probably are more. They showed over 415 African American artists, not just in New York because people always think, oh, Cinque Gallery only showed African American arts and no because I was on the artistic board there. We had artists from Texas, we had artists from all around the country because when Cinque moved to SoHo, they were on the same floor as Jack Shainman, so they were in the hotspot. They were right there on Broadway, you know, West Broadway right there on that corner above Dean & DeLuca, hotspot. People were coming in, and then word got across the country, so we were getting—and being on the artistic board, that was our job.

Our job was to look at slides, resumes, recommendation letters and decide on who would be in the shows. And I curated actually a couple of shows myself just alone without the board, you know, just on my own. And, um, you know, it was just amazing how helpful that was to so many folks because again SoHo was hot—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Showing in New York period.

NANETTE CARTER: —you know, and showing in New York City in the mecca there, you know, which was SoHo at the time. So this past fall, fall of 2020 on into 2021, The Art Students League again who saw me at this panel talking about Cinque Gallery got so excited because so many of the Cinque artists and even the founders had come through The Art Students League. Norman Lewis taught there. We discovered so many of the Black artists actually—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Connection—

NANETTE CARTER: —came through that school, and they decided, listen, they approached me, they said, "We saw you, you know, in the panel—" Actually the woman was at the panel and came up to me after the panel and said, "Here's my card, we're going to connect, please," you know. And the director of The Art Students League had me over to his office, and she was there, she was a development director, she had attended the talk, and they said just what they want to do, "We want to do a big splash." Al Loving taught there for a minute, you know, so, and Al Loving was on the artistic board, so they were like, "No, we want to do something, we want to make this connection, and we want to talk about it in terms of a community because we see The Art Students League as a community, and this was a—these were two communities that were actually, you know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —intersecting.

NANETTE CARTER: —interconnecting here and really helping each other out in many ways. And they said, "Listen, we want you to be the program director," and they asked Susan Stedman whose husband was an artist who had shown there and who's an art historian and who writes and has curated before, and they asked her to do the curation of this show. And so it was called, you know, *Cinque Gallery Community of Artists* or something like that. Oh well, I need to look up that and find that, okay, I need to get the exact name. So *Creating Community: Cinque Gallery Artists*. So in 2021, this show happened in the—in the winter of 2021 right during the time of COVID. We had to limit the number of people who could come to the opening. But during the course of the three months that it was up because it was up just like a museum show for three months, we had a wonderful group of folks to come through. And we got three reviews, *Art News, Artnet, Hyperallergic,* and some pieces sold because, you know, in this situation, they're not getting any money, it's—you know, but some things sold, and it just—it worked out well. They put a lovely catalogue together, I did write in the catalogue, of course Susan Stedman did too, and then we pulled two other artists to write. Debra Priestly and I believe Cynthia Hawkins and Howard McCalebb wrote in the catalogue, so it's well documented.

[00:05:03]

But I thought it was a really handsome show, it worked really well, and a part of my programming, I really wanted to talk about some of the other institutions that started during that same time, like the student museum, and then you had Kamoinge, the Black—collective of Black photographers, you know, Ming was in that, she was the first woman of course, but again Adger Cowans, a bunch of folks. Adger was on a—one of the panels with—one of the women who used to be on the board. Pat Hinds was on the board of the Cinque Gallery and then we had the director from the Harlem School of the Arts—oh, gosh, this is terrible—Eric Pryor and then we had Greg Tate to moderate. Greg Tate being someone who deals with social issues and art and what have you and worked for many years at the *Village Voice*. So, you know, I wanted to get that historical aspect to it and talk about how these other groups started back in the '60s and then I brought it up to the present time. And in fact, I had Cheryl Riley to interview the students of color who are presently attending The Art Students League, and they were the most articulate and wonderful, giving group. They were giving them information and their backgrounds and their hopes and dreams and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they were wonderful.

NANETTE CARTER: —what the institution meant to them and again the camaraderie and the community aspect. So you know, it—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Also their reactions to the work itself.

NANETTE CARTER: —and their reactions to the show.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because that was, a lot of—

NANETTE CARTER: —because the—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —was the first time they had seen those artists' works, and they were very much impressed with them.

NANETTE CARTER: And the panel took place in the gallery, so you were amongst those pieces, they were right there with the pieces, which was great. And again, I think this is just a wonderful positioning to have a gallery like that in an institution where people can come in and learn and find out more about all that's been going on in the art world, in the art scene so that worked out well. Then, I also interviewed several artists one-on-one in their studios, and that was nice, so that was a part of the programming that I did, but, yeah, that worked well and The Art Students League I think was really pleased with, you know, all the writeups that we got, the PR went very well so that worked out nice.

CHERYL R. RILEY: It was a beautiful show.

NANETTE CARTER: It was a great show, it was, it was hung well, she did a very good job, yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Absolutely, I wondered if you had had any input in that, but I was there when she was hanging stuff—

NANETTE CARTER: No, no, no, no, no—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —so I realize—

NANETTE CARTER: —that was her—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —she had done—

NANETTE CARTER: And, you know, they have a full-time curator and director, they're full time. Anki King—

CHERYL R. RILEY: There in the gallery—

NANETTE CARTER: —who you met, Anki was so helpful, very kind, generous, lovely person but they've got full-time people there, no, they don't play with that gallery. That's—it's almost like a museum because again they stayed—the show stayed up for three months, you know? And they document, they had catalogues. I went to the next show, they have catalogues all the time, well documented. So that worked out really well. I was really pleased and very excited and honored to actually be asked to help out with that because Cinque meant so much to the community. And again, it brought up so many memories of those days.

And, of course, it was soon after Cinque had moved to SoHo or maybe around the same time that—I guess June maybe was there before Cinque because Cinque moved all over—it started at Joseph Papp's building, it started at Shakespeare & Co., at, you know, Joseph Papp's building, the public theater. Years ago, he gave them a room for free, and the room was small, so they ended up leaving that, they went to another space after—they went to several spaces. At one point they were diagonally across from the Dakota on 72nd Street, that's when I showed with them, and, uh, I guess it was really after that that they moved to SoHo. So it was a great location; it worked out great. Yeah, I was going to move to travel and then that's it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Good.

NANETTE CARTER: Okay? My parents really instilled in my sister and myself this whole love of traveling and what have you. I think the first really big trip we took was 1963 where we drove across the country in our Ford station wagon. And I remember stopping in Wichita, Kansas, we went to Denver, Colorado, for a Jack and Jill conference, and then out to LA, my first time in California for a Boule fraternity conference.

[00:10:13]

On the way back, we stopped at the Grand Canyon, Rocky Mountains, seeing all of this changing of the land, the topography of the land and the colors, I mean—

CHERYL R. RILEY: America is so beautiful—

NANETTE CARTER: —oh, my God.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —isn't it?

NANETTE CARTER: —the Grand Canyon.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Isn't it beautiful?

NANETTE CARTER: The Rocky Mountains, and you can—actually when you fly over, you can really see how the glaciers cut into the land and form these mountains. You can see it going from north to south, you know, you can just imagine these glaciers coming down, just incredible, and I know that that started me thinking about making art around nature, just an amazing planet. And in '67, we drove up to Canada, to Montréal. You know, when we would take these road trips, they were so much fun because my father was at ease, he was—you know, they were away from work, Mom was away for work, and they both were working people. And I remember Dad would dance and just sing and just—you're just—he was uplifted and calm. And so as a child, I remember this affecting my parents, and the joy that they got, I think just—you know, I could—it was infectious. So we went up to Montréal for the World's Fair in Québec—um, well actually, the World's Fair was in Montréal but we went to both Montreal and Québec. And again this idea about driving as opposed to flying, also just seeing people—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And you're seeing the thing—

NANETTE CARTER: —and seeing where people lived and seeing—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —seeing the land.

NANETTE CARTER: —the land, exactly, in a different way.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Like you were talking about, how amazing America is as a continent.

NANETTE CARTER: And, I don't know, I probably already talked about my first trip in the plane I did with my father. I went to Virginia, that was really something, but that was like years before this. So in 1971, this is my first time in Europe, and this is when I was in high school, this is the American Institute for Foreign Studies. I went to study art and art history, and again this was the summer before my senior year in high school, and we did go to Perugia, Venice, and Rome, London, and Paris. And I just remembered some these museums and seeing these works that I have been looking at in and large coffee table books and what have you. And I might have even talked a little bit already, but I had a little thing that went on, a little tryst with my teacher. 1974, [19]'75 junior year, I went and studied, I think I talked about that also back to Perugia again. Jumping 1979, and I think I talked about this also, I went to Mexico with my girlfriends, and one of my girlfriends ended up writing a play about our travel, and I did go to see the play, and it won an Obie Award.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Cool.

NANETTE CARTER: But these three Black women going to Mexico City, San Miguel de Allende where I met this artist Clarence Hagins. Did I talk about that? No? Oh, listen, Clarence Hagins, oh my God, and I wrote all about this, I have it in these books, I'm going to keep these guys because it was so informative. This was the guy—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —those are journals?

NANETTE CARTER: —who—these are my journals when I was—this is again in '79 when we went to Mexico City.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Maybe at some point, the Smithsonian may ask you to give them to you—bequeath them to them.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, I'm going to hold on to them right now, but you're right, maybe later on in my life because I've just—I found them, kind of, you know? I just had decided because of this talk, I felt like, okay, let me go through and see what's here, and I just—I've forgotten I had written so much. But Clarence Hagins was actually an artist who's in San Miguel de Allende and just kind of ran into him there. And, you know, maybe there was something I did want to say. What was it? Yeah, I did make some marks in here. '79, Mexico, here we go. Clarence Hagins, was living in San Miguel. He had left—I'm trying to remember what part of the country he was from. I did look him up, and I found that he just died not long ago like a couple of years ago. Oh, my gosh, and I have this here, you know, why—[inaudible], Aztecs, I wrote down every place we went to, Teotihuacan, but I thought I had something here about Clarence, damn.

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_4of4_sd_track02_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: Okay. Oh, and then—oh, goodness, yes—we met these guys, one was the son of a very famous actor. Where is it about Clarence? Yeah, I went with these friends. Denise Hamilton was working for the New York Foundation for the Arts at the time and—damn. Oh, I thought I had something here I wanted to read, jeez, about him. It's too much to read the whole—here, it is, okay, here we go. So, yes, someone's taking us around to meet people, we go to the marketplace. What town was this? That was in San Miguel, and we ended up going to what sounds—it looks to me, must have been like a café, and there's a Black man there, Clarence Hagans. He's a Black artist, and he's with his white girlfriend. He was in Paris, knew Ed Clark and Beauford Delaney, and had lived in New York. He was quite astounding, and he thought that we were quite amazing, three Black women traveling by ourselves, and he made a great deal of that. But he knew a lot of the artists that I knew, and he knew Bill Hudson, and again I found out—I think he died in around like 2012 or so. So that was amazing meeting him, and I don't know that I ever—I saw his work online, it wasn't a lot of work, so I didn't really get a sense of what he was doing, but yeah, he just—he was an expatriate.

1980, went to Paris alone. I believe at this time—let's see, yes—I have just finished Pratt graduate school because that was '78. I'm now teaching at the Dwight-Englewood School, which I've already talked about. This is 1980, I went to Paris alone, my first trip out of the country for two weeks by myself, and I meet a Black woman from the States, Colleen Goldberg, married to a Jewish doctor. And we'd go to Rheims to have Moët & Chandon, of course, the vineyards, we'd do that, and find out she collects art. She knows some of the artists, she knows some artists in Paris, she loves to come to Paris with her husband. At this point, she is not with her husband, so she's alone and I'm alone. When we returned to the States, she introduced me to Dr. Meredith Sirmans. Now his son is Franklin Sirmans. Now, Dr. Sirmans was an ob-gyn, and Dr. Sirmans was the only Black doctor I knew that was on Sutton Place on the East Side in New York City, okay, paying high rent in his doctor's office, beautiful office. So I decided I'm going to change up, I'm going to go to this man for my OB/GYN work. And I go there, and there's all these female artists on his walls because he barters. So I said, "Listen, I'm an artist—

CHERYL R. RILEY: [Cross talk.]

NANETTE CARTER: —also and I"—you know, again—oh, oh, but let me tell you how I met him; I have to say this. He was apparently on the board of Joseph Papp, and he had some extra tickets, and he was good friends with Coleen Goldberg. And he'd given Coleen a couple tickets, so Coleen brought me along, and we saw *The Pirates of Penzance*. Outdoors, I met Joseph Papp, you know, and that's when I first met Dr. Meredith Sirmans, and he was this gorgeous, dark skin Black man, very much a gentleman, very handsome. And of course then later on, he does buy—I mean he doesn't buy, but we barter our works because I did have him as my ob-gyn. He was a great doctor and he bought several pieces—I mean, you know, we bartered for several works. And I met Franklin when he was really young, but because he was so young, I was just, oh yeah, he's a cute guy, and that was that but then found out he had dated and had lived with Candace Hill-Montgomery, another artist friend of mine, and I didn't know about that. And she actually, kind of, helped to raise her kids and his kids. And so, you know, the six degrees of separation is really just about two degrees especially in the Black community, but all this overlapping stuff began to happen and then, you know, come to find out, his son really gets involved in the arts.

[00:05:04]

Now Dr. Sirmans was married several times, and I know one of his wives, and I'm not so sure if it was Franklin's mother, but one of his wives was an art historian and ended up teaching I think at Howard or somewhere in the Midwest, and I'm sorry, I cannot think of her name. But I do believe that seeing all this art in his house because some of my work was in the house and in his office, and seeing all these women and—something caught on for his son.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Sure.

NANETTE CARTER: And in fact when I went to the memorial just a month ago now for Ed Clark at the Whitney, Franklin spoke, and he says—I did not realize Franklin was an intern with Ed Clark and really learned more about painting and the actual processes of painting. And he spoke to it, and he was just, it was beautiful what he—you know, how he talked about Ed and how he was learning about this, that, and the other and—you know, managing, you know, one's business and all that, it was fantastic. So anyway, that happened for that trip, going alone. I think when you travel alone, you end up almost having to meet people, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: You do, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: You really do.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You're more approachable.

NANETTE CARTER: You really are and it was just—it was fantastic, it was a great trip, I had a lot of fun. 1985, I went to Greece with my parents. My sister and her husband, painter Robert Freeman and their three daughters lived on the island of Spetses for a year so that he could paint. His gallery sent him there, paid for everything knowing that they'd get the money back when they would sell these paintings and say that this artist went to Greece, and these were done in Greece with his family and the whole thing. So we fly over there, we ended up going to Athens, of course, we flew into Athens, saw the Parthenon. We also actually rented a car and went to Delphi or Delphi however you want to pronounce it and went to the temples and museums there and then we got on a hydrofoil to go to this island of Spetses where they actually lived. And this was during the Christmas vacation, so we had Christmas in Greece, which was really very special and very interesting. And we did go to one of these places where you danced and you throw the plates on the floor and the music and the this and you're all doing these different, you know, kind of steps surrounding the circular motion, and it was fun, we had a lot of fun.

CHERYL R. RILEY: How old were you then?

NANETTE CARTER: I was—1985, so I'm out of college, I'm still teaching at Dwight-Englewood School, the private school. And I remember I was dating this guy, Harry Smith who really, kind of, got me into sailing. He had a sailboat up in Pelham Bay here in the Bronx, and actually he—with Morgan Freeman, and Morgan Freeman had his boat there too, and they sailed together, like we would see Morgan. Morgan had a bigger boat than Harry did, but—yeah, I ended up with a lot of these men—and then my brother-in-law and my sister sailed and they have a sailboat, so I've always ended up with—it seems like men who were very much about, you know, the water and the sea and what have you. But Black sailors, you don't get a lot of Black sailors—and back then, I mean there are more now, back then they were very few.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Absolutely.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, and to actually own your own boat and so, you know, again my brother-in-law, and that was another reason why they wanted to go to Spetses; my brother-in-law knew that he'd be able to get some sailing in. Now the waters are really rough, very different, but he loved it, you know, that was great. So that was 1985. Now, that was the Christmas so that was winter, but the summer of '85 is when I first went to Brazil, Rio de Janeiro. And I went with my girlfriend who is an endodontist, Michele Lapeyrolerie, this is someone I had gone to elementary school with and had maintained a relationship. And I was saying earlier that's when I met the artist Ernani De Silva who knew the museums to go to go because he was an artist, again knew where to go and took us around. He was really very gracious in that way, and of course, that whole series *Illuminations* came after that. But let me just say very quickly, we were with him, we went up to a samba school, which is one of

these outdoors, kind of, performance places like a band show, you know? So the band has kind of got a covering, but the rest of you are outside.

[00:10:00]

But it was a situation where it didn't start until 10 at night, but you had young kids, it was a family thing. You'd get a table, you brought your own food and drink, the bands would play one after another, no intermissions, girls would come out and dance doing the samba, beautiful half-, you know, dressed, very scantily clad ladies, beautiful bodies and then there was a dance floor for you to dance, so, you know, just joyous and all. And at one point he said, "Let's go up." There was almost a sort of interesting balcony area. Again, it's basically outdoors, but there was this area you could go up, it was higher, and you could look down and see the whole thing up. And we went up there, and all of a sudden, we heard these guns shooting, *bang, bang, bang, bang, bang*. Everybody—and again we're up high, everybody ran to one side of this area, this dance area, and all of a sudden, you see two men holding this guy, the gun is up in the air, straight up in the air, and they're fighting with him to take control of him. And they take him in the back behind where the musicians are—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Behind the band stand..

NANETTE CARTER: —and the music starts up, [snaps fingers] and everybody is right back on the dance like nothing ever happened. It's like this happens all the time. So when we went back downstairs, we found out that this man saw his woman with another man. Now he didn't shoot at him, he basically shot up in the air, too, to scare him—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Well, that's because they were holding his hand though.

NANETTE CARTER: No, no, no that was even before.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh, okay.

NANETTE CARTER: The man ever got shot nor did his wife get shot.

CHERYL R. RILEY: He was just a warning shot.

NANETTE CARTER: They don't—they don't do that there, they don't kill, you know. It was to scare because nobody left, even the kids came—everybody came, the families came back and started dancing like it never happened, I mean bizarre, okay. They took him in the back, and I said, "Well, what do you think they're going to do with them? Are they taking him to the police?" because I didn't see any police. They said, "Oh, they'll beat him up a little bit and then send him home, take his gun and send him home." It was like this is amazing, but, you know, it was just—it was colorful. We saw them—actually we saw some of the floats because that's their lives. They build up for the—you know, what is it called—oh Lord, the big festival down there? Oh here we go—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Not the Carnival—?

NANETTE CARTER: —the Carnival, thank you. Everything is based around that, people's livelihoods, everything.

CHERYL R. RILEY: All year, they're making the costumes for that.

NANETTE CARTER: The samba schools, that's right, and so there are these different samba schools, these different—and they had the bands, the dancers, and every—and then the artists who make this. So we actually went because again Ernani had these connections. We went to these big, almost like airplane hangar places where they would store this stuff and get ready for the next year, but they take the whole year, you know, making these costumes and getting ready. So that was wonderful, and there's nothing like traveling and having someone there who knows, who lives there and knows the people and gets you around.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Always the best.

NANETTE CARTER: It's always the best, it is. So let's see, I'm still dating Harry Smith, again the sailor, this is 1987. At this point, my parent, my sister has rented a house in Aix-en-Provence in France. So we'd go to Florence first—no, no, did we go to Florence? Yes, we did, we went to Florence first and then took the train on around Italy, you know, Genoa on into France you know, went through by Nice and all that all this stuff along the—centered on the

border there and then went to—and I'm not pronouncing this right, I'm told it's not Aix-en-Provence. It's like Aix, Aix-en-Provence, oh, okay—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I didn't take—

NANETTE CARTER: —my French—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —French, I took Spanish.

NANETTE CARTER: —my French, I didn't—I took Spanish and Italian. Anyway, my sister was renting a house there with her family, and actually my brother-in-law's family was there also. So we ended up going there after staying in Florence, took the train, and this place was basically like a country house. There were farms all around it, these were not farmers that owned the house, but it was there this French family's country home that they had rented with a swimming pool, and we just—we had a lovely time. You would go into the town to the markets and, you know, fresh everything and wonderful spices and what have you. So we ate really well, and on our way home, we stopped in Paris and looked hooked up with Ed Clark who was staying on the Cité des arts, which is where he had his—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_4of4_sd_track03_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —residence where he always went and had been going since the '50s. Something happened there. He was able to put something together with this residency where he could come every year basically in the summer—spring, summer for about three or four months, and he did this every year. So we stopped by to visit him, I saw his studio, you know, I saw the residency and all. I think someone else who has actually attended that residency—it's very, very hard to get into, but if they allow people to come every year, that's what makes it so hard to get into.

CHERYL R. RILEY: People or Ed?

NANETTE CARTER: No, I think that there were other people—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —other people were too?

NANETTE CARTER: —too. I think so too. I don't—

CHERYL R. RILEY: It was part of culture of the residency.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, something about the residency, yeah. If they liked you, and you got in, maybe Ed was giving them some extra money, I don't know, but, um, I'll tell you who else went there. Sana—was it Sana [Musasama], the ceramicist went there also at one point. So that was kind of neat to see him in his—all his glory there, and we met his French lover. Then in the '90s, and I'm not sure of the date here, but in the '90s, I did go to Puerto Vallarta, and I actually went with George N'Namdi, and we were actually looking at an artist who was painting on clothing and making clothing that he was then selling in Detroit. This was an American man who was living in Puerto Vallarta, of course, sort of retired kind of guy, elderly man, older man, who was making this clothing. 1997, I go to Cuernavaca with Mario Baeza, and we run into Elizabeth Catlett at our hotel. Her favorite restaurant happened to be in this hotel we were staying in, lovely hotel, and she invites me to her home, which I'm very excited about. But something happened there where she gave me the address but not a phone number, and when I went to try and look her up, of course she wasn't listed. And we never really had set a time or a date; it was just, "No, here's my address and—" but she didn't give me a phone number, so I never did go, which was a real missed, yeah, opportunity there, very sad.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I would've just shown up.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah. And maybe we should—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And just said—

NANETTE CARTER: —have—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and just say that—

NANETTE CARTER: —knock on the door—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I—

NANETTE CARTER: —here we are.

CHERYL R. RILEY: We didn't get a—

NANETTE CARTER: We didn't—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —number or anything—

NANETTE CARTER: —and we never set along a time and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And we're here, but if this isn't a good day, tell us—

NANETTE CARTER: And I've got to go.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —when we could come back.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, I'm not going to be here long. Yeah. 1998, I go to Brazil with Mario, this time we go to Rio and this time, oh, I go to São Paulo, and I was able to go to the Biennale there. Do you know the photographer Albert Chong? He is the only American that I knew in that Biennale, but he's also Jamaican, so he may have just—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Some—

NANETTE CARTER: —gone to—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —connections to that.

NANETTE CARTER: —Jamaica, yeah. Wonderful show, that was an amazing Biennale. São Paulo is a huge city, humongous, larger than Rio, and yeah, that was an amazing trip. Let's see 2000, I go with Mario to Milan and Bellagio, Italy. He was there for a conference, I finally get to see *The Last Supper*. all the times I've been to Italy, I'd never gone to Milan, and this was right after they had cleaned it, and it was incredible—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I love Milan.

NANETTE CARTER: —to see, wow—

CHERYL R. RILEY: People told me, "Oh don't go there,"—

NANETTE CARTER: —the shopping—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —"don't go there," but I loved it—

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, it's wonderful. Oh, it is—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I love Milan.

NANETTE CARTER: I did too. And that glass enclosed galleria with this—oh my God—

CHERYL R. RILEY: This wonderful city.

NANETTE CARTER: —just a beautiful city.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I loved it.

NANETTE CARTER: I did too, I enjoyed it. So I left the country a couple of times with Mr. Baeza. Oh, 2003, now I'm dating Ron Lewis, we went to Paris, Paris in the winter. I just love Paris, I can go to Paris any time, absolutely any time. It was cold, but we got around, we did a lot of walking. I don't remember going to as many museums because Ron wasn't—but walking is what we did, we walked that city, yeah. 2004, again Ben Jones, Havana, Cuba for the Biennale, and I go with my dear friend Jeanie Nedd. We shared a room together, again there were about 35 people.

[00:05:06]

Oh, and my dealer Sande Webster was on that trip, I forgot, from—the dealer from Philadelphia. And I have here Nari Ward had a large room in the fortress there representing Jamaica. 2007 was that US State Department, which I talked quite a bit about already in terms of Damascus and Aleppo. And then also 2007, I go to Italy and go to my first—oh, I went by myself, I wanted so badly. Oh, that was a good year, that's probably one of the best years I ever had. I sold over hundred thousand dollars' worth of work that year. 2007. This is just before the 2008 financial debacle with the ballooning mortgage when President Obama came into office; I was on a roll. Mott Foundation—Mott-Warsh Foundation, she came in here and bought about $60,000 worth of work and wrote the check, and it cleared, okay. I never had anybody—she bought several pieces, okay. I had never had anything like that happen in my life; I was just astonished. And then with George and everybody else, you know, other folks and all. Don't forget 2006, I had that show with George here in Chelsea, and that was when Delroy Lindo came in that Chelsea shown too. He bought the biggest in the show and a small piece, Peg Alston bought work, people, you know, so we basically sold the show out, sold out. That was *Aqueous*. I went there, I had some money, I spent—you know, I have never [ph]—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I love the *Aqueous*—

NANETTE CARTER: —to a Biennale, I'm going to go to the Venice Biennale by myself, I don't care. So I flew to Rome and then went to Venice and Felix Gonzalez-Torres was representing the USA—

CHERYL R. RILEY: America—

NANETTE CARTER: —in the Pavilion that year. And I just—I had a ball being there by myself, dealing with food when I wanted to, maybe I didn't eat just because I wanted to continue walking, you know, you can just move about. My Italian is not great, but it certainly helps me to move around a bit, and I hadn't been to Venice at that point in over 40 years. No, no, no—yeah that was my first, yes, yes, yes because that was my first time at a Biennale. I hadn't been to Venice in a long, long time. Of course, it's not one of those cities that changes much at all, it doesn't change at all but—

CHERYL R. RILEY: It's a historic [cross talk]—

NANETTE CARTER: —but it's just—it's just an incredible city and—but again to be there during that time. 2014, I've already talked about this. We had the African-American artists at The Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. This is when we had that group show, and I named all the artists that were in that show already. Kenneth came with me, I was dating Kenneth at the time, had a great time. 2015, Kenneth wants to go back to Cuba, we go to Santiago de Cuba to the old capital, this is their 500th anniversary. Raul Castro is in town, brother Ben Jones again hooks us up with someone to stay with, a wonderful woman who was a teacher and also was a principal at one of the schools there in Santiago. And what I will never forget is every night at 3 a.m., someone would knock on this woman's door. Now, we were in—again this woman, she was a teacher, she owned her home, her sister lived with her, she would rent out the first floor to, you know, tourists. She lived on the second floor with her sister and because it was the anniversary because all these dignitaries throughout Cuba were there to celebrate the 500th anniversary of their old capital, I think they were very much in tune with any person from the United States who was traveling there, foreigners. I think that they were really making sure that nothing crazy happened. This is my take, and I never said anything to this woman who owned the home, I never said anything, but, you know, Kenny was so tired he'd sleep through it.

[00:10:01]

I would—we were on the first floor, I would hear the door knock, I'd hear the knock at the door, 3 a.m. every morning. And she would come down, they'd speak Spanish, I could never understand what they were saying, and then she'd say goodbye, and she'd go back up and go back to bed. And we were there for two weeks, every morning at 3 a.m. And like I told you earlier, Cheryl, she was a member of the—I mean she's one of these top members because she got that position too as principal. She had her—because she showed us her papers. She could get to all the dignitary things that were going on, but they wouldn't let tourists anywhere near the area. They would shut it off, and she would let us know just what was going on, so we would know, Well, you can't go there, you can't go there. Now I hope—did I talk already about—? You know, I talk about going to the poor—to where the poor

people lived, I've already talked about that. But again this whole idea of them checking in and making sure that we weren't going to be any rabble-rousers or doing anything crazy every single morning.

CHERYL R. RILEY: That was that person's job.

NANETTE CARTER: That's what it was, that's it, that's right, that was the job, and I'm sure he knocked around to a bunch of places where other, you know, tourists—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Americans or—

NANETTE CARTER: —were coming and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —or whatever.

NANETTE CARTER: —the Americans were, that's right. So anyway, that was a most interesting trip going there. And let's see, where was I? That was Santiago.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You were in Cuba.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, that same year, oh my gosh, yeah, that was something. Now that was in—we went at a crazy time. it was—July was as hot as all hell in Cuba, but we also went that year to London, Berlin, and Germany. I hadn't been to London since I was in high school, and as much as I didn't like it then, it's really changed. It looked so dirty and horrible back then in the '70s.

CHERYL R. RILEY: It got cleaned up, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah. I thought, Man, this is—you know, this is was a country that had all these colonies that were rich and where—what happened, where did that—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Some of it—

NANETTE CARTER: —did the city?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —was pollution too.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, my God—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you know, and—

NANETTE CARTER: —terrible pollution—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —catalytic converters came out and—

NANETTE CARTER: No, you're right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —stuff that cleaned up—

NANETTE CARTER: And also just—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the air.

NANETTE CARTER: —I guess, you know, industries and factories—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Exactly, they made them—

NANETTE CARTER: —and stuff.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —put the filters on their smokestacks. Remember all of that changed—

NANETTE CARTER: It was dirty—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —everywhere.

NANETTE CARTER: Yes, it did.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because I—first time I came to—

NANETTE CARTER: But most of the New York—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —New York—

NANETTE CARTER: —even—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —my clothes were—

NANETTE CARTER: —even dirty.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I had like a yellow dress on and my dress was gray at the—

NANETTE CARTER: —at the end of the day,

CHERYL R. RILEY: —end of the day, Oh, my God, and all you could think of was, yeah, you're inhaling this stuff. So anyway, we went back to London, but neither one of us had been to Berlin, Germany, and he was really—he had been to London before also but he really wanted to go to Berlin, and we just wanted to see what that looked like and that was a lot of fun. Oh, we ended up going to an area in Berlin where a lot of people from Turkey lived. There were a lot of, you know, Middle Eastern people in this—it was a large community. And I'll never forget, of course, when—oh gosh, I'm going to get her name because I love her boots. Merkel, Angela Merkel allowed so many from Syria to come to—you know, he—she had sort of these numbers, these set numbers, you know, each day, they could come in or whatever, but she was allowing folks to come in, and I thought about that community. And I wonder if they ended up all going into the area, which appeared to me to be probably a little lower rent. It was clean, it was lovely, you know. There was actually an artist community, an artist residence near that we visited, and that's what took us to that community. I was really going to visit this residency to see what it looked like, and come to find out we're in this area where all the restaurants were, you know, Turkish people, Turkish descent and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: A lot better than German food.

NANETTE CARTER: Food was okay, and I think it's probably gotten better over the years because tourists are coming now, and they, you know, you can't just serve pork all the time. When I went to Munich, now I had been to Frankfurt—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And Bratwurst—

NANETTE CARTER: —and Munich, and I didn't talk about that, but when I lived in Italy for that year studying abroad, I went to—I went to Germany, I just didn't go to Berlin because back then you really didn't want to. I went to Munich and Frankfurt, and everything was the pig, I mean every—they used everything and the gelatin, the fat, all of it was there, and you could have the sandwich made of this, you know, oh, my God, you know, but I—you know, things have changed and—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_4of4_sd_track04_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —we had—but we found—because my man Kenny loves to salsa, we found a place that had salsa. I mean these Germans were doing salsa just like they were—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —in Brazil or—

NANETTE CARTER: —Hispanics, I mean they was good, okay, serious. They were giving lessons at this place, but at night, they have these what they call socials, you know, these gatherings. And we looked so bad compared to them—of course, he dances far better than I do in terms of salsa. But it's—you know, it's just become like Amsterdam, a real melting pot of people from all over the world. And the other thing I saw, and now this is me, I'm not—you know, don't quote me on this, but these women appeared to me to be from northern Africa. There's a look to Ethiopians, you know, what I'm saying—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh yeah, the forehead—yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: The hair and every—or Somalia or something.

CHERYL R. RILEY: The high bone—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —high cheeks bones, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: Man, I saw so many women hooked up with German men and families with children, you know, a lot. It was—so I felt like, you know, years ago when I've gone to Amsterdam because again that was another place I went when I was living there for that year abroad in college. I loved Amsterdam, it was so damn international, it reminded me of New York in that way and that I mean Asians and Blacks and Africans and—you know, everyone was there, and everyone seemed to be young, and this was back in—you know, when I first went—early '70s. Everyone appeared to be young. Of course, the reefer was going, you know, it was just like so free and, oh my gosh. Berlin was like that, you know, the new Berlin, the new Berlin. So that was a great year because again going to Cuba and then to going to Europe. London, I needed to go back, I needed to see the new Tate, I had never been to the Tate, Tate Modern, you know, just doing some things I needed to see.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Who was in the big artillery hall or whatever they call it?

NANETTE CARTER: You know what, they actually didn't have anything. It was empty when we went and the big show that was there was Matisse. They had some stuff, yeah, yeah. But I just needed—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Then they're seeing that—

NANETTE CARTER: —to go, I know exactly.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But you got to see—

NANETTE CARTER: I needed to go to—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the Tate Modern.

NANETTE CARTER: —the—I needed to go to the Tate Modern, I did. Oh, and we did go to Saatchi Gallery, and who's there but Cullen Washington who had just finished his residency at the Studio Museum, his work looked great, they had about six or seven of his pieces. And then when I come back to town, Kenny and I go to an opening of Ed Clark's up at Jack Tilton's, and there's Cullen, and we get a chance to really talk and get to know each other. And of course now Cullen has taken my place at Pratt because I put his name in to be the person to come in, and they liked him, and he got the job, so now he's teaching the drawing class I taught so, but we saw his work first there, you know? Actually, I had seen his work at the Studio Museum but then to go and see the work there at Saatchi, that was just special. And then come to find out the opening was just a week before and I just missed the opening so it was—but anyway, we did get to the Saatchi. You know, you go to these places and you got your—you've got to go here, you've got your list—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh yeah, you got your list—

NANETTE CARTER: —you've got your list, you've got your list.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, yeah you have your art list—

NANETTE CARTER: —you got—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: —to do this, you've got to do this. Now, the next thing, that next year 2016, I already talked about this was the Osaka. We went to Tokyo, Kyoto, and Nara. 2017, I talked about this already also, I had the two-week residency in Perugia, which ended in a show. I had to take work over because two weeks certainly was not enough time to make a show, and it was a huge space, but that was great, and that was when we ended up going to the Venice Biennale and seeing Mark Bradford. I've already talked about that a bit. The 2018 was the solo show in Cuba, which I've talked about also. I've also talked about the 2019 show at Ami-Kanoko Gallery in Osaka with Yukiko running that space. And then this past year 2021, what I haven't talked about is this residency that I had through Pratt Institute and Siena Art Institute, where I was in Siena for five weeks, Siena, Italy, very productive, loved it. Siena as much as they call it a city, it's not a real city like Rome. Rome is humongous. I love Rome—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I do too.

NANETTE CARTER: —but Siena is livable, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: I like Rome and Milan, those are my two—

NANETTE CARTER: Milan?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —favorite, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: Have you been to Siena?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Uh-uh [negative.]

NANETTE CARTER: Siena is gorgeous. Siena has a wall, a beautiful, red brick wall, those thin bricks that go all around the city.

[00:05:02]

And it's just—it has such amazing historical buildings there. They have what is in Europe anyway, the first hospital, and I went there, and it was incredible, and it was open to everyone. And it was known that even if you were just a voyager passing through and you got sick, you could go to that hospital, and if you didn't have the money, you pay what you could, and that was fine. The wealthy people of Siena kept the hospital going. The hospital was right across the street from the big Duomo, but there was a line in the middle of the road, and the line is still there, and it was basically saying this has nothing to do with your religion, we have nothing to do with religious, you know, institutions, we are our own institution, and we're about all people and every people. And Black folks from Africa came through, people who were, you know, import-export, and traveling with their goods, they had something happen. And if you had a child and you could not afford to feed that child, you could—there was a place you could bring your baby, and they would raise that child right there, and there was a school there, there were women there, there that would nurse that child, and it was the first orphanage in Europe, okay. So it was just—this is Siena, just so smart, so—you know?

And their town hall Pubblico, this big, beautiful building, you know, it was about—the murals on the wall show you, you know, what justice and spirituality and all this stuff is all a part of the city and bad people are put in jail. And the murals would actually show men that were chained up being hauled off to jail, but the rest of the city is good people living together, all these different kinds of folks, it's okay, you know? And just, you know, what everyone dreams of. Of course I don't think it was some sort of utopia, but they certainly were trying—

CHERYL R. RILEY: They wouldn't have those—

NANETTE CARTER: —it seemed to be—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they wouldn't have to have—

NANETTE CARTER: —trying.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the jail if it were a utopia.

NANETTE CARTER: No, no, exactly. They were trying, they really were trying, and again just the openness. I loved this hospital, this whole thing in this hospital it just amazed me. And the hospital went on until 1976, so it was going up. It was functioning during World War II, and they had photos from that time period. And you know how they have the hospitals in Europe where it's a big room, and it's just bed after bed after bed as opposed to different rooms like we have in a hospital? You know, you just have lines and lines of these beds. Up above these beds were these amazing murals, gorgeous murals that are still there and intact, and they even have pictures from 1976 of people in these beds, and these murals are still there from the 1400s. And just what a way to be sick, you know, in these wonderful spaces, just incredible—

CHERYL R. RILEY: So civilized.

NANETTE CARTER: —so incredible. So anyway that's my last venture, and I did get to Rome on a side trip. I had some dear friends who had just moved to Rome, so I hung out with

them. And I did get to Florence, a couple of times to Florence, so it was a great trip, I had lots of fun, lots of fun. And then we were—I brought it up to today I think. I believe that's it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: So what is happening next for you? What's on the—?

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah—

CHERYL R. RILEY: You have a—

NANETTE CARTER: —what's on the—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a show coming—

NANETTE CARTER: —horizon—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —or—?

NANETTE CARTER: The shows—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —now that you're not teaching anymore, you have more freedom for your —

NANETTE CARTER: To make art—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —for yourself and your work?

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, yeah. Well, and I actually mentioned these shows coming up for 2022, the Berry Campbell show, I mentioned that's April twenty-eighth, and then this show at the Hunterdon Museum, which is January twenty-third, and then the two-person show at Towson University, which is January twenty-eighth. And I just received the Anonymous Was A Woman Award, which I am so pleased to get.

Now, I'm going to tell you a story, Cheryl. I don't know if you remember this because this goes back, and I can tell you, it goes back to about 2006. I had been nominated, if it's not 2006, it's 2005. I was nominated for the Anonymous Was A Woman, and you know this—this was an award that started back in 1996.

[00:10:00]

For the longest time, we did not know who was funding it, I thought it was a consortium of women, wealthy women, come to find out, no, it was one woman. She finally revealed who she is, Susan Unterberg, lovely woman, she's been doing this all on her own, she's already spent well over five million dollars. But I got nominated in 2006, and I didn't get it. And I had you and Xenobia [Bailey] here for a Sunday brunch, and Xenobia got it, and she was talking about it. No, let's see, it has to be after 2007, okay, I'm sorry. It must have been 2008 because listen at this, I'll never forget I was jealous, and I told her I let—I told you-all, I said, oh, I was nominated and I didn't get it. But we celebrated her, you know, we toasted or whatever. But I was jealous, and I know it must have been 2008, I have to correct myself because 2007 is when I went to Syria. And I began to tell you a little bit about that trip and that I went to Palmyra where Queen Zenobia reigned, and she asked me, "Do you have any pictures of Queen Zenobia, what do you have? I want these pictures," and I wouldn't give them to her. That was out of spite. I said, "No, no, these are my private pictures," that's the way I put it I think, she was very upset I could tell, but it was—it was definitely out of spite, it was. And I have to say that, and I don't both feel good about it—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But you're a human being.

NANETTE CARTER: I'm a human being, but I was nominated then. So it was really nice to get this award this year to be nominated and actually—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And to get—

NANETTE CARTER: —get the prize, which is $25,000. And I think I stopped around 2007 with my grants and all. But real quick, I've got several of these Pratt faculty development grants of which one I talked about in terms of helping me to go to Cuba. And I set up the proposal of the grant as that, and—you know, and then of course I gave several catalogues and all to that. But anyway, so I got several of these Pratt grants over the years, but I also then got the

—in 2013, I got the Artist's Fellowship grant and the Mayer Foundation grant, both of those I believe were right here in New York City. 2014, I got the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation grant; that was a nice chunk of money also. 2015–2016 was when I went to Lafayette College again for the Experimental Printmaking Institute that was Curlee Holton. 2017 was Perugia to see Pratt faculty grant, da, da, da, da. So, yeah, that I think we're in, that's it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And you've shared this resume with the Smithsonian.

NANETTE CARTER: No, and I need to—

CHERYL R. RILEY: So, yeah, we—

NANETTE CARTER: —and I have to do that—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you will need to send that to them—

NANETTE CARTER: I will send to that them and—yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: So I just have one question, I know we're in this game-changing era in the art stratosphere. We got artists of the Black African diaspora are thriving, celebrated, more profitable than any time than I know. So I want to know, how does it feel to you to be alive at this time? What are your thoughts about why this is happening, and do you think it will endure?

NANETTE CARTER: That last question is the one, and that's the one, will it endure? I don't know. I don't know. The country is going through so many changes so quickly. You have these doors that are opening for Black people not only in the fine arts but in the theater, in movies, and I do wonder with this backlash and folks getting very upset and feeling as though people of color are taking over, I don't know, I don't know what that means. And I'm hoping that the young people who seem to be of a different mindset are going to continue to be open and to look at everybody's creative spirit and to have it on an even keel, you know. And—I think it's very exciting to be 67 because I did see New York in a time where, you know, the best galleries, the smallest galleries, it didn't matter, they just were not showing African American artists. The Whitney Museum, the Museum of American Art, okay, and that's the way they phrased it, again back to that American—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK carter21_4of4_sd_track05_m.]

NANETTE CARTER: —they should be showing people from Mesoamerica, South America, Canada, right?

CHERYL R. RILEY: And all of the types of Americans that are in America—

NANETTE CARTER: —in America, that's right, included, that's right. That's the way they tout themselves, that's the way they've, you know, thrown it out there. And Al Loving was the first Black to have a solo show there in 1969, you know, followed by Alma Thomas and then Jacob Lawrence but so few since then. Solo shows, please, uh-uh [negative]. I was wondering the other night when I was at the Ed Clark memorial there, was that the first time they had a memorial for a Black artist? I've never heard of a Black artist getting memorialized at the Whitney.

So to have seen these changes, the changes, you know, in technology, and which I think is also very helpful in terms of getting stuff out there and letting people see what other folks are doing.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You can bypass the gatekeepers.

NANETTE CARTER: You know you can, you can make your own. You've got your pop-ups, the Student Museum of Harlem set themselves in place. I think that Thelma Golden has been a brilliant director and has really guided that museum into a very international kind of a setting. People are coming there from all over the world, it's a place—

CHERYL R. RILEY: She's an amazing—

NANETTE CARTER: —you have to see—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —person, she is an amazing curator.

NANETTE CARTER: She's brilliant and so, you know, all of these changes I saw happen, but I also saw when nothing was going on at all, and we were making our own, and again, that's when people like Romare Bearden and Norman Lewis and Ernie Crichlow said, "Listen, we've got to do something."

CHERYL R. RILEY: The Harlem Renaissance right?

NANETTE CARTER: You know, and this was at a time only Romy Bearden was showing. Cordier & Ekstrom had his work up there on the East Side, you know, and that was the same building that Sotheby's was in.

CHERYL R. RILEY: He was an extraordinarily charismatic person and I'm sorry very light skinned.

NANETTE CARTER: Fair skinned—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Very—

NANETTE CARTER: —he could pass.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —very fair.

NANETTE CARTER: He could pass.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Even if he didn't pass, you didn't feel as threatened by him because—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, this was—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —he was—

NANETTE CARTER: —not a Black, Black, Black man.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And very articulate—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —very—

NANETTE CARTER: —very much so.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —educated.

NANETTE CARTER: Went to NYU, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Wonderful personality—

NANETTE CARTER: —great family, great family, great Harlem family from, you know, North Carolina though, based in Carolina.. But yeah, and he—I think he felt really bad about that situation that he was in and then, you know, had befriended Joseph Papp and started Cinque Gallery. So it's been—it's been an amazing journey. It's been an amazing ride to see, and it's also wonderful to see these young people who many of them are just coming right out, especially Yale are really getting into the blue-chip galleries like, *boom*, right away.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And museum shows—

NANETTE CARTER: And museum shows—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and a few of them are starting their own residencies.

NANETTE CARTER: Which is fantastic. They've got that much money—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Kehinde doing that—

NANETTE CARTER: —they are millionaires, that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah. Who is our boy in—near Yale that—

NANETTE CARTER: In Connecticut I know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh, I'm just—

NANETTE CARTER: I know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —on his name—

NANETTE CARTER: —I know.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —but, yeah, absolutely.

NANETTE CARTER: And we've got a come up with his name, and Theater Gates has a residency now too.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Theaster does, yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: And so does McArthur Binion in Detroit. What is that brother's name? It starts with a *k*, damn it I just saw his show, Jesus Christ. Kal [Titus Kaphar –NC]—oh, Lord have mercy. Yeah, but people starting their own residencies and with Kehinde going to Africa, that is just extraordinary, just amazing. Taking young people I'm sure to their first time in Africa and making art and being there with him, and this brother we're trying to think of, his studio is right there near the residency, so they can walk over and talk to him.

CHERYL R. RILEY: He actually told me that that—

NANETTE CARTER: He's brilliant.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —was his old neighborhood.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, right, yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And then he took this over and he's buying—

NANETTE CARTER: He bought it—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a lot of property there.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Because they are gentrifying the neighborhood—

NANETTE CARTER: Well, he got to get it now—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and the Black people—

NANETTE CARTER: —that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —who were there are—

NANETTE CARTER: —take it now—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —getting—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, kicked out. Oh gosh, this is terrible, I know.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Hold on, I—

NANETTE CARTER: You've got it?

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I'm going to try to find it.

NANETTE CARTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative], so I'm excited no, and the fact, the giving back, you know, the artists that give back, those are the artists that just—I just have so much respect for, giving back of knowledge, of time, of energy, being helpful, mentoring, yeah, investing their money in the future like that.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And in their—

NANETTE CARTER: And these are millionaires—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and in their people, you know?

NANETTE CARTER: —these are millionaires too, we're not talking—you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Oh yeah.

NANETTE CARTER: They've got the money, they do.

CHERYL R. RILEY: They're doing very well, and I can't tell you how thrilled I am to be alive and to experience it and see it at this time. I'm just so thrilled.

[00:05:03]

And I do hope it will last.

NANETTE CARTER: I do too, and you know what I think helped out too? I think the Obamas asking these two Black artists to do those portraits, you know, people began to look at Blacks who are doing portraits of course and what now the LA Museum [LACMA] has a big portrait show up while they're showing the Obama portraits, you know, they decided—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Let's just do that.

NANETTE CARTER: —Cy [Christine Y. Kim –CR] what's her name? Cy—this, in fact she's about to leave the museum, she curated that show. [Liz Andrews –Ed.] She's coming out of the student museum. That's the other thing that, you know, Thelma did of course, as we know, the curators that have come out of there—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And the—

NANETTE CARTER: —back where—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —residents, the artist residency is just a—

NANETTE CARTER: The residency—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —gold mine—

NANETTE CARTER: —but also—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —it's just—

NANETTE CARTER: —the curators. I mean they're getting these Naima Keith, we're talking about—

CHERYL R. RILEY: That have been—

NANETTE CARTER: —about Beckwith—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —yeah, that has been—

NANETTE CARTER: —Beckwith is—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —spread—

NANETTE CARTER: —running the Guggenheim now.

CHERYL R. RILEY: They're spreading out in everywhere.

NANETTE CARTER: I mean brilliant, just amazing.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, that's wonderful.

NANETTE CARTER: So she's doing this on several levels, you know—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, Thelma—

NANETTE CARTER: —just smart.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —any kind of award—

NANETTE CARTER: —just smart—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —you want to give Thelma, I would say—

NANETTE CARTER: She deserves it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —she deserves two of them.

NANETTE CARTER: The woman deserves it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: She's pretty amazing.

NANETTE CARTER: You know, and she's very—just very smart and positioning herself in such a way that's just helping so many people.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Yeah, she—

NANETTE CARTER: It's a smart way to do it.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —she's just really knowledgeable too. I have to say—

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, yeah, she is—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I was just here in New York on a visit before I moved here, and I'm in line to go see her *Black Male* show at the Whitney, and she's standing there with some of the guys at the guards at the door just talking. And she goes, "There's Cheryl Riley." How would she know who I was living in San Francisco? She is on top of everything.

NANETTE CARTER: All of the issues.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And she beckoned me to come in, skip the line, and just come in. I was—I'm a furniture designer at that time, like I'm not even in the "fine art world," and she knew who I was.

NANETTE CARTER: You know, speaking of knowing names as we continue to have difficulties coming up with names, that's an art in itself. Because I've seen her manipulate and move around in an opening, and she remembers everyone's names, [snaps fingers] and that helps, that—

CHERYL R. RILEY: People do love—

NANETTE CARTER: —that helps—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —it when you know their names.

NANETTE CARTER: —that's right. People say, say my name, right?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Say my name—

NANETTE CARTER: Say my name.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —say my name.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, have we come up with that brother's name yet?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Girl—

NANETTE CARTER: —oh damn.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Titus Kaphar—

NANETTE CARTER: T, K, Kaphar. I knew it was a *k*, Kaphar, Titus Kaphar—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Titus Kaphar.

NANETTE CARTER: —we have to talk about Titus coming out of Connecticut, growing up there and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And what was ghetto—

NANETTE CARTER: —opening up—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and now—

NANETTE CARTER: —that space—

CHERYL R. RILEY: But—

NANETTE CARTER: —to young people—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —it buts right up against Yale.

NANETTE CARTER: Yale, that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: And so now, it's getting—

NANETTE CARTER: —yeah, that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —gentrified and—

NANETTE CARTER: And these are all the Black folks—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —he's buying up buildings—

NANETTE CARTER: —that work—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and stuff—

NANETTE CARTER: —on the campus, and—

CHERYL R. RILEY: And he's going to—

NANETTE CARTER: —that's' right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —yeah, he's created that wonderful residency—

NANETTE CARTER: Which is great. So—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I love—

NANETTE CARTER: —smart—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —the seeing the artist now turn around and put that back into their communities and—

NANETTE CARTER: Bring it back, bring it back—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —just not the—

NANETTE CARTER: —yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: So all right.

NANETTE CARTER: Well, I'm hoping—I'm just going to leave by saying that I'm hoping that the abstract artists will also get their due. I think certainly—

CHERYL R. RILEY: The amount of attention—

NANETTE CARTER: —Julie Mehretu is opening the doors for that. And now that Hauser & Wirth has taken on Ed Clark, of course, it would have been great for him to have been able to live through this, to see this and Jack Whitten. You know, going to a space like that, that, you know, they're going to—I mean their prices have jumped up, and everything is going on, it's just amazing to see this and to have known these people when they were living, barely living.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Absolutely, absolutely.

NANETTE CARTER: Barely able to feed themselves, you know?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Exactly.

NANETTE CARTER: And so I'm just hoping that things will change for the abstract artist. And the way I understand is that the Smithsonian noticed that in their American Archive, they did not have a number of abstract artists of African descent and so this was a push. I know Erin Gilbert was the one who was I think employed first to get this going. She was the one that actually contacted me and worked with me in putting the papers together and getting them tuned, but she had said that they, you know, sent her on a mission to pull in somebody that's—

CHERYL R. RILEY: To beef that part of their—

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah, and Betty Blayton, I know they wanted to—I hope they were able to get Betty Blayton, I know she was approaching, you know, several other people, Howardena and what have you. But I'm hoping also that the museums and galleries will also begin to reach out to more of the African American abstract artists—

CHERYL R. RILEY: I think they will. I think they're finally getting over their addiction to—

NANETTE CARTER: —figurative—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —figure—

NANETTE CARTER: —yes, [cross talk.]

CHERYL R. RILEY: —because that was I think that's also part of why Romare Bearden—

NANETTE CARTER: That's too.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —had such a big career because you knew immediately—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, that was a Black—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —that was a Black—

NANETTE CARTER: —artist—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —artist

NANETTE CARTER: —who created that.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But he was not a threatening—

NANETTE CARTER: —that's right—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —Black man in a way.

NANETTE CARTER: No, he was not.

CHERYL R. RILEY: He was nothing but love from what I've heard.

[00:10:00]

NANETTE CARTER: Roly-poly, round—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —from—

NANETTE CARTER: —very fair skinned.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —happy, smiling—

NANETTE CARTER: —very happy.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —all the time.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, lovely person.

CHERYL R. RILEY: You know, comfortable—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right comfortable—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —with white people—

NANETTE CARTER: —in his skin.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and then in—

NANETTE CARTER: —that's right.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —and with everybody—

NANETTE CARTER: —moving about, yes he was. And again—

CHERYL R. RILEY: Big—

NANETTE CARTER: —Cordier Ekstrom—

CHERYL R. RILEY: generous heart.

NANETTE CARTER: —at that time Cordier Ekstrom was a blue-chip gallery—that was a—and to be housed in the same building as Sotheby's. I remember going there to see his shows. I mean it was very, yeah and he would—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —they did—

NANETTE CARTER: —they sold, they should his stuff out, yeah. But on that note, I'm hopeful for the future, I'm hopeful, that's all we can do.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Well now, as we are able to take more power, then there is a chance for more in the future.

NANETTE CARTER: Now that too, yes.

CHERYL R. RILEY: If you own it then you know that helps—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right, that too, yeah, yeah.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a lot. Not that they can't do them in a domain and things like that when they want, but still there's that hope, so—

NANETTE CARTER: There is hope.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —I'm—but I'm just—

NANETTE CARTER: —there's got to be hope there—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —just glad to be alive while it's happening.

NANETTE CARTER: I am too.

CHERYL R. RILEY: It's like—

NANETTE CARTER: I'm glad to be—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —this—it's like a—

NANETTE CARTER: —to be here too.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —a second Harlem Renaissance only it's bigger than Harlem.

NANETTE CARTER: It is, no it is.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Its' the whole world.

NANETTE CARTER: It's the country, it's the world,

CHERYL R. RILEY: No, it's the whole world.

NANETTE CARTER: The Africa—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —world.

NANETTE CARTER: That's right. No, they're looking at—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —it's European Black—

NANETTE CARTER: —African artists—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —artists, it's African Black—

NANETTE CARTER: That's right—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —artists—

NANETTE CARTER: Ellen [cross talk]

CHERYL R. RILEY: —it's American—

NANETTE CARTER: —doing extremely well.

CHERYL R. RILEY: —Black artists. It's a lot and so it's just—

NANETTE CARTER: It's opening up—

CHERYL R. RILEY: – it's just great and now we're going to have a Black woman representing America in the Venice Biennale.

NANETTE CARTER: It is amazing.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Simone Leigh.

NANETTE CARTER: After two Black men, I mean, *wossh*, damn near back-to-back, okay, it's amazing.

CHERYL R. RILEY: I'm very happy about it.

NANETTE CARTER: Amazing.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Very happy.

NANETTE CARTER: It's all good.

CHERYL R. RILEY: So I want to thank you—

NANETTE CARTER: All right, thank you, Cheryl—

CHERYL R. RILEY: —for just sharing what an amazing life, what a person of such power, it's just been exciting to—I knew you but I didn't know you and so it's really been wonderful. It's Tuesday, December seventh, we're in the home in Harlem of Ms. Nanette Carter, one of the greats, and thank you Smithsonian for offering me this opportunity to learn more about somebody who is a really good friend of mine.

NANETTE CARTER: Yeah and I want to thank the Smithsonian also. This is wonderful, I'm glad you have my papers, and I'm able to allow other people to read about not only me but all these other people who are in my lives—my life and that had great influence on me. Thank you so much.

CHERYL R. RILEY: Good job.

NANETTE CARTER: Oh, I am tired now. It's four—almost five o'clock, um. Oh.

CHERYL R. RILEY: But we did it, it's [inaudible].

NANETTE CARTER: I'm exhausted, my brain.

CHERYL R. RILEY: We did it.

NANETTE CARTER: I'm brain dead, mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes, we did, oh, two sessions, actually three because they didn't give us—we didn't have the damn card, remember?

CHERYL R. RILEY: I know. I—I'm not—okay, this is—

NANETTE CARTER: How many sessions did we have?

CHERYL R. RILEY: We only had—this is the third one, right?

NANETTE CARTER: Was it just three?

CHERYL R. RILEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [. . . –Ed.]

[00:13:35]

[END OF TRACK carter21_4of4_sd_track06_m.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]