

Les Brownlee

OK, today is May the eighth, 1998. And this is the interview with Les Brownlee, Professor of Journalism here at Columbia College. Mr. Brownlee, would you tell us please when you came to Columbia and what the circumstances were that brought you to the institution?

I first came in 1964. I was employed by Channel 7 and it was the consensus that my voice was not projecting enough. There was no question about my knowledge of reporting, I had more awards, at one point, more than anybody else there. So they sent me to Columbia, which at that time was at 540 Lake Shore Drive. And the instructor was a Ms. Viola Park and we would do exercises in teaching you to project and so forth. The next time I came was in 1978 when Lya Rosenblum, who I had met before, called me. I was, at that time, I was Director of Public Relations with the Chicago Board of Education. And she asked me if I would teach a course, one course, and I said, "Of course." And so that's how I started

That's interesting that you really came here as a student first. Can you describe what that was like to remember, you know, the description of the other students or some of the faculty?

Most of the faculty were part-timers. Most of the students were, in some respect, working people and they came with the respect purpose of either improving the quality of their work or to get some sort of an advancement. I was not aware if we had any, if at all, undergraduate students at the time. So, and I don't recall that we had, we may have, I would not be knowl-

edgeable, but I know most of the people whom I knew then were part-timers and professionals. And it seemed that that was the first thrust of the College was to give subsequent education to people who were in the professional, or the arts, field.

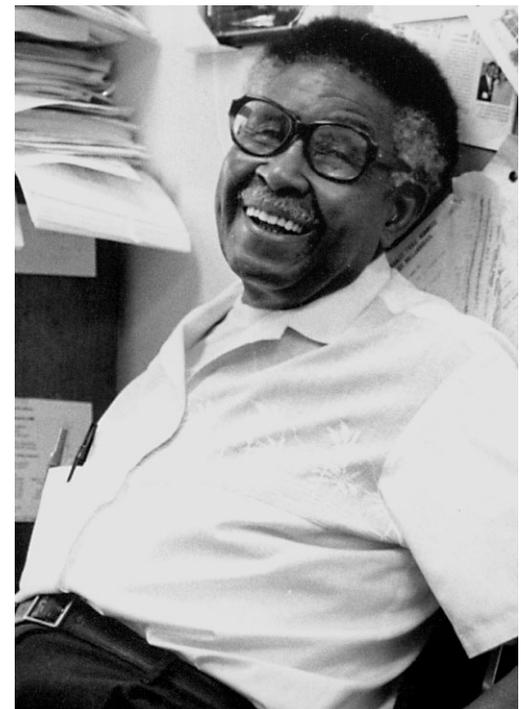
Could you expand that a little more in describing what you see as the mission of Columbia and perhaps if it's changed since you've been here?

It has expanded. Our connections with those who are the professionals in Chicago has remained the same. And the undergraduate side of the College has increased fantastically, almost unbelievably. As a matter of fact, we seem to have had the experience of trying to buy another building in order to be able to catch up with the enrollment each Fall, you know. Also, the shifts seem to be more towards working with undergraduates. I think our strength lies, more than let's say Northwestern, my alma mater, in that we have the professional connections so that students in the junior and senior year can get internships in much larger quantity than Northwestern has been able to provide. And that leads to a great deal of employment. Also, we seem to grow by leaps and bounds primarily through voice, word of mouth, by students. And that's really strange, because I had one student in the summer, I teach at a high school institute in the summer, who came from Pennsylvania and she had heard about Columbia College from a cousin who lived in one of the suburbs of Chicago. She had a wonderful time and is threatening to come back here as a student. So, you know, it's that kind of experi-

ence. Obviously, we do have foreign students. My dear friend Robert Edmonds, who died a few years back and was an authority on film, he was always being invited to lectures, places like Czechoslovakia, [Cologne] and Yugoslavia. And I asked him, I said, "Now, when you go to these do you speak that language?" He said, "No, I speak in English and they understand it. They write their tests in English." So it always made me feel kind of silly, I had some Italian, you know. Anyhow, I have remained here despite offers from Northwestern, University of Kansas, Indiana, from others that offered me more lucrative remuneration but I think that I am needed here more than I am needed in other places. And since I managed to put together a slice of bread and a jug of wine...

Can you tell me more about that? Expand that feeling that you're more needed here?

Well, first of all, open enrollment. Because I've had some students, for



example, who have no way in the world of getting into college, any colleges, who have gone on to make some really good careers. Primarily because once they're inside the door it was our obligation to teach them and to help them expand their knowledge. And through their own conscientiousness, they developed the skills that were necessary. I remember one that I didn't have very much hope for at all. When he was graduating he got a job at the Kankakee Journal. And a few years later on we had an annual Peter Lisagor Award for Exemplary Journalism and sure enough there's his name on the list, one of the winners. Well, he didn't win but he was a finalist, you know, so, this was a person who never would've had an opportunity. And there were more of them. And I've had some, this is a really interesting thing, the present architecture critic on the Chicago Sun-Times, Lee Veigh, I had to threaten to beat him up to make his first job application. I literally took him out in the hall and said, you know, "Go to it or I'll beat the hell out of you." So he went and not only got the job but he's gone on up the ranks, you know? But the thing that I fear most, as far as Columbia's concerned, is that we're getting people in at the administrative level who have been trained in the more traditional colleges. And they seem to want to skew the College direction, into that direction I should say. And that frightens me because they're always telling me about whether or not we should keep open enrollment for example, these kinds of things. And also, the NCAA, the accrediting is used as a yardstick that's used to measure traditional colleges, and that can push us in the wrong direction. At that time then I guess I'll go sell incense.

What are the things you fear losing most that makes Columbia unique or are necessary?

Well, first of all I think it is an open door for people who may have had some problem. For example, whatever they are: economic mostly, sometimes family disruptions. And most, not infrequently, I find young ladies who have had an interrupted marriage, that they have one or two children and whoever he was is long gone. So they're here and they're trying to work part-time or arrange for babysitting, gotta get them an education, so they're really swimming upstream. And I have not known, because it's been many a decade since I was on another college campus, but when I was, I never saw any of that at Northwestern, for example. And before, what we were talking, University of Wisconsin, and I don't recall any of that kind of thing.

So it's not just open enrollment, but you think the students that Columbia accommodates and attracts would not have another place to go as well.

Also some of the, we got some who come in from suburban schools. People like to think of suburban schools as being the superior. But we find some of them who are at a lower level of competence but by the process of working with them and encouraging them we're able to turn up the students and people do go on to make a good career. And our concept of higher education came in from the right wing in the first place; it belonged to the will to do and so forth. So it has been difficult to try to push it in a different direction. It's like anything that's going, more like a locomotive going in that direction:

if you start trying to change that direction it's going to be difficult. And people who have grown up in that system have a problem making that change. Like the Army, the Army has a system and it isn't unique. All armies have the same system. And so now when you introduce, let's say first of all, females in it, it changed the dimension. It's not that they were not competent, but most armies were based on a physical strength, so the females coming in were perceived to be not so strong. Whether that was true or not is the thing. And there's always a fear, at a higher level, that you're debilitating the Army. And I can tell you this from my having spent some time in the service. And I think this is a problem that people who have come in from, in our administration, seem to think that we are wasting our time, our effort on educating these people who are peasants. What I found in my experience in teaching goes back to the same thing that I learned coaching junior high school and teens: Not only do you have to show them how but you have to brainwash them into the feeling that they can do it. And so that is a great deal more important than the contact feeling. So that's my observation anyway.

And then at other schools, sometimes kids arrive believing they can do it and that...

Yes, they're praise happy. You come from a family, everybody's been a college graduate, that's natural, you don't know anything else to do, you know? And so all this support has gone into it. Many times people have had opportunities at reading because there were libraries or, like at my house, we've got a library that rivals almost anybody's. But that's because they go and read three or four books a day, so they have that background. And others

where you may have had trouble even getting to a library had a great deal more trouble. Also, you would live in a household where there is so much noise, or the sister who decided to go to high school when she was twenty-two and there were seven of us kids, so there's so much noise in the house. But we lived two and a half blocks from Evanston library. And so I, she would take me along as company and what does an eight year old do in the library? So the library introduced me to Robin Hood, next thing you know I was hooked on reading. And I attribute a great deal of whatever I was able to accomplish to that kind of experience. But no other one in my family ever bothered to go to college, they were just not sold right. Also I've had a, I went to a, I finished at a good high school in New Trier. So there again you're right in a kind of a U where scholarship is important. And I think that has a great deal to do with it. Does it have value, how do you see yourself? For example, I came along with my first love, which was football. And let's have a debate, I mean Madison, Wisconsin. First of all, I'm excused from freshman English Composition and we didn't have English, so all I would do was write poetry. I'm invited to lunch and into Sam Tylorosas' class. I was known as a writer but I was also a football player. I also made my operatic debut at that point. So I go into opera, football, writing; one Purdue game in 1939 settled that. But I'm saying...

You had an injury in that game?

Oh yeah. Anyhow, but if you come along, I was exposed to these kinds of opportunities and I don't know if I hadn't been. The gang that I went to Evanston High School with my

first two years, none of them would have thought of trying to go into college. However, every last one of their children finished college. So they saw its value but not for themselves. And I think this is a great deal of doing, you know, if you come up in a community of steelworkers you have a hard time trying, you have to live in the community and go to college.

Will growth, do you think, affect the ability of Columbia to meet the needs, I mean they've added a lot of remedial education, but how do you see the large growth that you alluded to earlier as impacting?

Well, as long as we have people here who are familiar with what our primary mission is, and that is "Come ye all who want an education" in Greek. If you can get in the doors we'll do our best to keep you in education. And I think that is our primary responsibility. Now what we need to do is to find more ways of funding it, more ways of getting scholarships or whatever. Because I read in the paper the other day an organization that has scholarships for C students. In other words, if you're A and B you're not capable of, and that to me made so much sense. I think what really made me think about this is years ago at the University of Wisconsin they made a survey of top executives and they found out that the vast majority went through college with a C average. What they did have, they had a great deal of people ability and that's what helped get them to the top, not their superior knowledge. The people who were the A students were working for the C students. They ran their laboratories and so forth. But the big businessmen are always the C students. And I wonder, in other words, we

have to have some of our images changed. One of the things, for example, that happened, I was one of the first African-American men hired by any of the downtown newspapers, and that was January 1950 at the Chicago Daily News. At that time I became such an oddity that I was invited to all these different high schools to speak, you know. I guess they wanted to see what I was level with. And I encouraged a lot of people to come into journalism. Some of them have made outstanding careers: Russ Ewing with Channel 5, and John White who was a Pulitzer Prize winner, Sun Times. As a result of us saying, "Come on in, the water is fine," they did and they succeeded. Well, what we still are not knowledgeable of, for example, we have a number of African-Americans and Hispanics now on television. But I don't think they have any idea how many are on newspapers or magazines. And I've always thought that somebody should come up with, maybe it's the Chicago Association of Black Journalism, sort of a brief resume of showing the photographs and just a brief so forth, that could be circulated among high schools to show, "Hey, you can do it," you know? Because I was an oddity in my community when I grew up. First of all, football practice, I'd take a copy of Shakespeare with me and read, you know?

I'm sure you were an oddity.

They called me Rasputin the mad monk.

Was your course schedule different than a lot of your peers on the football team?

Well, in high school you don't have that much variation. However, in my senior year, I took another

English course as an elective because this is where I thought I could do best and of course I got As in them. But some people would have taken something else, but I took English.

Another gym class.

Yeah, that's true. But I have been here, well, first of all I had that one course in '78 and I pointed out to Lya that there were two more courses missing from the curriculum. And she said, "Will you teach them?" And I said, "Yeah." So suddenly I had three courses part-time. And then the next couple of semesters, the people who were working on the newspaper revolted against the guy who was in charge of, they said he was not a newspaperman at all. And they refused to put the paper out but they asked her to have me take it over. So I took it over, then I had five courses part-time, part-time. Anyway...

Were the courses that you added, was the first course in '78 like an Introduction to Journalism?

Yes, you know, it was more like a concept, who should be in journalism? What qualities are needed and what should you expect? And it was more on that basis and that was eventually phased out.

What were the two other courses that you thought should be?

The History of Journalism and Media and the Law. And so those are the other two that came. So I still think that we need a—of course every department feels this—we need a little bit bigger budget. A friend of mine came to me and asked me if I would kindly retire so he could get another member in his department. I mentioned that to my wife and she hit the ceiling. I'm in good health and I have most of my sanity most of the time, you know. I think that that might trigger a divorce and I

can't quit now. It took a long time to win this woman's heart.

In that twenty-five, almost twenty-five years that you've been here, how—it's a big question, but how has journalism changed and how has the department changed, maybe in response to changes in journalism, you know, through your eyes?

Well, first place, we had a, there was a time here when we had one of the strongest faculties we've ever had. Everybody who was here was a full member of the Chicago Daily News: Darryll Feldmeier, Eric Lund, Nick Shumann, and myself. In other words, there were, and so we had a much more cohesive concept of what it should be about and said, "That's how we're standing." Well, Darryll died and we got a person in who was head of the department who really should not have been in at all. And that was Nat Lerman, and his claim to fame was he was president of Playboy magazine, which is not exactly journalism. It has something to do with writing but—and so therefore, we had some internal fights to try to keep a certain standard. And he retired a couple years ago and we have Chairman Ed Planer who was a member of Channel 5 for NBC. And he does have a much broader knowledge of journalism. One of the things that we are seeing, however, is an emphasis, more emphasis being placed on television because of the glamour of it, I think. And that, I think, is a mistake. It's a mistake in several reasons: number one, the people, the top ownership of the television is interested in the medium as entertainment and so therefore we're not doing the journalistic job. In other words, we're not talking about conditions of the schools, the roads, things that people can really

work with. We're talking about who sleeps with whom and, in other words, it's gone askew. And I asked my class last semester, "How many of you can name three members of the United States Supreme Court?" Nobody could name two. "Name any member of the Illinois Supreme Court?" Nobody. "How many of you know the name of your alderman?" Less than half the class. But we're journalists; we had to do this in sixth grade. And so, you know, where have you been? What's wrong? And as I pointed out, television is poorly equipped to report on elections. They can report who's ahead in Cedar Rapids and so on and so forth. But unless the League of Women Voters gets a big enough budget to be able to arrange a debate, and then only between two principals, or a few principals, you don't get any of the issues. And so the whole concept of journalism is a symbiotic relationship between our type of government and journalism. And if we don't know what it is, I pointed out, "Do you know how easy it would be for Saddam Hussein to elect his candidate for president?" All he has to do is get enough money, buy ads on television, presto, and we just vote for him. We have no idea that there was something wrong or even know how to look behind the scene. Now, this is very frightening, and it's frightening to me as a journalist who took the responsibility very seriously, you know. As a matter of fact, I quit television. I got fed up with it. I was very, very disappointed in its inability to report on the issues, many of which, when I brought them up, were retold at Channel 7. When you got to the place, when even you got running up it always seemed like quietus interruptus, ninety seconds to tell a story that they needed fifteen paragraphs in a paper. And, you know,

that's business consistent with our diet, you know, McDonalds, fast food and so forth, you know where this cookie is cut from. And that's not journalism. And of course there's a recent thing with President Clinton. Well, first Princess Diana was understandable, but a debacle; we shouldn't have gone over there, and, of course, there was a great deal of sympathy but we shouldn't have given that much to her. Once we've done it, we've opened the door and now this business with President Clinton, I don't have any love one way or another from him except that from a journalist's standpoint, if he's involved with this woman, it's his, his wife, and the other woman. It isn't something that we need, a matter of stake. But we forgot to report, I can't think of the man's name, who gave two million dollars to the American Spectator with the injunction, "Get Clinton!" Now this, what's her name, Tripp? "Oh, he's a part of that conspiracy and they are as phony as a three dollar bill." And the judge, a Republican judge dismissed the Paula Jones case, she ran with what the law said. The suit didn't meet any of the standards. In other words, it was a set-up all along. Now, where is journalism and reporting at?

Do you find that your students, are they more interested in those kinds of topics or are they as discouraged?

I don't think that they have the problem that I've had... Broadcast journalism, each one of them has a vision of standing up, looking pretty and...

And reading news, or reading entertainment.

...getting paid for it. But the reality is this: Channel 5, for example, for quite some time, has had about

twenty percent of its on-air personnel part-time.

I did not realize that.

Yeah, they don't have to pay any insurance. The Tribune is going into that now. So what you're doing is you're even diluting the quality of experience. And my wife, who is a lawyer, Madison, Wisconsin, for the Wisconsin Education Association, has been running into this—these small town school boards, they find a teacher who is at the upper level of the K scale and they go out of their way to try to figure out how to fire, frame him, almost anything. One teacher, they sent private investigators out to check his whole career and they found somebody who claimed he had sex with a student, not one of his current students, eighteen years ago. Now that kind of stuff. I said, "My God, what's happening?" So, all right. The scandal that has developed in Cicero with the Chicago Police Department, where were we? And this is what I'm saying: we have to do this! And we took pride in it, we won eight Pulitzer Prizes, and I had published work in about three of them, but we were indoctrinated into this whole idea.

Investigation is what journalists need to do.

Well, yeah. And I was first, "Pete, let's go over this send it to Washington." And the city editor then says, "Give the story over to Les and I." I got the story, I didn't have any idea what it was since we were always being investigative, I was looking for the crooked side of it. Well, what had happened during the Depression, people who had bought lots were unable to pay the taxes so they lost them. And at the time we had more than two hundred and fifty thousand lots that had been taken over by the

county because people couldn't pay taxes. What could the county do? So there was a woman's name who kept appearing and she was a clerk in the office and she kept buying these properties. I'm looking at, what in the world is going on? And her bank account, she has a modest home, her children were grown and out. I couldn't find out though suddenly it hit me. First of all, the Illinois Constitution, 1870, in order to keep New York bankers from taking over, said that if a person lost his property for taxes, he had two years to redeem it. So that meant if he lost it you couldn't have clear title for two years. So here I had found all these back taxes and so forth. The back taxes and all may have been more than the lot's worth. However, if somebody came and made a bid on that, he could buy that property. So suppose I had this clerk make a bid on it and she's already signed to quit claim B. So I give her the money, she buys the property, sells it back to the person who had it in the first place. And suddenly it's back on the tax hold. Well, it's a funny thing that made sense. But having been brought up in an ideal, because there's gotta be something crooked, I was looking in the wrong way for several weeks before I could find the guy who runs it. But the part was, this is what we did.

Who was giving her the money?

Well, anybody. Let's say my lot was taken over.

Was she out soliciting people?

No, no. It was known in the clerk's office. In other words, this was the only way they could get the lots back on the tax roll. In other words, the guy who lost it owed more in back taxes than the lot was worth. So there's no way in the

world that he could not. Somebody was going to buy a whole block of it he's got to wait two years until he can get a clear title. So that wasn't the direction to go. But if this person, this clerk with bid on it, I'd get it and then it was hers to do with whatever she wanted. But she had already decided to quit plan B before she brought the property and so it's back on the tax roll; I'm paying my taxes again. So, you know, it's this kind of thing that we, although the Sun Times still does a lot of it, the Tribune to some extent. But this is what we are about. The thing that came up in Cicero has been going on for years. And suddenly somebody discovered it. It's just like, "You mean my mother had sex with my father?" You know, that worries me. And I do believe that that's where we are and unless we can put more emphasis on the reasons behind things happening. Journalism magazines have been extremely critical of what has been happening with authority. The way the media has been treating this whole presidential debauchery...

I think that people now expect that that's what's going to be on the news and they, you know, it's created its own standing.

One programmer, a woman from Denmark, she was, spoke English, but she said, "Every time I turn on the television, I get tired of looking and listening to this crap." That's the way she put it. And, "What in the world are you people doing? What else?" And so the next few, I think, days, they backed off of it. But, it was just, it was entertainment. And that's probably has some value as entertainment although I don't, maybe I've had enough sexual experience not to find that it's particularly exciting that the President wants to go to bed, to

someone our age. And she says, "Yes, that's between him, his wife, and the woman," you know. And I don't see it any other way. It isn't a matter of stake, the Constitution isn't threatened, I don't see it. They talk about the moral issue, well, if you're Pat Buchanan, yeah, OK fine. But most, and this idea that Paula Jones, as he is supposed to have propositioned her, show me some woman over fifteen who hasn't been! I mean, how else does it work? Does the woman come up and proposition the man? How else does it work? Now she has, she can say no, but I still believe I then have an obligation to speak up if they're interested in someone. How else can you do it? Maybe that's my peculiar religion but...

A lot of people agree with you. Well, the point is this: If somebody asks and the woman says no and that's the end of it, I don't see anything wrong with it.

Has—based on your experience here at Columbia—has your vision of education changed? Maybe because of the times or based on what Columbia's about and what it's trying to accomplish?

Well, I like what Columbia's trying to do and all of the different departments I know are very proud of the reputation it has, many of its, many departments. And I think it is gaining, rightfully, a very good stature. And I believe that that's the direction in which you continue it. I have more concern because we don't seem to have developed a kind of outreach program to high schools. Now, I've been lecturing in high schools and although I tend to lecture about journalism, it is more a, I try to give them the impression that if you want to, just, you can do it, you can try it, the door's open. And I think that this is what, we should have more outreach into

high schools. Actually, if we could get down to the grammar schools and junior high schools it would be even better. But we have to give students, particularly minority students, a feeling that there's a possibility. I grew up in Evanston during a period of time when it was so damn big that you would not believe it. The mayor tried to get the city council to deputize the American Legion. They'd have clubs to stand on the corner in Negro neighborhoods and just beat up blacks. Oh, some of the things that happened you just would not believe. Anyway, I'm putting it into an autobiography that I'm working on now that may be out whenever. But...

And Evanston's so anonymous. I mean today it's reputation is being progressive and...

I am more responsible for that too. In 1960, as a result of talking to Bill Baar, I opened the Evanston Urban League. And it's November, a lady who I knew, a good friend, we got a list of three hundred names, about equally of blacks and whites, and we sent out invitations for a meeting right after Thanksgiving.

What year was that? Sorry.

1960. The day of the meeting there was a terrific blizzard. And of the three hundred people we invited, two hundred and ninety-eight showed up.

Are you kidding?

So we begin, we divide it into committee work. People began to make some investigations and some white people were extremely surprised. For example, at that time the Evanston YMCA was not open to blacks at all. You know, there was a color line and some of the people who had been making

contributions, when they found this out they said, "Well, I'm certainly not going to." And then suddenly the doors open like, "Please come in!" OK. We had a problem trying to get black teachers. We had them in Foster School, which was the black school. So Dr. Chute, who has recently retired, and I became friends. My wife, first wife, was the first one hired by him. And we sat in our kitchen and plotted how to get them into better schools. And we had one, a woman, a bigoted teacher at Lincolnwood School in Evanston. My wife had gone there substitute teaching; she wouldn't let her teach. Anyhow, so we got an African-American who was extremely fair, blue eyes and everything, and put her in the school. And then she was there three years before the principal said, "African-American." She was extremely popular and then she had a principal retire. But, I mean, these are some of the things that happened. We, as kids, we were playing across the field, they sent over two paddy wagons, a bunch of kids, rounded us up, put us down in jail. Now some woman on Sheridan Road had—this was in the summer time—had come out of her dining room into the living room and through a screen door had seen a child on her front porch. And the child ran. She called the police and they rounded us up and kept us in for her to come in and identify us. Well, she had a big dinner party planned and so she couldn't come down for three days. And for three days we sat there and waited. And when she did come down she says, "Well, I didn't see who it was. Don't you have a third degree or something or other to try to find out who it was?" It happened time and time again.

Three days; children. Do you find yourself, when you tell your students about your own experience, are any of them, do they know the history of their experience, that they're African-American in Chicago or, is it a surprise to them or...

Not really, because the thing that is happening in Chicago, and even worse in Cicero, is that many of the practices still continue.

They stand.

And I talked once to a sister that you could turn to who told me that one of the state's attorneys, a person's stature in that office depends on the number of convictions you can get. So it's easy to convince someone who is a minority because they don't usually have the money or so forth and so on. And then a guy who's running for reelection points out he put more people in jail than the last guy. Now, in 1990 Rob Ward, who is a darn good crime reporter, pointed out, he did a piece for The Chicago Magazine, I can give you a copy of it, pointing out that there were twenty-eight people in Statesville that he really knew were not guilty. Illinois has the highest record of people being turned, taken off death row than any other state. So this, you know, this still goes on. And the idea of "put them in jail and throw away the key" is right now building more jails than schools. It's sick. Part of it is the National Rifle Association insisted everybody ought to have half a dozen guns. And what happened? I'm a combat veteran, five years in active duty, nineteen years in the National Guard; I don't own a gun. Why don't I own a gun? I know what guns do. And most of the guys who I knew as officers, they don't own guns. I mean, we're combat veterans.

You know, when you find out who uses them against whom and... Well, first of all, if you got a gun and you got children, you got problems. And if you have to dismantle it or put the ammunition one place and the gun another place, when somebody breaks into your house, you know, while you're lying in bed the guy's pointing a gun at your face, you say, "Wait a minute until I go into the closet and get my gun," you know? It doesn't make sense. People tend to be trigger-happy too, I think.

Just, when, you've already mentioned but anything else that you'd like to see as either the major challenges that Columbia's going to have to face on the horizon or what you see in its future. I think that we're going to have to be a stronger voice of what I call equal education opportunity. That is, at the lower grades. Now, one of the problems we have in many of the minority communities, of course, is the gang problem. Which affects attendance because you're not going to go to class if you're going to get shot and so forth. And that goes down even to some of the grammar schools. Plus the fact that we need to make a stronger push for educational budget at a lower level. When I first started at Chicago Daily News none of the black schools ever got any textbooks, none. The ones, the white kids that were using them said, "Yeah, the South Side high school that was teaching high school without a lab." Because they couldn't get the money for it then, you know. These are the facts of life. So we still have people who believe that it's much more important to pave the roads than to educate a child. And so until we can do that, until we have—we know by the

fourth grade that a child's in trouble. And that's when the interventions should start and we're not doing enough of that. Now we always call kids the real high school dropouts, by in my experience is that so many more of them are push-outs. They are a problem for the administration, they're a problem for the teachers, so whatever you can do to get rid of the guy, it makes life easier for you.

It does.

Also there's a concept of a voucher. It's the stupidest thing because what it will tend to do is to further separate the poor from the rich. And the more we do that, the more we move towards some kind of social revolution. But most people are not intelligent enough to be able to see that. And I do believe that in that respect we should have a stronger voice enunciating this. It should be done, probably enlisting more people to go down to Springfield and twist legislature's arm. Our, those in the southern portion in the States still carry a lot of the bigotry from where they came from, you know. After the Civil War, you had a bunch of Copperheads, they moved to southern Illinois. And that's where you get this entrenchment of bigotry. And so you can always get elected if you say, we need to spend, to send the poor money down a rathole for those kids, in Chicago they're not gonna, you know, with gangsters and so forth and so on. And so therefore you have them always fighting a frenzy. There was a time a few years ago, we had eighteen Illinois school districts on the verge of bankruptcy. Now, I don't know what I'm supposed to do for.

Well, thank you very much, I appreciate your time.

If you need more... we were in the process of doing a search for a new department chair. First of all, we had to fight like hell to get more of the department on the committee.

As opposed to, who was on...
Bert Gall, a whole bunch of the administration.

OK, outside of the department.

So, finally they can see it. But what they did was, they greatly increased the other side. Now we had eight full-time people. Seven of them wanted a woman who had been teaching... and under no circumstances would they get her. The first person they wanted was a guy who had been a sports reporter for some place out in California. But we were afraid he was part of the old boy network.

What reason did they give for not wanting to hire the woman from Emerson?

They didn't have to. We had a system of voting you picked first, second, and third. The first place got three points, two points, and one point. And so when we ended up, you know, we were outvoted, OK. So I was talking to one of my students who is now a graduate and they work in the same news journal. And I was telling him about it and I pointed out, at the time we had one female, maybe two, two department chairs, one African-American chair; no Hispanics. So now when people ask me outside, "How do you consider you have diversity?", what am I supposed to tell them?

People don't like to talk about that.

I know.

When they write about Columbia in interviews, they don't, I mean very few address that.

So he wrote that in a column, and boy, did the President hit the ceiling. He began to point out all of the minorities, the women and so forth. That's fine but they're all in administrative positions. When the army was ordered to integrate, I know, because that was a big one too. They brought African-Americans into white organizations, or offices. We were put in administrative posts. Nobody had a command and so at the same time, we said this, but the same chain of command was primarily white. OK, and that's what we have had. As a result of that, I can't say as a result, shortly after that Lya named three women to departments. And we got Margaret Sullivan, chair of Marketing. Was this because of that? Maybe we just can't find qualified blacks to head departments. Anyway, that's another thing that we need to work on here. We are not telling the truth about diversity. But, if we have people who are in power who are part of the old boy network, they can't see any farther than that.

So the old boy network has been alive and well here at Columbia, even at Columbia. Thank you very much, Mr. Brownlee.

No, Les.

Les.