



Interview with Donald D. Warner

Under the Auspices of the
Monmouth County Library Headquarters
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**Donald D. Warner,
present day**

Ms. West: Hello, Dr. Warner. Thank you very much for participating in our oral history project. First of all, can you tell us where you are from?

Mr. Warner: I am glad to be here, thank you. I am from Crestmont, Pennsylvania, an interesting small town on the outskirts north of Philadelphia. Interesting in that there are, I guess, approximately three thousand citizens. The largest municipality there is called Abington Township, which is a very wealthy district. Crestmont itself was primarily an African American community. We had one Italian family living in the community; one of the children was one of my boyhood friends. I remember the name specifically, but I won't mention it.

Ms. West: Okay, please continue.

Mr. Warner: I was born one of eight children and I would be number five actually. My mother was from Newport News, Virginia, and my father was born in Hatboro, Pennsylvania. My mother and most of her family members are very well educated persons from Newport News. My father only went through grade three. During most of my life he was never employed. Most of the men in Crestmont worked at odd jobs, except in times when the WPA and several other federally sponsored governmental programs were in vogue during my early years.

Ms. West: Would you tell us what the WPA stands for?

Mr. Warner: Works Progress Administration. That was a program that came out of the early governmental area along with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps etc., that were utilized to hire youth. During that particular time, I was never part of that because I was too young. But, what's very interesting in the hometown is that it was very difficult for African American men to find jobs. Most of our mothers worked as domestics, even though my mother, along with many others, was well educated. She spent all of her life working for wealthy women and families in the greater Abington area taking in washing and ironing, scrubbing floors, and the like. And on weekends other persons from the Abington area would bring in their washing and ironing to be done in our home also. I attended the Park Elementary School which was ninety-nine percent African American, with the exception of the one family that I mentioned earlier. In Park Elementary School I was a very, very good student. It was very interesting that upon entering junior high school, I found out that as good as I was, I dropped from an A student to immediately becoming a C and D student, based on the information I had acquired. One of the things I had to do was to learn how to read and write at the level of other students. The junior high school was an integrated high school, and many of the students there were from the wealthy areas of Ridal, Pennsylvania, Abington, Pennsylvania. I learned to write by copying from a girl named Joy who sat in front of me in most of my classes, and she wrote very beautifully, with large circular letters. I just copied her writing and learned to write that way. It was very interesting: in elementary school, where my grades were very, very good, I would, on report card day, have to run home, because other students would want to beat me up, simply because my grades were that good. And then to go from that atmosphere to a junior high school where one's grades evidently were not good enough, based on the learning that I had acquired, but also based on what I believed happens to be some sophistications of racism in America about expectations for young Black men at that time, which continues even today in some sophisticated areas. I graduated from junior high school and attended Abington Senior High School. The graduating classes were very small during that time; there may have been one hundred and fifty students graduating from prestigious Abington High School. After Abington High School, I was employed by Strawbridge and Clothier as a stock boy for a short period of time. Then I was employed by a building contractor. From there I joined the United States Marine Corps. In 1951, as an enlistee, I saw service in Korea on front lines. I returned from Korea, met a sailor in Portsmouth, Virginia and asked him if he knew of any colleges that I could attend in Pennsylvania. He directed me to Temple University. I attended Temple University from 1954 to 1958. My mission there was interesting in that I talked to the bursar and asked if I could take an entrance examination. They allowed me to take an examination, and I entered Temple University.

Ms. West: Let's regress a little to your youth before we get too far on. You say that you were a good student; did you do a lot of reading then as a youngster?

Mr. Warner: I read primarily for school, and outside readings were slim because there were always a lot of chores to be done. These were considered manly chores at the time: white washing fences and white washing rocks, cleaning the yard and the outhouse, things that we don't have to do today, thank goodness.

Ms. West: Thank goodness is right!

Mr. Warner: But there were loads of chores. We also picked coal on the tracks for warmth during the winters. We grew a very large garden, and one of the things my father would do was to trade vegetables for soft coal from the engineers on the freight trains. We would stand at the railroad tracks, because the home that we lived in in Crestmont was adjacent to the railroad tracks. We would wave the freight trains down, they would stop, we would trade vegetables, and they would give us soft coal, or coke, not the kind of coke that's associated with cocaine today, but soft coal.

Ms. West: What a horrible way to have to think and differentiate!

Mr. Warner: Yes!

Ms. West: Did you have any heroes when you were growing up; heroes or heroines?

Mr. Warner: Most of our heroes during that particular day, were really people within the community. Most of them were religious, ministers, or Mrs. Armstead, my Sunday school teacher, who was a very, very devout religious person, who, in fact, I had bless all of my children when they were born. These were our heroes. It was a time when you were responsible to every member in the community. You could receive a spanking from Mrs. Armstead, and once she told your parents what had occurred, you would receive another spanking, without question, whether or not you were right or wrong. There were no questions to be asked. Also the same thing occurred at school; whenever a parent was contacted by the school, I was immediately spanked. There was no question about "What did you do, etc, etc.?" The school was always right. I'm very happy that that has changed today, because I know the school is not always right - in terms of today's times.

Ms. West: What was the first movie that you saw, do you recall?

Mr. Warner: When we first went to movies we used to have to walk the railroad tracks to attend a movie theater. That was usually a twenty, twenty-five minute walk, and most of the movies that we saw were, we called them serials at the time, would be of the Tom Mix caliber: westerns where the good guys wore white hats and the bad guys wore black hats, black clothing. They would be the earliest movies that I recall.

Ms. West: What type of music did you listen to as a youngster?

Mr. Warner: As a youngster, I don't remember music per se, except the recordings that we played on a Victrola for my older sisters who were allowed to go through the courting nuances in the living room. I would sit on top of the stairs and wind the victrola for them, whatever stock, but I don't recall the music as much as I recall running up and down the stairs to wind that victrola when it stopped. I personally guess most of our music at the time was really religious; my mother spent a lot of time, an exceedingly amount of time, in church. That means three times on Sundays, plus any activity that occurred during the week. We were always asked to accompany her to church, so we, too, spent a lot of time in religious activities. I'm very thankful for this because of the things that happened to me at Temple University: I took a course in dramatics, and the only drama I knew happened to be the church plays that Mrs. Armstead had us involved in at church. So it's from those plays that I can write about choreography and characterizations, etc. All thanks to Mrs. Armstead.

Ms. West: Did you listen to the radio much?

Mr. Warner: The radio was the only instrument at the time, and what I primarily remember is World War II and Gabriel Heater, who was a commentator on the War. He had a very ominous voice. Everything was death and dying and the end of the world kind of approach for Gabriel Heater. Other than that, I do recall the Amos and Andy radio programs. I'd have to think a little harder to remember beyond that.

Ms. West: What newspaper headlines stand out in your mind as a young adult?

Mr. Warner: Newspaper headlines would be primarily associated again with the War.

Ms. West: And with the War, I'm assuming that you mean World War II?

Mr. Warner: World War II. Because my brother, my oldest brother, was involved in the War, so I was paying attention at that particular time. So most of the headlines that I would recall would speak to the German front or our adventures with Japan, etc.

Ms. West: Do you recall President Roosevelt?

Mr. Warner: Well, I'm especially attuned to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, simply because I was named after him with my middle name. He was seen in the community, especially from my parents' eyes, as somewhat of a hero at the time, even though programmatically I guess we were into welfare lines and all this kind of thing in terms of making a living. But he was viewed as a hero.

Ms. West: As a boy, what games did you play?

Mr. Warner: Games? Games were very simple. We spent a lot of time in the cellar of one of my friends named Charlie Miles. It was a dirt cellar with a stream running through it. And in that stream we had tadpoles and frogs and we spent a lot of time playing there in that little pool of water in the cellar. We also spent a lot of time in blackberry patches and raspberry patches just picking berries. These kinds of activities became our games. We had what we called bunks, that we would build adjacent to the railroad tracks. We had sledding. One of the phenomenal activities was sledding down Rockway Avenue and jumping the railroad track with your sled. The railroad tracks led right into my back yard. But we did some roller-skating, and I had some friends, the Jones, two older women who taught me to play small, organized card games. But that was primarily the extent of games - there was always work to be done. But we did have time to play. We raised chickens for example, so you had to feed chickens, and one of the difficult things coming up was learning to wring the head of a chicken. It was not a game, but it was an activity that had to occur because we were broke. Also, when it was time to clean the well, I was usually lowered into the well on a rope to clean out any dirt that would be in the well. So games were sort of interspersed with whatever activities you had to do.

Ms. West: Was Crestmont a rural area?

Mr. Warner: Yes. Not really rural, but suburban. But when it comes to rural, I worked on a farm as a youngster.

Ms. West: Yes.

Mr. Warner: That was rural. That was in Hatboro which was ten miles North of Crestmont. That area would be considered rural.

Ms. West: What were the fads when you were coming up? What kinds of clothes did the teenagers wear?

Mr. Warner: I'm trying to think. We wore knickers most of the time. Hand-me-downs were the order of the day. As the fourth boy I would wear whatever was handed down to me from the other boys. Most of our clothing would have been given to us by primarily Mrs. Wagner, for whom my mother worked. And I would have the third wearing of the knickers. We also wore brogans - these are big shoes. Actually the kids today are wearing what I would call brogans, only we had cleats on the bottom of them. We were not allowed to wear our brogans on the way to elementary school; we'd tie them around our necks and put them on at the schoolhouse door so they would last longer. But they also were good soccer boots for playing soccer in school. But long socks and knickers I recall because if you had a hole in your pocket, which we often had, then your marbles would fall down into the knickers to be caught.

Ms. West: Did the boys and girls play pretty much the same games?

Mr. Warner: Oh, actually I don't recall many of the girls' games with the exception of jump rope, because we used to turn rope for the girls once in a while and jump double-dutch on an occasion when they would allow us.

Ms. West: Okay, now we'll get back to your college days.

Mr. Warner: I attended Temple University on the GI bill. That was my opportunity to go to college. My statement in the high school yearbook simply says that I wanted to be somebody, I didn't know what I wanted to become, because the professionals that were available for us to emulate were very few. We had in my community an undertaker, or funeral director, a pharmacist, Dr. Woolfolk, one physician, Dr. Pinkny, and the minister. So these were the professions that you would know.

Ms. West: Right.

Mr. Warner: And of course your elementary school teachers who lived in the community at the time. So these would be the professionals. After an honorable discharge from the United States Marine Corps for my participation in the Korean War, I attended Temple University where I majored in English for my undergraduate years.

Ms. West: In what year was this?

Mr. Warner: That would be from 1954 to 1958. I graduated from Temple University and I took the examinations for teaching in an urban school system, and I taught at Fitzsimmons Junior High School during the day, which is in North Philadelphia, and I worked at Morlan Recreation in the evenings for a period of time and attended night school for some ten to fifteen years working on certification in reading. I left Temple University where I was attending graduate school to attend a special program at Pennsylvania State University, where I earned my masters and doctorate. I graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a Doctorate in Education in 1972. During that period I went on sabbatical leave from John Bartram Senior High School, which is in Southwest Philadelphia, to attend Pennsylvania State University.

Ms. West: When did you become interested in teaching? When did you realize that this was going to be your vocation?

Mr. Warner: Well, because teaching was the only profession that I really knew, given my experiences with the few people that I could emulate in the community. I decided that I could become a teacher, and become a good teacher. And then I became a motivation director, a vice-principal, and a principal, and finally a

superintendent. My principalship occurred when I applied for a position in Willingboro, New Jersey.

Ms. West: When did you first move to New Jersey?

Mr. Warner: 1970. We moved to New Jersey, and I served as Principal of Willingboro High School and John F. Kennedy High School, in Willingboro, New Jersey until about 1974, when I became acting Superintendent of the Willingboro Schools. And from there, in 1975, I took a position here, in Little Silver, as superintendent of the schools, and I worked there from 1975 to 1997, when I retired.

Ms. West: I understand that you were the first Black superintendent of the Red Bank Regional High School District.

Mr. Warner: Yes, I was the first Black superintendent there. I was also the first Black principal in Willingboro, and also the first Black acting Superintendent in Willingboro at the time. One of the things that I think helped me propel forward was the fact that in Willingboro we were on what was called a dual shift, a double shift, and they perceived themselves as having quite a bit of problems, etceteras, but those problems were very miniscule in terms of what I had already been through in the Philadelphia areas where I had served at the senior and the junior high level. While completing my doctorate, I spent two to three years working with gangs, and my doctoral dissertation deals with the gang family that I actually lived with for about a year and a half. So the problems in Willingboro were miniscule as compared to what I had knowledge of in Philadelphia. And the Little Silver Red Bank Regional High School was the smallest district that I had ever worked in, and it was somewhat an academy as far as I was concerned.



Donald Warner, former superintendent at Red Bank Regional High School, with students Mike Korba and Stephanie McCarter

Ms. West: Right. And how did you secure this position?

Mr. Warner: I interviewed along with, I guess, one hundred and fifty other candidates. In fact I was one of the last persons to be interviewed. Interestingly enough, a person now deceased, Dr. Larry Kaplan, had recommended me for this position, and had asked me if I would apply for this position. Larry Kaplan worked for Rutgers University, and I had met him through one of the programs that we had at Willingboro High School. But the person in Monmouth County who I think was most influential in terms of bringing me here, was Dr. Parker, Dr. Alvin Parker, because he drove board members to Willingboro to see my performance

there. And from there I became the school superintendent here, after a series of interviews.

Ms. West: Dr. Parker, is this Dr. Parker, Sr.?

Mr. Warner: Senior - no, no..

Ms. West: Or was it a different Dr. Parker?

Mr. Warner: Well, Dr. Parker Sr. would be his father. This is Dr. Alvin Parker, who would be Junior. Right now we're dedicating the Parker Family Health Center after him. That's the Parker I'm talking about. Dr. Alvin Parker, Jr.

Ms. West: Okay. I say it like that because you know we have other tapes with Dr. Parker being referred to, and I just want to make sure that people understand when they see this Dr. Parker's name coming up to whom we are referring.

Mr. Warner: Dr. Parker, Sr. I have never met. He was deceased before my coming into the area. But I did live in his house for two or three months while my home was being built. So I'm sort of familiar from that standpoint.

Ms. West: Right. He had quite an influence on a lot of African American lives, not just in Red Bank, but in the Monmouth County.

Mr. Warner: Correct.

Ms. West: Now you say there were about a hundred people who were interviewing for this position; were there any other Blacks besides yourself?

Mr. Warner: I really don't know. I don't have that information. I never asked, actually. I only know that I was one of the last persons to be interviewed.

Ms. West: How were you received in the educational book by the Board of Education in Red Bank when you got this position?

Mr. Warner: Well, it was very interesting in that the night of my hire here, five of the board members from Willingboro came here to support me in the hiring process. That made quite an impression. And I was received very, very well here and in Little Silver. Now the high school itself is, or was at the time, eighty to eighty five percent Caucasian, ten- percent minority, and five percent other. It was an excellent position, a rare position, here in New Jersey simply because there are some six hundred plus superintendents in the State of New Jersey, and only a few of us were, and continue to be, African Americans.

Ms. West: And you held this position until your retirement?

Mr. Warner: Yes. I was there close to twenty-five years. It was a very successful superintendency. I see many of my students no matter where I go. In fact, as I walked into the Library today, I was watching a young man sweeping outside and I was wondering if he had been one of my students. I didn't stop to speak with him, but I see former students all over in all kinds of professions. It's a great community to work in.

Ms. West: If you could describe your life as a road map, how would you depict it - smooth, rough, up and down, rocky?

Mr. Warner: Actually, it was a little bit of all of those things. I just finished reading a book by Hunard, I think her name is, who talks about hind feet and the preparation. She looks at antelopes and mountain goats and their ability to develop hind feet. As an African American in this country, one has to develop those hind feet. You have to be over prepared in everything, you have to be more knowledgeable in most things, and you have to present yourself in almost a perfect manner. For example, many of the superintendents could, for example, go to the local Molly Pitcher Hotel and sit up at the bar and have cocktails, etc., and nothing would be said about them. I was never able to do that, and I knew I couldn't do that because any incident that could cause negative comments would reflect against me, the school district, and the community, and myself as an African American. I had to be very, very careful in all matters. I had to exercise social distance most of the time. I had to be available, but not available at the same time. So it's a very difficult line, a very thin line, that you walk in terms of being successful. And most of my life has sort of prepared me for that. One of the more interesting things that happened to me happened in high school when an English instructor asked me to read "When Malindy Sings," one of Paul Lawrence Dunbar's poems. That poem is in dialect, and is very difficult to read. It's very interesting that my mother could recite it backwards and forwards. But as a young man coming up, I didn't have that opportunity, and the moment she asked me to read, I knew I couldn't read the dialect. But she, as a white instructor, expected me, as the only Black member in that English class, to be able to read that dialect. I couldn't do it. I've had similar situations throughout life, but I especially remember that. I can read it now, quite well, but at the time, I could not. And it's those little subtleties that begin to smash at what we are as Black Americans. We're always a hyphenated American. And one of the things that you have to remember is that no matter who you are or what you become, no matter how successful you are, you're still a hyphenated American, and people perceive me in that way, and no matter what, you can't change that. It's always very negative in a country that we have established in terms of equality for all, etc. Equality just does not exist at this time.

Ms. West: What would you say is your greatest achievement?

Mr. Warner: My greatest achievement has been, and continues to be, just communicating with individuals. I'm available, approachable, able to -- most of

the time -- able to communicate with people. People want to be heard, but are not necessarily seeking answers, because there are many problems that no one can answer. Only God can answer. And so, if one is just available to listen, to be concerned, this is most helpful to persons. There have been other achievements, such as establishing the Performing Arts School at Red Bank Regional High School, this kind of thing.

Ms. West: Tell us about this Performing Arts School at Red Bank Regional High School.

Mr. Warner: Well, the Performing Arts School at Red Bank Regional was new to the County, and we had to go to the court to be sanctioned to have it, because many districts were against our becoming a performing arts school. But the courts sanctioned us. It was a difficult battle, but it provided an opportunity for Red Bank Regional: for example, the district now has students from at least twenty-five outside districts attending that high school because of the Performing Arts School, and because we offer other vocational programming that a comprehensive high school wouldn't normally offer. So that was a landmark decision here in Monmouth County.

Ms. West: So that's a program that you're responsible for having here.

Mr. Warner: Yes, but that was one item. The most difficult thing with Red Bank Regional is the perception of students from a Little Silver or Shrewsbury wealthy, well to do community, that I'm sure you're very familiar with, against or versus Red Bank public students. These students mesh all of a sudden and one has to manipulate and make that work, so that on the one hand, the underachiever is achieving and pulling himself or herself forward, and at the same time those who are already achieving can obtain their objectives with relative ease. That's very difficult, but we managed to do it very well.

Ms. West: What would you say is the most unusual thing about yourself?

Mr. Warner: Most unusual...I don't know that I necessarily have anything that's most unusual. I don't know. Most of what I like about me presently has to do with my ability to internalize the greater fears of mankind and somehow or other be able to at this point deal with them effectively. And here I'm talking about areas of pain, death, dying, and the greater issues that we hide and don't spend enough time talking about. These are issues of great concern, and these are the issues that I think I'm able to deal with now. It's interesting because during the years of my time in the United States Marine Corps, 1951 to 1954 on the front lines, as a young person, I never looked at death in terms of it ever happening to me, and yet it was happening all around me.

Ms. West: And now that you're older you see your mortality?

Mr. Warner: But now that you've had those experiences, you can piggyback on those experiences, and deal with what is now. It's not a matter of "becoming" anymore, you revert back to "being." So it becomes interesting.

Ms. West: So when you see your life today, and in your quiet time or whatever, do you reflect back as "dear youth" or what have you, and how different times have become?

Mr. Warner: The times, or me?

Ms. West: Well, say with you. Say when you were a youngster, one of your parent's friends or other said to you, "Donald, what would you want to be when you grow up?" And maybe you weren't prepared for the question, but the average, I guess there was a fireman, a policeman, and then as you were going on, you might see say a mason, or whatever, and maybe you'd like to be a bricklayer, whatever. Did you ever dream that you'd be in this position?

Mr. Warner: I never dreamed that I'd be in any position. It was interesting to note that I said I wanted to "be somebody," yet I didn't know what that somebody was all about. I had absolutely no idea. I never thought I'd have an opportunity to go to college, but then the GI bill came about because of my service in the Marine Corps, so that gave me an opportunity to attend college, and it was after I'd met so many different people in the Marine Corps that I realized that I had to do something that was unique, something that would set me aside from all the others, and that is when I really began to pursue a higher education. I did not necessarily know what I was going to do or become. And I'm still striving to become as it were, because I'm now a full time student at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Ms. West: Now looking at you are still studying, so I assume there is something you still are likely to accomplish.

Mr. Warner: Well, I spent, as I said earlier, from the earliest of days until now, quite a bit of time in religious institutions and churches, and I teach an adult Sunday school class on Sunday mornings. Now I'm pursuing a degree in the ministry, so that this may be my final step. I'm not sure, hopefully there'll be many more after this, but it's very interesting that when I was a young boy, my mother had said to me at one point when one of her brothers died, there was a scholarship for me if I wanted to take it, to go into the ministry. The money would be left by her brother, Eldridge. And at the time I said, "Mom, that is the last thing I want to do." And it's very interesting that this is the last thing that I'm doing. So I'm pursuing that particular vocation right now. I have some other things I wish to do, such as publishing a volume of poetry, and perhaps writing a book that I could do in the next two years. I did a poetry presentation about six months ago. I have already written over two hundred and fifty poems, so it's just a matter of organizing them and having them presented.

Ms. West: Has anything been published yet?

Mr. Warner: The *Asbury Park Press* did a couple of them, and there are a couple in a couple of poetry books. But I haven't compiled them yet.

Ms. West: Is there any other writing that you've done?

Mr. Warner: Well, I've written research articles for the American Administrative Association, and a few articles of that nature along the way, and I've presented in my professional field several times.

Ms. West: Does the public have privy to this?

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Ms. West: One of the things we haven't mentioned though, is your family - you're married?

Mr. Warner: Yes, we just celebrated our forty-third wedding anniversary July 27th. I'm married to Mercedes Roney Warner. She's originally from South Philadelphia. She is now a retired elementary school teacher. She just retired last year. We have three children, all of whom are successful: successful means out of the house and working. We have Dr. Beth Warner, who is a clinical psychologist; Nicholas Warner, a lawyer; and Thomas Warner, a computer and mechanical engineer.

Ms. West: Okay, besides Dr. Parker, is there any one else in Monmouth County who might have had a profound influence on your life?

Mr. Warner: Besides Dr. Parker, well there were Flo and Chet Apy and those earlier people I had spoken about in terms of Mrs. Dorothy Armstead and the community of Crestmont. And I had mentioned earlier that when I was coming up, you are really raised by the community. And it's very interesting that even while I was attending Temple University, people in the community kept a donation can in the beer garden (we used to call taverns "beer gardens"), and people would put change in there for my education. I would go in each Friday to pick up the can, and I used that money to purchase books and to give me transportation from Crestmont to Temple University, which was in Philadelphia. So when I say I was raised by the community, I mean it in a sincere sense. People of all types, from all walks of life helped me to get where I am today, and I have been doing everything I possibly can to help others to reach their goals.

Ms. West: Then you are really giving back, as they say.

Mr. Warner: Well, I'm trying to give back in terms of advice and counseling, and to those in need. I try to help youngsters who are in school in terms of seeing that

they have their spending change, etc. Spending change is very important. I remember one instance at Temple University when I was darn near starving and on Columbia Avenue, which is Cecil B. Moore Avenue now, named after Cecil B. Moore. There was a tavern we would go to every noon period for lunch, and sometimes we would just go in there to smell the food, not having any money. One day I walked in and someone at the bar dropped five dollars, folded, onto the floor, and I got up out of the booth where I was seated with my other two buddies and went over to the floor and I stood on top of that five dollars. Now, actually, I should have picked up the money and given it back to the person who dropped it - I know that. But, I was so hungry, we were all so hungry, that we used the five dollars improperly, I have to keep emphasizing that, improperly, and we bought soup where we were at the bar.

Ms. West: Well, you had to sustain yourself. The reason you did what you did was self-preservation.

Mr. Warner: Yes, you can rationalize it, but it was still the incorrect thing to do.

Ms. West: Oh, right, right. What are the milestones in your life?

Mr. Warner: Milestones. Do you mean milestones as the important posts where changes and differences were made in your life?

Ms. West: Right, such as when you were graduating, or the first job that you got after that, your marriage, and whatever.

Mr. Warner: I could point out some of those milestones. Completing high school was a very important milestone. I'm trying to think if any one else graduated in my family. I think one other, my younger brother, who received a GED diploma because he followed me into the Marine Corps, and one other sister graduated. So out of eight of us, only three of us actually graduated from high school. The other milestone was, of course, graduating from college the first time. But then receiving a Doctorate from Pennsylvania State University was a huge, huge milestone. Not only for me, but for anybody who graduates. And it was difficult for me -- more of a milestone for me because of how old I was - I'm trying to think of how old I was at that point. And because most of the people graduating with me were very young. But I had gone into the Marine Corps, worked a few years, then attended college. So, it was a very huge milestone. My marriage has been a significant milestone in that I was fortunate in being able to marry my pen pal. My wife Mercedes was my pen pal while I was in the Marine Corps overseas. So I married her and we've had, I think, a wonderful life together - I think that's a milestone. And then each position that came along became a milestone: moving from teacher to motivation director, to vice principal, to principal. One of the more interesting people in my life that I did not mention is Cecil B. Moore, who was a Black attorney in Philadelphia. There is, in Philadelphia, a home rule charter provision, which allows the City Board of Education to appoint five percent of its

personnel into Administrative positions without certification. And because of the protestations and actions of Cecil B. Moore, there were four of us who became Administrators without certification. Now, when that occurred, and after that occurred, we then entered into our respective doctoral programs at Penn State University. We took sabbaticals. That's when we became certified. But we were allowed to work in a position prior to that because of the home rule charter and because of Cecil Moore, an activist for us back in those days. So that was a milestone. The other couple of milestones, believe it or not, and this is going to be a weird kind of milestone for you, was participating in the Civil Rights movement. We did many, many things in Philadelphia back in the days when Rizzo was police chief there. We marched around Gerard College day after day after day. And one of the more interesting things that happened to me just with Gerard College alone was the fact that a representative came to Red Bank Regional High School from Gerard College to give a Black student a scholarship. That was interesting because Gerard College was a school for orphaned white boys. And to have many moons later, many years later, someone from Gerard College where I picketed every day along with other groups, to come there was one of the more outstanding things to happen. The second milestone associated with the Civil Rights movement was to attend the Washington march in 1963 and then go back to the Million Man march. The difference, though, was that this time I'm marching with my kids, my own kids. And that was one of the saddest moments in my life. Because when we marched in 1963 we were marching to end everything, and now here I am marching again, only this time my kids are grown. But that was a kind of sad milestone for me in terms of our growth as African Americans in this country. So that was a milestone, too. I have a lot of different kinds of milestones.

Ms. West: Speaking of the marches and things there, what concerns you the most about the state of the world today?

Mr. Warner: Well, what concerns me most is that I've lived a lifetime, I'm sixty-seven now, and the world hasn't changed enough in terms of the acceptance of all human beings as human beings. We're still somewhat rampant with degrees of prejudice, discrimination, and it's everywhere. I'm studying at Princeton Theological Seminary, and sometimes when we discuss some of the great issues, you would be surprised at some of the Caucasian students who are going into the ministry under this great commission of love, but who actually have nuances of hatred in their heart that they can't seem to realize. You see, because one of the things that they will be able to do is, once they graduate, given our segregated system of churches, not have to deal with people like me again unless I appear there as a congregational member through some miracle. And so they can take their attitudes and move from where they are now in terms of their utilization of the scriptures to keep people in their places and move into their own little communities with those same attitudes. It's very disturbing that we have not been able to make the changes that need to be made in that particular area. I heard Geraldo Rivera, that news commentator -

Ms. West: Geraldo Rivera?

Mr. Warner: Yes, Geraldo Rivera - mentioning that he's thinking about running for mayor of New York on the platform of the equality of the races. Now, that's great that he would be thinking of that, but the fact that equality of the races has to be a platform is disturbing, and it needs to be a platform given the present mayor of New York City and his pronouncements, no question about that, but I doubt very seriously that he would be able to win on such a platform.

Ms. West: I doubt it also. Well, tell me is there any part of your life that you would like to relive?

Mr. Warner: Well, it would be very easy to say that at this stage in the game, at my age, I should want to relive all of it. But that is not the case. I've had some very, very good moments and all of the moments have been meaningful but, there's no moment that I want to relive - even the moment of the greatest joy, I don't want to relive.

Ms. West: What legacy will you be leaving your family?

Mr. Warner: I hope the legacy that I leave my family will be a sense of family. Period. If they can have a sense of family and love with their fellow human beings, I'd be very thrilled. But I was disturbed as I watched the hip-hop awards just last night or the night before. There must have been about five thousand people out there in Pasadena at that particular performance. It lasted two hours, and I watched these awards purposefully. As I listened to each person receive an award, I watched the crowd and I thought about the fact that these five thousand persons must all have gone to and graduated from somebody's high school somewhere, and yet the utilization of their language would set us back fifty years - and that disturbs me. I wish we could somehow or other find a way to recognize hip-hopping, gangster rap as a legitimate source within the music world, but at the same time have it not influence our young people in such a way that it ends up being a negative mechanism that is existing within their lives. I'm very concerned about that. I understand that, and given all the time that I've spent in the cities of America, and working with gangs, I understand that life, and that there must be some way to express all those particular concerns. But when you place on top of that recognition layers of glorification, gold in terms of chains, and big automobiles that are non-existent for most of us, etc., it becomes very negative for me.

Ms. West: Well, along the lines like that, what would you say are your deepest values?

Mr. Warner: I don't know that there are any values beyond love and family. Love is the greatest of all expressions that leaps from heart to heart, from human being to human being. You can't top that. You know when I talk about family, I'm

not talking about the nuclear family, relative to father, mother, siblings, I'm talking about however the family is. Because my father, for example, died at a very young age. And my mother raised all of us, and so I never allow anyone to put down a single parent, especially the single woman who is raising kids. Because I know it can work. But sometimes we use that as an excuse.

Ms. West: Oh, yes.

Mr. Warner: To not have things work.

Ms. West: Well, with all your experiences with people and what have you, what would you say is your personal strength?

Mr. Warner: I guess my personal strength emanates from those experiences and being able to predict, not only conversations, but behaviors, so that I'd begin to develop a sense for what's going to come next. And you begin to understand the dynamics of groups and group behavior, and learn how to utilize those strengths and weaknesses to, as it were, dig a path, a path on which you can follow your energy and keep moving and have people advance.

Ms. West: What advice could you give future generations?

Mr. Warner: Well, the only real advice is, number one, you have to know who you are. And for most of us the only thing we have, and I've thought about this a lot, is our names. And that name is very important, and if you can somehow or other manage to maintain your name and all that goes with it, in a way that's meaningful. People who don't even know you can say, "Oh, there goes the Warner boy," and will know or the Warner boy, or the Jones girl - and will want to be somehow or other like them. If you can do that, then, I think you've managed all you need to manage.

Ms. West: Prior to January one, we were inundated with so much talk about entering this new Millennium, and how things should be, and what we would like to see. What would like to see change? What could you add to create the perfection of a better time than what we just left?

Mr. Warner: You know I have to think about it. You know that we're going to be in an increasingly technological world, and as technology moves forward, it makes for more and more depersonalization of that which is human, and I'm concerned about that. We have these advances of technology and I'm looking forward to them because I'm hoping that there'll be a time when those young people out there, for example, won't have to sit in a college classroom, they can sit at home at their desks and have everything that's available to them in terms of interactive video and the whole business. And yet, that lack of human intervention and the ability to reach out and touch someone is going to be missing and that's what frightens me about technology, if anything frightens me

about the future as I perceive it. Because we still have to get to a point where we can reach out and touch individuals to make a difference. It's the dynamics of the heart that's missing. Whatever that is.

Ms. West: Right. Whatever that is. It makes you think. It's making me think. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?

Mr. Warner: Well, I have a thousand stories, but I don't know what you mean.

Ms. West: Well, you see, we're recording now, as you know, for history, so if one hundred, two hundred, three hundred or better years from today somebody gets to the computer and pulls up Monmouth County and are scrolling and they come to you...

Mr. Warner: Well, Monmouth County itself is a fantastic community to live in, and we're going to see, I'm sure, a complete mushrooming of population here. But along with that mushrooming we're going to see a more diversified population, and Monmouth County is going to have to deal with that. Monmouth County is going to have to look back at all the negative nuances that are still existing. Even in the midst of this great affluence, we still have housing patterns, employment patterns, and college admissions patterns that work against segments of the population, and no town, no county, no America is going to advance until we come to grips with those problems. They don't go away, and we don't spend enough time or money, primarily money, dealing with those issues. Everything is economics and money for us here, let's face it, and until we begin to put the resources, especially the financial resources, into making things happen, they don't happen.

Ms. West: How do you perceive Monmouth County, then, as a place to live years down the pike?

Mr. Warner: Having lived in several other areas, I can say that this will still be the better of other places to live, unless, for example, the urban centers become totally revitalized, re-energized, in fact, reinvented, and that's never going to happen. I don't know that resources are going to be there to allow it to happen. We live in a searching and seeking world, and people will continue to look for Nirvana, and Nirvana will continue to be in those rural areas that you were talking about early on in the interview. People think that there is that untainted space where they can be alone and be with their families and whatever it is that they own. And unfortunately, that kind of Nirvana takes us away from dealing with one another, and being the nation that we need to be, or the county that we need to be.

Ms. West: So you've lived in Monmouth County twenty-five years?

Mr. Warner: Yes. And five years in Burlington County.

Ms. West: Why did your children leave the county?

Mr. Warner: Employment opportunities.

Ms. West: And when they come back to visit, when they come home, do they kind of wish they could be still residing here in the county?

Mr. Warner: I don't think so. And that's good, because they have no real sense of the demographic other than this is home, this is where Mom and Dad live. But their world is their world, and that's technology, and that's the way it should be. And I want that to continue for them, because their world should be their world. For example, my son, my youngest son, Thomas the engineer, is getting ready to fly to Brazil for his company. That's great. That's the way it should be. So they're not limited. My daughter is getting ready to present over in Paris next year. That's the world today, that's the way it should be. I don't want them necessarily to identify with any particular place other than the fact that this is where they were raised and this is where Mom and Dad existed for a while.

Ms. West: Then your children didn't even get any education here in Monmouth County?

Mr. Warner: Yes, they did. They're graduates of the high school here, Monmouth Regional.

Ms. West: All three of them?

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Ms. West: And are they satisfied with the type of education that they received here in the county?

Mr. Warner: They are, but I don't know that I was necessarily happy with all aspects of the education they received because they had to go through all the same subtleties and sophistications I had to go through as a young person. I am hoping that those young people out there now will not have to go through that. But I know darn well they will. That's why I said it's important that we know who we are, and what our name stands for. So that when we run into these incidences of discrimination and racial defamation, we can deal with ourselves and still survive.

Ms. West: Well, I just hope that whoever listens to this tape, or reads the transcript, has actually heard just what you've said. It makes you think, it makes me think. I'm very grateful that you've given me almost two hours of your time. It was very interesting, most inspiring.

Mr. Warner: Thank you. I was happy to do it.

Ms. West: And every time that I do this, I hope that people are listening or reading. I sincerely hope so.

Mr. Warner: The thing about young minds is that they can do two or three things at one time and still get the point.

Ms. West: Well, I know the library thanks you. You brought a little book with you, is there something in that book that you wanted to refer to?

Mr. Warner: Oh, no, no, I just thought that in case you were late, I was just going to continue reading.

Ms. West: Oh, okay.

Mr. Warner: I'm reading Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, and Jesus.

Ms. West: Oh, my heavens. Well, thank you again, Mr. Warner.