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I was born in Brooklyn. I'm the oldest of three kids. I have two younger brothers. When my second brother came along, my father decided raising a girl in Brooklyn might be trouble enough, but trying to raise a boy in Brooklyn would be impossible. So he decided to move the family north to the Hudson Valley, near West Point. That's really where I grew up. From about the second grade on, I grew up in this little tiny town in the Hudson Valley.

One of the questions that's on the paper that you provided for me asked about early exposure to diverse populations. Brooklyn certainly was diverse. We were in a Jewish community there, and I remember Puerto Rican people on the block. Then when my family moved north—I didn't know this at the time because I was a kid, but later when we grew up—I asked my father, "Why did you pick this little tiny town called Washingtonville?" I mean, it was a little village. It doesn't even qualify as a town. He said basically because of the schools. He talked to all the superintendents and the principals of various schools in the area, narrowed it down to a few communities and then tried to find a house, or some place to build a house.

One other attraction, in addition to the very good school system, was that it had somewhat of a diverse population. Very few of the towns had any black students or any black families in their neighborhood. He wanted some diversity. Also, the school system was partly funded by the federal government because it was the school system for the Air Force base. The personnel there sent their

students to the Washingtonville schools, so the programs were good. You had a diverse population because it was the school that was used by the Air Force. That was why he chose that.

What's your father's background?

My father is from the States. He was born in Massachusetts. He was the last of five or six kids. He was the only one born in the States. The family was from Newfoundland. His father was a fisherman. When the fishing industry got put out of business, Newfoundland became depressed. His father worked as a carpenter, fixing fishing boats and all that. It was a very poor family, very poor. My father left his family when he was sixteen, got himself to New York City, found a little place to live, finished high school, supported himself—I mean, he was really unbelievable. There are stories from his sisters



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that say at two he had a little wagon and they would trolley themselves miles from the family home. It's a very strong work ethic—long hours, too. My mother's from Scotland and she came with her family to the United States when she was sixteen. She comes from a very affluent background. Their two worlds were quite different.

I graduated from high school and then came the decision to go to college. It was in the late '60s when the world was going nuts, and most of my high school friends were older than I was. Everybody would come home from college on Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks, and they had all turned into hippies. My parents freaked and said, "Okay, you're going to pick your college very carefully." They decided I should go to Gordon College, which is a small Christian school up on the North Shore. They said, "You can go to a Christian college, that's it." So I decided I was going to one in California. They said, "No, you will go to one closer. In fact, you will decide between Wheaton, Illinois, and Gordon College on the North Shore. You may choose from those two or we're not paying your tuition."

Since I didn't have any money, I had no choice. My pastor's son went to Wheaton College and I thought that might cramp my style, so I decided to go to Gordon. I majored in psychology there. I fully intended to get a Ph.D. in cognitive and social psychology, which is what I was interested in. The professor I enjoyed the most and was the closest to went to Vanderbilt in Nashville, Tennessee.

So I moved down there, thought I was going for Vanderbilt, but we had a misunderstanding. I couldn't finance it. I felt I had to do part-time, but they didn't allow part-time students in the psychology department. They had sent a letter and said I could come. I moved. I packed all my earthly belongings in the back of a car, drove down there, got an apartment, got a part-time job, went over to register, and they said, "You've got to speak to the chair of the psychology department." I met with him and there was nothing he could do. They said reapply in January for the spring term. I was immobilized.

I stayed down there and worked for a couple of years at this ridiculous place called the Maramont Corporation. They provided shocks, brakes, and exhaust systems for motorcycles. It was very funny. I walked in off the street, literally, just

drove down this big highway where the big corporations are. I didn't know a thing about the place. I applied for a job. They saw I was from New England and they interviewed me because they were in the process of centralizing their inventory. Inventory had been done by each one of the centers dispersed throughout the country. They were going to centralize it all in Nashville, but the most resistant group was the New England group. They didn't want people from the South because they talk funny, so they must be stupid. They were the hardest group to work with. Here comes me from New England without a Southern drawl, so they offered me a job on the spot.

I think I was there for several months. I knew the big boss—my boss and my boss's boss. I had a real serious meeting. They called me in. It was towards the tail end of my meeting and I was asked if I would consider working higher up. I thought that was fine. I hadn't been with the company all that long. Certainly many of the other people had been there longer. Many of them had moved from other parts of the country when they did centralize in Nashville. I don't know why they picked me. It was just kind of peculiar—the new employee. "Ah, they've never had a black employee before." In Nashville, Tennessee, my colleagues would not feel comfortable working with a black. This was 1977, and my colleagues would not feel comfortable sharing a cubicle. I was stunned by that. I had worked with them for maybe half a year. Race relations never came up. We worked together and then, a year and a half later, things on the surface were smooth and they opened the door.

My impression of Nashville was that they may be evenly divided. There may be more blacks or more whites in downtown Nashville. I don't know. It was comforting to be located minutes from downtown. This was the first time—and you might say I'm stupid—I had realized that, "Oh, wait a minute, there are some racial issues in this country." It hadn't occurred to me before. I was late. I was twenty-two.

This happened in 1977?

Yes, I was twenty-two. It was late in life that I realized it. In Nashville, I sold my car. I relied on public transportation. Whites would not use public transportation. I didn't know that. I came from the Boston area and New York. Everybody used pub-

lic transportation. Almost always I was the only white person on the buses. I didn't know that. I had mentioned to my colleagues at work I had gotten rid of my car. It literally fell apart after the trip down there. It was a piece of junk anyway. I was going to take the bus for a while until I could scrape together enough money. They all just looked at me funny, but I didn't know why.

How did you happen to come to MIT?

Another fluke similar to the Nashville, Tennessee, thing. I walked in off the street. I moved back to Boston and rented a room from some people from the Bluegrass Festival. I didn't really know. They were advertising in Harvard Square, so I moved in, rented their room from them, walked down to Harvard Square, and applied at one temporary agency. I really thought I had to think about going back to school. I applied at one temporary agency, walked back to my little room with the Bluegrass people, and the phone was ringing by the time I got there. It was that temporary agency. They said they had a three-month position in the physical planning department at MIT—"Are you interested?" I said sure.

I came the next day and met with Bob Dankese, the director of the budget office. He talked for forty-five minutes or an hour about what he needed and what the tasks were. He said politely at the end, "Do you have any questions?" I said, "Well, what does this have to do with physical planning?" He said, "Nothing." Whoops! I tried to get out of it gracefully by saying that that's what the temporary agency had billed it as and that's what prompted the question. I could see that wasn't well received.

I went away. The next day he calls back and says, "Let's meet again. I'd like you to meet Bill Kelley." He was his boss. So I met with the both of them and they offered me a position. I had no intention of staying at MIT. I didn't feel comfortable. The office was in E-19. It didn't feel like a college to me. You never saw any students. We were doing peculiar budget kinds of things that didn't really make sense. I was never really trained. I was a temp, so who wants to waste their time? Then I was asked if I wanted to stay on and then asked if I wanted to stay on and assume more responsibility. I just stayed.

John Deutch came back from serving as undersecretary in the Department of Energy in

the Carter administration. When he came back, he came back as dean of science. Stu Cowen, the then vice president of financial operations, was a friend of John's and had helped him when he was chair of the chemistry department. John went to Stu and said, "I need someone to help me with some of the financial stuff in the School. Any ideas?" Mr. Kelley suggested that John and I meet. So John called me up. "Hello, this is John Deutch. Who am I?" I had just read in *Tech Talk* the day before that he was coming back, so I said, "You're the new dean of science. Welcome back to the Institute." I'm scrambling for the *Tech Talk* in case he asks me anything else. He said, "Mr. Cowen said we should meet." I said, "Okay." I didn't know what he was thinking of. I thought maybe I was going to be his budget officer—staying in the budget office, but helping the School of Science. He said, "How about tomorrow?"

So we met, our big meeting. I appeared at the door and knocked on the door. He's sprawled out on his sofa, feet up on the coffee table. He's got a crew neck sweater, partially taken off. It's up to his neck and the sleeves are wrapped around his neck. He's waving me to come in, and he's motioning me to sit down in a chair. While I'm walking across the room and just about to seat myself, he was asking me a question. I answered it as I walking. Just as I got my butt in the chair, he said, "See ya, kiddo," and got up and walked out.

Well, thank you—good-bye. I figured, well, easy come, easy go. A day or so passes, he calls back, and he said, "When are you coming back to talk to me at greater length?"—as though I had gotten up and walked out. He just made an instantaneous decision, I guess. I said, "Now?"—catching on to his personality. He said, "Yes." So I walked over and I thought, "Well, now we're going to get to it." He said, "Sit next to me on the sofa. It's March. No budget has been done for the next fiscal year which starts July 1. I need a budget by department for the next fiscal year. I need a list of who's going on sabbatical where. I need a list of non-recurring equipment needs of the School. I want to do a chart on tenure, who's coming up for tenure."

I didn't know quite what to do. I didn't know if that quite meant I was hired. Nobody knew what I was talking about. I thought, "I can't go back with all this stuff. What am I going to say to Bob Dankese?" So I stopped to see Mr. Cowen

and said, “I’ve got a problem.” Mr. Cowen said, “Don’t worry about it.” He smoothed it over.

I started working for John on Wednesday. The deal was that I was going to divide my time—half time in the budget office, for a transition period, and half time for John. I started on a Wednesday. On Friday, two days later, John called a meeting with Mr. Cowen and said, “The transition has gone on long enough. I need her full time.” So it was a very brief transition and it was fun.

What has been best about your experience at MIT so far? When you look back and reflect on the number of years of working with people like John, Bill, Mark, and a host of other folks, what has been best about your experience at MIT and what would you say has been worst? The best part is easy and it sounds a little hokey, but it’s the people. It’s people like John and Mark, who are just such masterful leaders. The privilege of working for either one of them—they’re very different, as you know—is just amazing. The electricity around the place is palpable. In September, when everybody starts coming back and the place is humming, I practically cry. I know it sounds ridiculous, but it’s so exciting. There’s so much fun stuff going on. Everybody is working almost too hard, but that’s what I love about the place. I mean, the electricity and the individuals are just stellar. The beauty of the place is that everybody here is smart and cares deeply. I do boring administrative things, but the people with whom I do them are very good and very smart. It turns into fun, even though they’re boring, mundane kinds of things. Everybody you know that you speak to here is at a certain level, so you can just cut right through an awful lot of stuff. That’s really the best part.

The worst stuff is there’s too much work. All those positive things—too much going on, a lot going on, the electricity is palpable, all that sort of stuff. There’s a lot going on and there’s too much work. What’s worrisome to me now, having been here for seventeen or eighteen years, is the change that’s coming with the reengineering stuff. I see a real change in the climate and culture. I see a collision of the cultures, and it’s worrisome to me. I’m going to say it in the harshest possible way. We’re bringing in these slick, young MBA types and that’s not what MIT is. I think we’re losing some of that. That’s troubling. We won’t know until a lot of time passes and maybe I’m nervous for no reason, but it is worrying.

That’s a real danger.

I get the sense with the early retirement, which was a good thing, I think a lot of people were left with the impression—those who retired and those who have not—that we didn’t really value the contributions of those people who left.

How many people took early retirement?

There probably were 225 or so.

When you look at the group that you are most familiar with, on the administrative side, you had some people there who really kept this place together, guys like Jack Currie.

And Phil Keohan and John O’Sullivan.

These are people you couldn’t get in a hurry. It would take you decades to get people like that. A lot of people I miss are very, very important people who year after year were amazing. That’s a really interesting thing, to see what happens when you go through this phase. You really worry about how it’s going to turn out.

There are a lot of opportunities that have come along because of that. That’s obviously a plus, and it’s a very important plus. I think we have to acknowledge what those people gave, what the people we just named did. They protected us from ourselves, they were very popular. They did much more than we’ll ever know. For people to kind of glibly say, “Well, now we’re going to be able to get in credential-qualified people,” it just gets my back up. It really angers me to hear that said. That’s what I don’t like.

That’s really what has made this place extremely unique—the activity of people because of who they were and where they came from. It may not fit outside, but it fits here. I think there’s something to be said about that.

There’s an area that I need you to talk a little bit about. This question I have here about adjustments that you found necessary to fit into the MIT environment—adjustments in general and adjustments possibly unique to, say, black administrators. Based on your experience, and I know you’ve had a lot of experience, what have you found necessary for yourself to fit into MIT, and what from your perspective do you think are the kinds of things you think would be necessary for blacks?

Well, it’s necessary to fit in in certain ways. One has to get used to accepting a lot of criticism, a lot of candid criticism. This environment is a very candid, frank environment. The faculty are the reason we’re all here, and so acceptance of a service mentality to those of us who are administrators is

important for me and other people who are administrators. It suited me. It suited my personality. I tend to be kind of quiet, the behind-the-scenes type, so I didn't have to adjust to MIT. MIT made room for someone like me. There was room for someone like me. Many others are much more outspoken and articulate. Behind the scenes is where I'm most comfortable, and it's wonderful that I could find that niche.

It's hard for me to speak for black administrators. I don't know because I think the underlying thing is that service orientation, that you need to be an administrator regardless of your background or race or anything. The black administrators I've worked closest with are probably Tony Davis in OSP, Mark Jones, Ronnie Dudley. They're all administrative-officer types. Ron Crichlow, who runs the Upward Bound program, is different. He's an administrator, but he's more of an educator.

So certainly understanding the service orientation, working real hard, and all of that are what's needed. For the black administrators, I can't imagine how isolated they must feel. I think the black and Hispanic faculty is small. We've made some progress, but we've got a long way to go. I think the feelings of isolation would be very hard. Probably the adjustment that you would need to make is to network immediately with the minority population right here and then keep your connections with wherever you came from, outside the institution. I think that would probably be wise.

Two people I know, and pretty well worked with over the years, are not happy because of race at MIT. Neither one of them has ever mentioned that there might be a racial tension or uneasiness or anything like that at MIT. Both of them within the last year are thinking that there are some problems and racial problems that have caused them to either remain where they are—they're unhappy where they are—or they were stuck, which is the reason why they can't connect better with the Institute. I don't know if it's that they feel more open or are more stretched or frustrated by it, but this is the first time since I've been here that two have expressed that. There's only a handful of black administrators, so two is meaningful.

Well, it's interesting. I have a very good sense about a lot of things, particularly those long-term things. There's something about certain people in, say, an area like the financial area. There is a very limited number of blacks within that area.

The provost is the academic center of the place. That's why we're all here. It's about academic leadership. A lot of power, influence, and authority rests with the provost. I'm on the fringe of that. I can be discreet. I can also be obnoxious, but if somebody comes and says, "Can you just check? This can't go any further," I'll do that. More and more around this place, I find that that's unusual. If you say, "Can this just be between us?"—pretty soon you're hearing about it from all different corners. I think it is important to know that if you say something is in confidence that it remains in confidence. If I say one word to the wrong provost, it can be problematic. So I think in large part it's not me as an individual, but rather that the power and the authority are in the provost's office.

I think that's certainly a very hectic place, but people don't say things based on just that alone. There are some other things that I have heard people say about people who carry a subtle, very direct kind of power. I think it has to do with people's sense about people. There are people who have a lot of power and others won't come near them. There are things that they sort of sense, so there is something. There are a number of people whom I have selected to interview who, I think, based on my experience here in terms of listening to problems—particularly from African-Americans—you gather this information about how they feel they have been treated, how they feel about people. I don't just pull this out of a hat.

One of the things that I'm very curious about, of course, is why are people certain ways versus other ways? Is it in the background, in what kind of experience they have had? You mentioned, for example, the first time you really recognized any racial conflicts was at a time when you think that people would have known. But part of it may have been because of the way you were raised. Talk about that.

It's not to say that I haven't experienced prejudice. Mine was very different. Having grown up between West Point and an Air Force base, I was very prejudiced against the military. I didn't like their class structure at all. My friends were at the Air Force base and we could tell how important their father was by how far up on this hill their house was. That was just outrageous to me. So I have experienced prejudice. Mine tended to relate to the military rather than to racial issues.

But you had a sense about it because you experienced it. Yes. I think I probably had an openness to different kinds of people, and the service mentality—

being a servant—is clearly from my parents. They were religious fanatics. I was in church from the time I was three weeks old, so every single Sunday, there was Sunday school, worship service, evening worship service, prayer meeting—I mean, you name it. So we were all in this together. You were a child of God just like everybody was a child of God. That clearly shaped how I viewed people.

I remember as kids, I was mad at my brother and I called him a fool. I was punished for that. My father was very strict. “Fool” meant you didn’t believe in God, and that was like the worst thing you could say about somebody. If I said somebody was stupid or retarded, I was pulled aside and spoken to about that because retarded people are God’s creation and you know better. What you do with what God has given you is what counts. Where you are—if you’re retarded or if you’re blind or if you’re whatever—it doesn’t matter. We’re all the same. So I think that that really shaped me.

It wasn’t just spoken. That’s the way my parents lived. For eighteen or so years, I think that that was a large part of who I became. If people see me as a resource, I think it’s because as busy as this place can get, I try—I don’t always do it, but I try—to make time. If somebody wants to sit and talk, then we’ll sit and talk. If I can possibly do it, I will. Sometimes I don’t and sometimes I’m short with people. I know that, but I do try and make time. Maybe people will see that because they know you’re busy, so time and that time here counts for a lot.

That is one thing that has to have a lot to do with it. I’ve talked to all the people whom you know fairly well or very well in some form or fashion. I must tell you, if we could produce maybe ten of you, this world—and this particular place, certainly—would be better.

I have two last questions here. One is, again, trying to get you to reflect. Based on your own experience, is there any advice you might offer to blacks who are entering or planning to enter MIT on the administrative and faculty level? You’ve had such broad experience here. Based on your sense of this place and how you actually make it through, how some people flourish and some flop, what would be your advice?

On the faculty side I can’t really offer much advice, but I have seen some things. Mark put together that initiative to increase the number of minority and women faculty, and that has done

very well. If I were looking for an institution as a faculty member, I would look for an institution that has that leadership at the provost level. I think maybe none of the other institutions have this. It’s perhaps the most generous, that’s what I’ve heard from J.J. If you have a slot, you provide 30K. If you don’t have a slot, the provost’s office provides the funding for that individual. So it’s very generous. Most won’t provide the funding, or only partial funding.

So a leader is important. In that case it is the provost who set that up. And then he set up the Martin Luther King visiting program. I think those are important. It really sends a signal and I wish I could get Joel to think of something else or others to help me think of something else. But Mark put those two in place, and of the 39 or 40 minority faculty who are here now, 15 to 18 of them came from that initiative. That’s over forty percent. I think that’s telling. It worked. He wasn’t sure it would work. It turns out it does, which is terrific.

So I think if I were a faculty member, I’d look for those kinds of things. But also as an administrator, those would signal to me at a very high level that there’s some meaningful attempt to diversify the population. I would look for the language they use. It’s not, “We’re going to meet this for affirmative action because everybody’s worried about affirmative action.” But I’d look for words that say, “It enriches our place,” those kinds of things. These are enormously positive things. It’s not like you have to be begrudging or reluctant to diversify the population. It’s the right thing to do—of course it’s the right thing to do. We’re all enriched, so it’s not completely altruistic. I’d look for those kinds of maybe subtle phrases to see that they really mean it.

For administrators, particularly for administrative officers who are in their department, they need an advocate for the department. It’s important that they do so, but they also have to build good, meaningful, effective links with their dean’s office and with people like me and all those people.

Well, that’s good advice. Is there any other topic or issue that comes to mind as you reflect on your experience, and particularly on blacks at MIT?

I’m disturbed because those two individuals I mentioned earlier are unhappy enough that they’re thinking of leaving. It’s so disappointing.

Do you have any sense of why we have not done any better? One of the major issues that black administrators face is that they have not been able to get to advanced positions or really get credit for what they do. Do you have any sense of why that's the case here?

Most of the black administrators I know are here, and there isn't much promotion connected to that. There is administrative officer I and administrative officer II, that's it. If you want to stay in what I consider to be the heart of the place—that is, in a department—there just isn't much opportunity. It's a very flat organizational structure, so there really isn't much opportunity for promotion. Moving around the Institute is something that maybe after we're reengineered, we'll do a better job and that will open up opportunities for everybody. But you don't see too much of that.

I'm thinking of Wayne Turner, who was in the budget office to work on reengineering. He seems to be flourishing. He's a smart guy and he gets a lot done. I don't know whether he's terribly happy working in the world of reengineering, but he's now been trained with that set of people and he can go anywhere in this great country of ours. It seems like that could actually worry me, because actually a lot of those people could leave if they want to and find very lucrative positions.

So there's a case, and for some of them it's just like for everybody—being in the right place at the right time. But most of them, the black administrators I know, are administrative officers. There's not a lot of movement, and that's true right across the board. It's turned into an all-female job, which is worrisome because usually when that happens, salaries start to dip. I worry a little about that. You try to keep that in mind. One person I know who's unhappy feels as though clearly his work hasn't been recognized. He is in the center of the organization and his biggest contribution is serving the faculty that he's associated with. That doesn't usually win you recognition. If the faculty complain, then you're out and you don't do anything—but if they praise you, it just doesn't go anywhere.

For the most part—you've heard the phrase—MIT is a praise-free zone. If you hear something good, as he would because of the department he serves, they just love him, well good, that's where you're supposed to be. But if there was a complaint, you'd hear about it. But in this particular office, when the new director came in,

there were a group of three people who worked close to her, two of whom were black and one was white. She apparently said, "We've got to break this up." There was confusion about what was meant by that, but one of those people was known pretty broadly as a weak performer. I think when the director was meeting with people—she heard from people that he had a really weak staff record—rumor has it that she gave this person an A-21 test, the government document A-21 test, and nobody else was given this test. That didn't look right.

So you do things like that and you ask, "Where have you been?" That's really picking on someone, and when the someone happens to be a minority, it raises questions. When you've got behavior like that happening, it's not helpful. I really do not believe in my heart that there was any question of racism, but rather trying to establish for herself in some kind of objective way what she had been hearing. It shows a lack of sensitivity, perhaps, to single out any individual that way.