

Interviewee: Camille Russell Love

Interviewer: Tanya Zanish-Belcher

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Zanish-Belcher: This is Tanya Zanish-Belcher and this is an interview with Camille Russell Love. It is January 31st, Friday morning at 10:00. So, Camille would you like to tell me about your family background and growing up in North Carolina?

Love: Yeah, I'm from Winston-Salem, North Carolina. My family is large; there are eleven of us living children and my father was an entrepreneur in the city, and also was a politician in the city. So growing up in North Carolina; prior to coming to Wake Forest; we really lived segregated. I went to segregated schools. We lived in East Winston, we had little contact with the white community other than you know to go shopping or; that was pretty much it. Until integration came and the Civil Rights Movement my father was very involved in so we were very conscious of the fact that there was segregation but in another way we were protected so we just lived in this bubble; but the effects of segregation did affect us. My mother was from South Carolina, and so when it was time for us to go visit her relatives, my father; there was a lot of us. My father would hire one of the men that worked at our funeral home to drive with my mother to really protect us from what dangers there might be from, on the road. But, my experience with Wake Forest actually

started before I attended Wake Forest because of my father's position in the city, he was an alderman then he was vice mayor. When black athletes first came to Wake Forest, our home was their second home so they came over to eat dinner, wash their clothes and just to be in a family environment. That was kind of, I knew Wake Forest, I knew about them. But growing up here, Winston Salem has always been a very comfortable space. It wasn't that big; and again, we went to catholic schools for elementary school then I went to Atkins High School. First I went to John F. Kennedy Middle School for my 9th grade year, and then in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grade year I went to Atkins High School. My first experience with white students however was in my senior year at Atkins; I took an advanced placement chemistry class at Reynolds High School. Which Atkins was the black high school and Reynolds was the white high school. There were others but these were like the big time schools and that was really my first experience with white students in the classroom; and not only was I the only black in the class, I was the only girl in the chemistry class. So the boys were pretty, you know they tried to kind of patronize me. That lasted for about two or three tests, and then once I did as well on the test as they did; then they kind of backed off and you know it was then real competition. There was a lesson for both of us in that encounter. I learned that I was just as smart as them, especially in things that

were black and white. The numbers computed or they didn't. They learned that a black woman could sit beside them and everything they had been taught about white privilege may not necessarily be true; in so, that's kind of growing up. You know I was a majorette in high school and sang in a little group and I was voted most popular in my class. I mean I had a great time.

Zanish-Belcher: So you mentioned chemistry, were there any other classes that you really liked?

Love: When I was in high school I loved Spanish as well. I just loved school to be honest with you; I loved school, I loved learning.

Zanish-Belcher: And your parents encouraged that. Did they encourage the entire family?

Love: Oh yeah, absolutely. We all went to college, all of us. That was just kind of like a nonstop. Now some finished and some didn't but we all went you know, and my parents were both college graduates. My father graduated from Johnson C. Smith University and then went on to the University of Minnesota back in the thirties. My mother was a graduate of Winston-Salem State University, and she was a teacher and again my father was an entrepreneur. He had lots of different things he did as a young man. He had a newspaper, he sat on the school board; he had his own business and a funeral home which is I think is now maybe 80 years old. So he just did a

lot. He worked very hard but he was very, very, very committed to equality. He even told me stories about when he was a young man he coached people on how to pass the voting test so that they wouldn't get disqualified for voting. And then he had a radio program from the time I remember in the fifties, sixties, and seventies where he basically educated people in Winston Salem about the issues so that was that.

Zanish-Belcher: Why did you choose Wake Forest?

Love: I didn't really kind of choose Wake Forest. The real story is that when I went to college, I went to Fisk University initially but due to an unfortunate encounter; well I got pregnant and I came home and my son was born in August. My father sat with me one day and said, "What are you going to do with the rest of your life? You're smart, you should go back to school." I said well, Okay. Then he said, "You should go to Wake Forest", and I said okay and so I made the application, which is why I came to Wake Forest in January so my son Craig was five months old when I came to school. Lou Leake would roll over in her grave [laughter]. Is she dead? Do you know who Lou Leake is?

Zanish-Belcher: Yes, I think she's passed away.

Love: If she knew I had a child [laughter]. She would just roll over [laughter]. But I also, [laughter], she would roll over in her grave

and kick out. In so I didn't "choose Wake Forest," but it was like a good solution for me and I could stay home, I could go back and deal with my child; I could come to school and it was a real turning point in my life. You know there's a whole lot of talk about the bad experiences at Wake Forest. I didn't live on campus so I didn't have to deal with whatever happened here. When I came to Wake Forest, I came to get an education because I saw an education as a way to do what I wanted to do in my life which was to be able to get a job and leave home [laughter]. And so, coming to Wake Forest for me was just enlightenment. We lived in East Winston so I was very familiar with Winston-Salem State, even Salem College. I was familiar with it because I had some friends who had gone to Salem Academy then onto the college; and I knew about Wake Forest but never thought that I would end up here but my father was very much, he was very friendly with Anne Reynolds Forsyth and Dr. Frank Forsyth. And so they said if I would come to Wake Forest they would pay for it. So I had patrons and I kind of like did little odd jobs in their house. I tutored their son, and babysat with their daughter; you know just did some things to make me feel like I was earning my way and make them feel like they weren't just giving it to me. But every semester I had to go to them with my grades and show them what I had done, and then when it was time to go back to school I had to pick up the check and pay my tuition.

So, the fact that there were people who were behind me, really made an impression upon me and that coupled with my desire to get on with my life and my desire to be independent; Wake Forest was just a perfect refuge for me. So, when I came to school I came to learn, I came to get the good grades and move forward; and yeah there were issues but to be able to come someplace where learning was valued. And again I was a real student, I loved learning so being where once I got into a classroom well the teacher wouldn't say, "Well there's somebody black in here so I can't teach her too." They had to teach everybody and it was just a different way of learning that I have never been exposed to so I loved the learning part of Wake Forest.

Zanish-Belcher: I'm just really curious, how did you get back and forth?

Love: I drove, I had a little car [laughter]. I had a little Plymouth Barracuda [laughter]. My first car that I bought because I worked at RJ Reynolds. I worked at night, three or four days a week I worked doing performance statistics. The first job I had was one where I did surveys, you know you called and asked somebody to complete a survey. So now when people call me I know how important it is for them to get the survey complete. You know not to hang up on them beforehand. I tried to schedule my classes so I had very heavy days and then days that were lighter. I worked at night and I had to deal with my son but my parents were very helpful to me, but what

that taught me was how to be very productive and how to schedule my time so that I could get everything done so I didn't waste any time.

Zanish-Belcher: Cause you really didn't have a choice.

Love: I didn't have a choice. If I wanted to stay in school and get out of school, I didn't have a choice.

Zanish-Belcher: So were there favorite classes that you had or favorite professors that impacted you?

Love: Dr. Shirley [laughter]. I loved Dr. Shirley.

Love: He was in speech communications. I loved him, I loved being around him. He and my father were friends as well. If he wasn't on the board of alderman then, then he got on it so he was one that I remember. I also had a least favorite professor. I don't even remember his name but let me just describe the situation to you. It was a history class, and he was a tenured professor, and in his class you had to use the blue book to take your test so it wasn't definitive answers, it was essays. And so what I quickly discovered was that if you were black you got a D in his class. If you were African you got a C. So I'm like okay, I know I'm not a D student, this is not going to work for me. So I decide I would test him, so I went to one of the test sessions; took the blue book and sat there the whole time, pretended that I was taking the test. Put my name

on the outside of it, turned it in, got it back, I had a D. I hadn't written one thing in the book. So I took that book and I went to Dr. Scales and basically said to him, this is something going on that you need to be aware of. They're other students who maybe don't understand that they are not D students but they're being subjected to this and I don't know what can be done about it but I just want you to be aware of it. So even though he wasn't my teacher, Dr. Scales was someone whom I had access to. So I was kind of an unofficial liaison between the African American black students on campus to go report to Dr. Scales what kind of things might be going on that he needed to be aware of because he was a real advocate. During that time we had just come off of the King and Kennedy being murdered. There was the Vietnam War, it was just a mess I tell you; and I thought that he was very courageous in his support of minority students on campus and I had access to him and I used it, and I could always get into his office to see him.

Zanish-Belcher: So tell me about the community of African American students on campus and how you depended on each other and what you did for each other.

Love: Well, we just kind of gravitated towards each other. I mean it was like a natural thing. We knew each other because I didn't know Debbie and Beth, but I knew Awilda and Linda. Awilda and I went to elementary school, the same Saint Benedicts Elementary School

and Linda went to the same high school; so we knew each other and Debbie and Beth, we just kind of had no choice but to be together. Because we were the only black girls on campus, the males were very protective of us; and so it just really became a community. One of supporting one another and dealing with one another. I remember an incident where two football players were accused of cheating, you know the honor code. So, I was asked to defend them. Which was something that they, bless their hearts, may not have been good students but they weren't necessarily cheating. They were just bewildered and kind of looking around. Well the person who reported them, when we had the "trial," I asked him how did he know that they were cheating if he wasn't up looking around; and so they got off [laughter]. So that was one way that we supported one another. And again, my coming onto campus and going off; when I was here I spent a lot of time in the library and then we got the black student lounge. Then I spent a lot of time there, and that's where we really could get together and commiserate or whatever. And then we went to sporting events together, we just bonded together.

Zanish-Belcher: And what was your experience with other Wake Forest students outside your community?

Love: It was fine for me. I didn't have to live with it, and so I didn't know what the other women experienced but for me they didn't bother

me. Like I said, I came in and got my work done. There were the issues that the white girls who were dating the black guys, kind of sort of. We knew who they were so we had to deal with them; kind of pretend like we didn't know what they were up to, but they were the ones that would date them behind the backs and then be the cheerleaders at the games and that wasn't a positive situation because some of those relationships had been forged before we got here. They were some of the upper-class guys and we didn't necessarily like that, we didn't like that at all [laughter]. I probably made a couple of friendships with some of the non-black students but for the most part I was kind of like a fly on the wall. I was in and out.

Zanish-Belcher: Did you have similar experiences to the advance placement class in your classes at Wake Forest?

Love: Let me tell you how I approached my classes at Wake Forest. I thought that, in fact my father told me that it was my responsibility to come and demonstrate that black students could sit next to white students and could compete. That was what my job was and when people have asked me before today, what was my experience like for Wake Forest I told them it was like a job. The job was to teach the students that we were just as smart, if not smarter than them; in some ways just like they were just as smart and not smarter or whatever of their peers. But also to teach the teachers. They

needed to understand that as well. And so, I felt very strongly that I had this responsibility that in order for the next group of students to come in, that we had to grease the skids for them. We had to demonstrate to both students and teachers that we were not incapable of being Wake Forest students; that we were there and we had earned the right to be there and that they should respect that and accept it because Wake Forest had made a statement that things are changing and so you better change too.

Zanish-Belcher: Well before we go on, before you go into law school, is there anything else you want to share about Wake Forest?

Love: Well you know, Wake Forest was positive for me in a lot of ways. People thought of Wake Forest as being this stodgy organization and you know this Baptist school; but you know Wake Forest was pretty liberal [laughter] in a lot of ways. I was telling someone last night about the coed dorm. There was such a thing, you know. The 414 curriculum which was an opportunity that I had where we had taken a religion class in Africa. So we went to Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, and there were other places we were supposed to go but for unforeseen reasons we didn't go. But for me it was the first time I traveled internationally so I had to get a passport. It was the first time that I read a newspaper that was not an American paper; and then I began to understand what propaganda was and I understood that there was our propaganda and there propaganda because if

you looked at an issue and you were familiar with an issue before you came to a foreign country and then you read their side of the story, that was very enlightening and empowering for me and really strengthen my own intellectual curiosity about the world. One disheartening thing that happened on that tour was that there was a mixture of black and white students. We were there for three weeks, well we woke up one morning and most of the white students had left and gone to South Africa and we didn't know, they didn't tell us. We couldn't go because of apartheid but it was like this little side trip was planned and we weren't made aware of it so were just left there in Kenya on our own devices. [Inaudible] that happened [laughter].

Zanish-Belcher: That's not a good experience.

Love: And then another, I had this experience with a teacher. I was in psychology, that was my major and we had to do a psychology project and my partner was a friend of mine, a black guy; and he and the professor were kind of cozy and so the professor asked him to ask me would I go to the movies with the professor and I said, *no I'm not interested in going out with him*. When we got our grades back, he gave him an A and me a B. So, I'm like, *I'll give you an F* [laughter]. That happened and I'm sure that there are a lot of young women who come to college and professors take advantage. And so he tried but he wasn't successful.

Zanish-Belcher: He failed.

Love: He failed. Absolutely, big time.

Zanish-Belcher: So when did you decide to pursue law school?

Love: Okay, so I didn't choose Duke [laughter]; Duke chose me [laughter]. Kind of sort of, Dr. and Mrs. Forsyth suggested that I might want to pursue law. After the little incident with the football players and my willingness to speak up and get underneath issues and all that, they suggested that might be something I would want to try and so I applied to Duke. Took the LSAT and all that and got it but I hated law school, I mean just hated it. This was around the time that Nixon went to Duke. This was around the time that stuff was going on around him. You know they removed his portrait and I remember being in my first classes and the professors didn't know you but you had to sit somewhere and there was a professor who would always pick on me because I had glasses like Angela Davis and a big afro. He would say, "Ms. Russell you can't hide." He would call other people but they wouldn't answer but he was like, "you can't hide so you have to answer." But I had my notes stolen from the library. The final straw for me, I left home and had my own apartment. I left home one day to go turn in a project with some of my classmates, and I didn't want to go because we had worked all night on it but they said no we have to go together, so I did. When I came back, a truck had rolled through my apartment and had I'd been there, I

would have been dead or injured. I said this was sign, this is not for me [laughter]. I had been recruited by Southern Bell to join their management training program and I knew that if I called my parents and said I'm quitting law school that was not going to go over too well and so I called Southern Bell and said, "You know that job you offered me, is it still available?" They said yeah but if I take it then I'd have to go to Atlanta, I'd have to move to Atlanta. Then they said, "We'll have to look into it." They called back and said, "The job's available and we'll move you." So then I called my parents and said I'm quitting law school and moving to Atlanta and that was that [laughter].

Zanish-Belcher: You just answered my next question [laughter]. Which was did you choose a corporate path?

Love: Oh, okay [laughter]. Well let me say this, I worked for Southern Bell. I guess it was Southern Bell back then, it's changed names so many times. I was in their management training program and there was me and there was one black guy and he was about six foot seven, you know looked like a pulling guard on the football team. He was put into the marketing program and I was put into the customer service arm of the business which I knew were not equal paths. When I started working at Southern Bell, I had to supervise customer service reps who were undereducated, daughters, mothers, wives of men who worked in the Bell system; and they

were unionized and most of them had been working for the company for a while and I had taken my job seriously. I was there to listen to their communications and I was to make notes and I was to correct them you know to make them grow, to help them to become better at their jobs. Well they weren't taking that, they were like oh hell no. So I was in front of the grievance committee it seemed like every week so I was like you know, this is not for me. I'm just going to leave [laughter]. I'm in Atlanta now so at least I'm half way where I want to be, and Jimmy Johnson who had played football at Wake Forest was working at IBM and we had connected when I came to Atlanta. I was lamenting to him about my situation and he said IBM is hiring and you should come and try to go to work for IBM so I made the application. IBM had tests you had to take and they were analytical tests which I was very good at, and so I took the first test and he said you didn't get any wrong and I'm like, I know that [laughter]. So then they gave me the second test and he said you didn't get any wrong and I'm like okay. So I took a job with IBM and became the first black woman to be hired to be hired in the southeast region to market large system computers which was the biggest step for IBM in the south which Wake Forest was years before that, so my Wake Forest experience had prepared me to go to IBM and be successful. So that's how I got to corporate America and I'll tell anybody, working for IBM was one of

the best lessons for me because IBM had only one of doing things and it was the right way and I tell my staff now that at IBM if you were on time you were late. You know that when you got into a competitive situation to earn the business, you didn't disparage your competition, you just out performed them. It was just a great space to be in.

Zanish-Belcher: Then you went on to a second career really and would you like to talk about the decision process to leave the corporate world to become an art dealer, a gallery owner and then eventually working with the arts in Atlanta and really what that means for both the African American community and then also I think the broader community too? That's like eight questions in one.

Love: That's okay, that's okay. I'm going to say that growing up in Winston Salem and growing up in this tight knit community really being from a family situation where I was exposed to the arts was important. Winston Salem has the first art council in the country. Excuse me, I took ballet dance, all that as a child. When I came to Wake Forest I really learned; when I was a child there was an east Winston branch of the public library and they had a children's room and I know I read every book in the children's room. I would just go over there to check out as many as I could, take them home, read them and bring them back. When I came to Wake Forest I know I had a literature class that was like southern literature and I was

introduced to the likes of Flannery O'Connor and then while we were students here Maya Angelou came to our school as a lecturer before she came back to be a professor. So, I had exposure to the arts early on. When I worked for IBM, I had the opportunity to travel around the world and what I did when I got to a city was to be a tourist. I go get the tour bus so you could get the lay of the land, figure out what museums were there and it was just my way of entertaining myself and really becoming better educated and more knowledgeable about a culture and all of that. Also when I was with IBM, it wasn't perfect and so I embraced arts and culture as a way to maintain my blackness while I was like little Ms. Black in the blue business suits. My decision to leave corporate America and go into the arts was fueled by the emergence of the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta. I had always been a patron of the arts. I collect first editions by black women writers, Maya Angelou gave me my first lesson in that and I took a leave of absence as a loaned executive to the National Blacks Arts Festival from IBM and I loved it; I mean I just loved it. I loved being immersed in this whole thing that dealt with a lot of things that I didn't know about myself I know at Wake Forest we didn't have a black studies program then and so I was self learner. When the festival was over and I had to go back to work, IBM announced its first downsizing ever because IBM meant full employment. If you've got employed by IBM you could be

there for life, but this was the first downsizing and I was in kind of the middle ground. There were people who were laid off, there were people who were told that they could not leave IBM; and then there were people in the middle who they said, "If you want to take advantage of it, you can," and I'm like okay that's me because I felt that if I didn't leave then, I would never leave. My job wasn't threatened. I had achieved senior consultancy status with IBM. I didn't ever want to leave Atlanta so that was a problem for me because IBM also means I'd be moved and I just thought that again, if I don't leave now, I would never leave. I thought that IBM had taught me how to make money for them so if I can make money for them, I can make money for myself. So, I just jumped in with both feet, gave them like maybe 90 days' notice and that December I left [laughter].

Zanish-Belcher: And never looked back.

Love: I never looked back. In fact, I forgot all about IBM [laughter]. I would see people and they would say, "you remember me from IBM," and I'd be like yeah, sure where do I know you from because when we left from IBM they put us in this transition process and I remember that there was a book that said, *How do you Reinvent yourself*. It kind of said you can't straddle both sides of the fence. You got to really just jump in and be the new person you said you were going to be and so that's what I did. I embarked upon this career. I began

to consult with small art organizations about board development, audience development, marketing plans; then I took my severance from IBM and decided that I would go into the fine art print publishing business which is not reproductions but its where artists recreate original prints, in multiple originals and because I had also been collecting art and so I thought if I'm collecting art everybody wants to collect art. So I started that business and it grew. My clients who bought the prints that I pulled did want more prints that I didn't have so then I sought out who else has original prints and then I would offer them to them. Then as my client base grew in knowledge, then they also wanted to get original works of art. So then I began to connect with artists to find out if you're willing to sign your work, and then I would do little shows in my house and then that became intrusive on my family life and then. I got a gallery. First I had a gallery in the hood. That was a lesson for me because I didn't know, I never had a gallery before. In Atlanta there was one other gallerist and I think by that time she had passed on; who was the one who I had bought my artwork from so I found a loft space which if I had been an artist creating art would be great. It was beside a recycling center, it just wasn't perfect so I had made a decision that I would represent the best African American artists that I had access to and so I had some international artists. One of the artists Frank Bowling that I did a show for recently had a one

man show in London, and visited with him and saw the show there. And so I had to close that gallery, go back home and lick my wounds and then a guy who had been at IBM with me, who also became a gallerist called me up and said, "I'm in this building and their looking for galleries. They just want galleries to be in the bottom floor of their headquarters." Then I said okay, went up and met with the owner whom I knew because my ex-husband had a business in that building prior to and so he and I struck a deal. I opened up my gallery there and was successful but then a young from whom I knew from Duke Law School [laughter], you know things go around and around, had become the mayor of Atlanta. He said Camille you're always talking something art. For one of his campaigns I had artist do t-shirts, like campaign t-shirts and he said he'd really like someone I can trust to come and direct the office of Cultural Affairs and I said I'm happy with what I'm doing. He just wore me down with "you come from a political family. You know how important this is." He asked me a second time and I said no I'm happy doing what I'm doing and then he put his wife on me and she just wore me down and that was twenty one years ago.

Zanish-Belcher: What do you think is the hardest thing about your job?

Love: For people to just recognize how important arts and culture are to just their existence. They don't recognize the value of it, like the jacket that you're wearing was designed by some artist. The

patterns were weaved by some artist; the building that we're in was designed by some architect who had to pay attention to detail. So the fact that we don't recognize just how important the appreciation of art is, just to our general existence is the hardest thing because in most people's minds art is just for the elite. So it's just like you have to be this to appreciate art, you can't go because it's not for you, it's for them. Just trying to break through that barrier so that every man has access to art so that they can appreciate what it does for your soul and how it just nurtures you when you don't even suspect that it's doing it. So that's the hardest thing about my job. In Atlanta, in the twenty one years that I've been there I've had to work with the major arts institutions to get them to diversify boards, programming, audiences; just get them to try a little something. Yeah try Porgy and Bess and see what happens. We created a program in my office where every year every child in the Atlanta public school system goes on a field trip to one of the cultural institutions at no cost to them because what I recognized was there were a lot of buses around these cultural institutions, but they weren't Atlanta public school buses. And when I got underneath it I understood why, it was because the suburban kid's families could support the institutions but the Atlanta children's families could not; but that didn't mean they were not entitled to arts and culture as part of their Atlanta. These were Atlanta institutions and they were

citizens of Atlanta. They were gonna potentially be patrons of the arts but if they never got the exposure then that wouldn't happen. So just trying to be a fighter is the hardest thing in my job because sometimes I'm misunderstood but that's okay because I've been misunderstood in other things too but that never stopped me [laughter].

Zanish-Belcher: And it shouldn't [laughter]

Love: It shouldn't [laughter]. Just to overcome those barriers because the people who you are supporting or working with think that's all you do. You're only working on their little area. They don't realize that you may have a whole plateful of things that you're dealing with and you're trying to be fair and consistent with everyone. That's the hardest thing.

Zanish-Belcher: Do you want to talk briefly about how you've balanced your career and family personal life?

Love: Okay [laughter]. I have the best support system. My children, because I have taken them with me, I drug them to arts events and made them go with me until when they decided they really didn't want to go but that was okay. That didn't mean that they were not exposed. I have a partner, I do the same thing with him. He's my plus one everywhere I go but he loves the arts as well. He's an artist in his own way. Before I worked for the city it was easier

because I was on my own time. I could work in my gallery, I could close it when I wanted to; when I worked from home I could take my children off to school and do my work. Pick them up at the bus stop and come and cook dinner. That was all very easy. Working for the city is like a twenty four seven job so I sleep with my Blackberry cause I never know, even from arts and culture you never know when you may get a call that you have to respond to. I remember being on vacation one time and someone coming down to the beach and saying, "Are you Camille Love?", and I'm like yeah. They said, "The mayor from Atlanta is on the phone for you." I'm like, what! So it's harder now but everybody's older now. They've kind of grown up with it and I think that they are accepting of what I do. It's okay with them and they are proud of my accomplishments and so that's all I can say [laughter].

Zanish-Belcher: When you look back over your career can you think of any mentors you've had or how you've served as a mentor to others?

Love: When I was at IBM, unfortunately I didn't have any mentors because we were it. We were like the pioneers so we had to make it or break it. It's almost like being here at Wake Forest as well, you kind of had to learn how to stand on your own two feet. In my job now, I have a lot of young people who work with me and I'm always teaching them. I'm always correcting them in a positive way, even down to if they break a verb; you know I'm like, you know that's not

what you do. *What did you just say?* Just to make them stop and think because language with your friends is not language that you employ when you're working. I read what they write, I correct it, I send it back just like I'm a teacher. Send it back to them and make them come in and read it out loud, *read this out loud. If you were reading this, what would you think of this?* You have everything in the same tense because I want them to; when they leave, to be better and so I'm trying to be a constant mentor.

Zanish-Belcher: That's constant.

Love: Yeah, so that's kind of it. It's a role that I have embraced and what's so beautiful about it is that there have been some occasions where I've had to let people go because of their behavior or their not working and they leave and their in a huff. They may come back later and say I just want to thank you. I had one young man who came to us, came to my office from a work training program; but he was also coming out as gay and he was so confused about himself. He came to work with some hot pants on one day and I'm like son, *what are you thinking? What do you think you're doing?* He is now, I'm trying to think of the designer that he works for. He comes to Atlanta and always comes in and see us and he goes, "I want you to understand something, I'm never late for work." He says, "I just remembered what you told me." He says, "I'm never late, I'm always there early because you taught me that." Then I've had

some others who'd come back and say I didn't leave right, I didn't do this right, you taught me. I appreciate it now that I have thought about it from a distance. I'm not always right, I probably make a lot of mistakes, but I would like to feel like my heart is always in the right space. I just want them to better.

Zanish-Belcher: As a collector, if you had to choose; this is a trick question. If you had to choose a piece of art in one of your first edition books as your favorites, what would they be and why?

Love: Okay, so the first work of art that I purchased was called *Circa 1943* by Phoebe Beasley. It's a tissue paper collage and it shows a multigenerational family around the table praying, like around the dinner table. That is my favorite because it really taught me what collecting art was all about. You had to connect with the piece. It had to mean something to you. I paid for it on time, you know [laughter]. I had it on layaway so it really meant something to me. It started my collecting effort and it'll always be my favorite. I've had to ask my children when I pass on, who wants what; and so what of them did say that they wanted that. That means a lot to me. And then books, oh my God! You'd have to see my library. It encompasses one whole room, their stacked everywhere [laughter]. Oh my God let's see, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neal Hurston because she was a bodacious, the protagonist in the story was just so true to herself and she was true to herself under all

circumstances and that was a lesson. If I had to choose one but I have so many. I have them stacked up where I have to get to them to read them. I an Amazon account and I get the New York Times on Sunday and I'm on Amazon that afternoon ordering. I'm really true to ordering first editions by black women writers. There is books that I want to read like *American Dirt*. I just want to read it because it is so controversial. I wouldn't buy it but I want to read it. I want to eventually get around to reading it. *Where the Crawdads Sing*, I would like to read that as well; but as far as buying something and putting it into my collection, I buy first editions by black women writers. Lately there is Caribbean writers, there is British writers and there is African writers so it's a lot of books.

Zanish-Belcher: Need more rooms [laughter].

Love: It's a lot of books [laughter].

Zanish-Belcher: Well when looking back over your life, is there anything that you feel is like a primary theme when you describe yourself to other people what you think of?

Love: I think that I have always been very intentional about what I'm doing. I'm unapologetic. I don't live with regrets, I think it's such a waste of time. If I did something, I did it. I don't know if I thought about it all of the time, but whatever the consequences were I accepted them. I just feel like that has made me feel very free and I

think that's, I just love being that person [laughter]. I just love being the free person, not being influenced by other people's opinions. It's like so what. You don't know how I got here, you don't know what happened to me last night that formed my decision making today so you can just go sit on it. That is something that I have always just been a free spirit and that is what I would like for people to know about me is that I still think I'm seventeen [laughter].

Zanish-Belcher: We all do [laughter].

Love: Yeah, yeah [laughter].

Zanish-Belcher: Well is there anything else you would like to share that you haven't gotten to? Any experience?

Love: You know, when I think about Wake Forest again, I just think that it was such a place of enlightenment for me. I don't know about other people but for me it was a different environment. It wasn't like my high school, it wasn't like the other college that I went to; it was just for me a place where I could focus on learning. I loved having, just being able to do that and be kind of insular my own self and I just loved it. There were bad things about Wake Forest that I don't really remember because I wasn't going to let them define me, it was just the good things and you know, that's it. I got a good education at Wake Forest and I think anyone who comes would get a good education if you allow yourself.

Zanish-Belcher: Great. Alright, I think we will stop there. Thank you very much. It was very enjoyable.

Love: You're welcome.