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Richard F. Pride oral history interview by Nancy Hewitt, September 9, 1985

Richard F. Pride (Interviewee)

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Hewitt: I am speaking this afternoon with Richard Pride, Director of Project Upward Bound and an associate professor in the College of Education. Could you tell me first of all, what was your first contact with the University of South Florida and what made you choose to take this position here?

Pride: I was a high school principal. I worked at Blake High School in Tampa and I had been a principal on all levels for several years and supervisor of elementary schools in Hillsborough County. My wife was working with Project Upward Bound teaching reading when the program first began. I think it was about 1966 or 1967. I was asked to come out and work with the students on Saturday to coordinate the Saturday program on the University Campus. We had a director of the program at that time, but this was a Saturday contingent where the students were at. Then after that year I was still principal of the high school and just doing this on the side and for the sake of love in working with children. Then the director of the program left at that time to further study and they asked me to come out, but I didn't come out initially. I was enjoying my days at the high school as a principal. Then about two years after that, they asked me again. So actually I was recruited to come out to the University. I was concerned at that time about losing the tenure that I had in the school system over the years and moving from one level to another. Finally my wife convinced me to come out to the University and direct this program. So I came out in the Fall of '69 as director of Project Upward Bound.

Hewitt: When you were working as principal of a high school in Tampa, did you or your students have much contact with the University of South Florida? Were
there recruitment efforts made to get students into the University from the local high schools?

Pride: That is an excellent question because at that time, and prior to that, since the beginning of the University, there were very few, if any, black students. Then someone contacted us. Pressure was being put on the University to have black students out here. So being a high school principal . . . We had two black high schools here in Tampa, and we got together 25 students that we recommended to come up the next fall. This was the contact that we had. Now we were using University people with our Southern Association Evaluations in the school systems at that time. So we had contact with professors out here. They had some of our evaluations and consultant work and that type of thing. But I was one of the high schools that sent the black students out here for the first time.

Hewitt: Do remember about what year that was?

Pride: It must have been about '66 or '67.

Hewitt: So it was a couple of years after the landmark of the Civil Rights Bill of 1964 was passed.

Pride: I would think it was about that time.

Hewitt: Now what was the Upward Bound Program itself and what were its goals?

Pride: The Upward Bound Program is designed to help low income, disadvantaged students who have potential to go to college. It was designed to help them go. We are presently, as we were then, to help build their skills in the academic area, to provide counseling and motivation, and to assist the students in getting financial aid to come to the University. The University
has been pretty good about giving financial aid to the students. All they have to do is apply. And that applies to now. You have to apply in time and get all of the forms in order. They have been very good in helping the students. I say particularly Upward Bound students because I work directly with them in the financial aid process and with admissions. I have served on a number of committees that would affect the enrollment of these students at the University. So that is what Upward Bound is about. It is to help low income of all races. The white students have not taken advantage of the program as much as black students have. The program is designed for all. The majority of the students are black in the program with a few other minorities. There are very few whites.

Hewitt: Now given the low percentage of blacks and minorities on this campus over the 25 year history, do you find that your program becomes a focal point for those blacks who are on campus? Maybe not so much because they are disadvantaged, but because they are looking for black mentors or blacks to work with?

Pride: Maybe, initially, when there were so few black professors out here, we served as a sort of nucleus hub for many students. Of course I was on so many committees and helping to make decisions pertaining to black students coming to the University, but now with the expansion you have people in all areas. The Admissions Office has someone and other offices have blacks. Then you have other programs like special services and projects to help students. So it has expanded its efforts. We have to continually remind the administrative people on the campus about our concerns. They are willing to listen, and it worked pretty well with us in trying to do it. Sometimes we have to put a little pressure on them. But I think the
University has done an excellent job in working with us and particularly, Upward Bound, to get the students on campus. I'm sure with other areas they have also. What we are concerned about now is the raised standards. Black students still have not, even though schools have been integrated, caught up with white students on their average scores and grade point averages as a whole. Once given the chance, the students eventually can perform pretty well. It is just a slower process when your background is so different. This makes alot of difference. We can see the difference of a black elementary child going to a white school or going to an all-black school. It's the difference between chalk and cheese of that black child in a white environment than that child who is in an all-black environment. This is what we are trying to do with the Upward Bound Program where students live out on the campus during the summer for six weeks. They have classes in all the buildings on campus. This environment is suppose to make a difference and it does make a difference.

Hewitt: It sounds like that your office certainly had no less work now than when you first arrived.

Pride: No, we certainly don't.

Hewitt: But as you expand your efforts the standards and everything else changes so you keep having to . . .

Pride: That's right. That's what we were talking about just before you came in. Students may have had a pretty good academic average coming in. You have to have a "C" average to come into Upward Bound. The students may have even had a little higher than a "C" average, but then when they got into Upward Bound, and we are channeling them straight into academic courses, then their
grade point average falls. So we are hoping that we can make the difference. If you come to tutoring sessions and then you can go back and perform in your high schools, then your grade point average should come up. Then you should be able to score better on the standardized tests and then be able to fit into the University.

Hewitt: Are there black students organizations, like the Black Panhellenic Council, that are involved with the Upward Bound Program?

Pride: They have good intentions, I must say that. Every year they come and say that they want to volunteer to work with the Upward Bound students. We have found that their intentions are good, but they don't follow through on them. They will set up a time to come, and then they cancel. So we can't depend on them as volunteers to assist. So we employ faculty from the high schools who actually do the tutoring in the classes. We tutor in English, mathematics, and science. We cover the whole area in math, algebra I, algebra II, geometry and trig. In the sciences, we cover biology, chemistry, physics, and physical science. Of course we teach the communicative skills. I have a well equipped reading lab that all of the students have been exposed to to help them improve their reading.

Hewitt: Now given that you deal both with local high school students and with high school teachers as tutors, in many ways, it sounds like Upward Bound is also an outreach program from the University.

Pride: Yes, it is. Let me say this about the University. Our University was the first predominantly white institution to have the Upward Bound Program in the state of Florida. The first program was experimented at Florida A & M University. That program was funded in '66. We came next in 1969. So that
showed then that the administration was concerned to have a proposal written. At that time we could serve 250 students in the program. We are now down to 120 students because of federal funding. We were serving seven counties. We had Hillsborough, Manatee, Polk, Sarasota, Pinellas, Hernando, and Pasco County. Now we only serve Hillsborough, Manatee, and Polk. So the University did have an outreach at that time of doing what they could to pull blacks in. I had a program that was in operation when I came called HEP. It is called the High School Equivalency Program. It's not like the high school equivalency test that you take. It was a program designed to bring students from all over the state to the University and to help them build skills and so forth. They could be of any age, more or less, up to 24 or 25 years old. Some of them were young married people that were brought in and lived in the University Apartments behind the campus. They had one whole building where the students lived and went to classes. But that was no longer funded after about 2 or 3 years after I was here. The Upward Bound Program has been one of the longest running programs and most successful ones throughout the country. The program here is rated as a top program. I won't say the number one, but it is among the top in the country because of our organizational structure and what we do to place kids in colleges. It's not only to place kids at USF, but to any college in the United States. They have gone to over 120 different colleges throughout country.

Hewitt: So not only is this an outreach program into the community, but it's actually helping, not just USF, but these students could go to a university of their choice. Does it tend to draw minority students into USF even though they can go elsewhere once they have been in contact with USF?
Pride: I think that we get a share. I won't say the largest share because the students are interested in getting away from home. It isn't that they don't like USF, they just want to get away from home. We try to encourage as many students as we can to come to USF if we feel they can't succeed. We have adequate support in all of that. We have no problems with getting them housing. I tell them that they can live out on campus and not even go home. But many of them end up coming back here. They may want to go to the University of Florida or to Florida State because Florida A & M is there in Tallahassee, and they'll be able to get the reaction of both with Florida A & M and Florida State. Many of them do transfer back to USF.

Hewitt: And when they do transfer back, then they sort of have a home here already?

Pride: Yes. They already know and they thought the grass was greener on the other side. We can't blame them for that. I'm glad the grant and the University accepts this idea of helping a child go to any college he wants to in the United States.

Hewitt: When I was researching information on minority faculty members at USF for this oral history project, I found out that you came in 1969 and you are the senior black faculty member here. I realize that there were any number of black faculty members who came and left in between and no doubt since then. Since you arrived, has there been any move to create a black faculty caucus or has there been a sense that minority faculty at USF need to work together on certain issues to try and keep this awareness and concern in front of the administration?
Pride: Yes. I was the instigator for the initial group because I was here getting us started. We have organized the black caucus group that has been in operation. I think it is very much needed. In fact that administration, including Dr. Brown, says that we need to know our input and feelings. So we do have a strong black faculty group. We've even had a stronger one because we had more pertinent issues at that time. We don't have them now. We were struggling to bring things before them; dealing with admissions policies, dealing with the promotion of faculty, of the recruitment of more black faculty on campus. The problem always came up where we can't find black faculty. Then they came up with the qualifications of black faculty. What one of the problems is you can find many black faculty members from other colleges and universities if they want to pay them because they are at a premium at big institutions all over the country and then we offer them a meager amount. One other problem that we are trying to get the administration to see is that the black faculty members have not had the opportunity to publish as much as many others. Most white professors have contacts with persons or companies. We, as blacks, don't have that entree. So it has hindered our publications. I know many professors that just rewrite books every year and just change the cover. There is very little change in there, but they have published through the company before. So we have expressed that, but in the recruitment of black faculty members, you have lots of whites that apply. Well, many times the white professor has had an opportunity to work at various colleges and universities throughout the country and the black faculty member has been limited. So we have all these barriers that we have to deal with, and we try to help them to see this in the hiring of black faculty.
Hewitt: Now as blacks have moved more into the institutional infrastructure and administrative posts, do you think that has provided a sense of mentorship or leadership for black students on campus or do we still need to develop ways to link black student concerns with black faculty and administrative concerns?

Pride: Yes, it's a never-ending process that we do need black faculty members and administrative staff in these positions because many of our concerns are overlooked dealing with the masses since the majority of students are non-black out here. Unless a black person is there to bring up whatever the concerns are, just like the state is adopting all of this now, moving up the requirements and the public school system is doing the same. You need to build up to it. It's like the years of integration. You need a time to do it. You need time now. We were talking about that in Upward Bound, and the simple thing is that in the ninth grade they are not teaching general mathematics as a pre-college course. You have to have algebra in the ninth. So you have algebra in the ninth grade. In tenth grade you would have geometry, maybe in the eleventh grade you would have algebra II, and then trig in the senior year. Well what the eighth grade teacher is thinking about when she is scheduling this child for ninth grade generally is general math. But now this eighth grade teacher has to think that when this child enrolls for the ninth grade, if the child has a skill in algebra, she will be in algebra. So you see you need time for students to get the required courses which will enable them to score better on tests. Now they are coming up with the idea that students may attend during the summer, prior to their ... Now you would still receive credit, but it's a little different during the summer. Classes are not as large and all of that. This is not
only happening here, but in all institutions. I know at the University of Florida, they have had a program that the score on the SAT may be a minimum of 1000 for the freshman class. I might have a student in Upward Bound whose score is 900 or 950, but the bottom score is a 1000, so my child would not be accepted at the University of Florida. So then the child goes in the summer, and he is already ahead of the rest of the students. So I think the University here and all state universities are running into the same thing, that students who don't quite score will start earlier and get in. So we do need black faculty in all positions. This is what we have told the University. They have been, especially in the administrative area like financial aid, admissions, and advising, have had blacks as mentors and I guess students just feel comfortable with their own. It's not only with blacks, it is with whites as well. I'm a black and a director of a program and many white students in my program will go to my white staff members to discuss it when really, the staff member has to send them back to me. This is the kind of thing because they feel more comfortable.

Hewitt: And it is certainly true for female students and female professors. I think that you see that everywhere.

Pride: This is natural. I don't think it is anything unusual about people wanting to relate to their own.

Hewitt: Now the year that USF opened, in 1960, was also the year that Tampa had its first sit-ins at its downtown lunch counters and so obviously the history of USF, to some extent, has paralleled the history of integration in Tampa at large. To what extent, having worked in the Tampa community before you came to USF, are there changes in community-wide attitudes towards blacks, integration, and civil rights in the last 25 years?
Pride: Well, I think that it has changed tremendously but gradually and there still is subtle type of implications of things. I think that even in the community there has been a change, but there are still subtle types of things that happen. I can't pinpoint anything particular. In job opportunities, employment in the city and things like that, the effort has to be continually pushed to hire more blacks and this sort of thing. And it's not done unless you do put a little pressure to say why not. I think sometimes the conscience gets to people, but they need to be fairer than what they presently are. Things have really changed.

Hewitt: Do you think the current decrease in federal funding for programs like Upward Bound will have a significant impact at USF, or are these kinds of programs for minorities well enough established here that they will continue to be funded and developed?

Pride: They are federally funded now. Not Project Thrust, but Upward Bound and special services are federally funded projects. For instance, funded by the University; that is another avenue that the University has shown interest in bringing blacks to the campus and not only bringing here, but providing assistance to help keep them here. I think we, along with others, are along the forefront of doing that. We still need the federal programs because the University could not provide all the funds they wanted to for these programs. I hope that we will continue, for the unforeseen future, that we will still have Upward Bound or some type of program to assist students that come here. The good thing about it is that we deal in small numbers of children, and we can work directly with them individually. I feel sorry for the high school counselors who have five to six hundred students per
counselor. There is no way in the world that they would . . . I just wrote that down somewhere recently about counselors that I am doing a survey in the high schools now to see how many counselors they have per student. Last time I did it . . . And the state has a maximum of five to six hundred students per counselor. So students, like minority students, who don't feel, in the first place, that they have an opportunity to go to college, wouldn't push to go to college. Now maybe a student that has good grades and is semi-affluent in the black community will seek out the counselor, but the child in Upward Bound will not. So we need the program or that alone. The classes in the school system are still large and if a child needs help, usually the teacher doesn't have any time to help them. So in Upward Bound, the child can come out and say if they don't understand something. You should see the classes we hold on Saturdays. They run between 8 and 12 students. So it is almost individualized instruction. They show you the whole procedure. I hope that the programs will continue. We have expanded. I have another program called College Reach-Out and that was state funded. It is the same thing as Upward Bound only we take the 9th and 10th grade students. In Upward Bound we take the 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students. I had to have the two as a build-on so those in College Reach-Out were funded with a minimum amount of money from the State Department of Education. That was because I, along with others, went to Tallahassee and fought to get money. I really wanted to expand the Upward Bound Program to serve more students as we did in the past. Then they came back with this. And yet, I understand that we provided them with all of the information guidelines to set up the program, and yet they have a different name for it. So that was one of the programs that was funded by $80 thousand dollars two years ago. Then they broke it down and gave us only $20 thousand last year,
and now this year it is $9 thousand. What is wrong with the state is that they are trying to please everybody. It is political to give money all over. So they are funding 25 community colleges in the state and I think 9 state universities with a little bit of money.

Hewitt: Let me ask you this, although most of what I have been talking about on these tapes has been historical. Obviously USF is only 25 years old and there are some indications that it is making an effort to develop its programs for minorities and the disadvantaged students and to recruit more minority administrators and faculty. Over the next 25 years, if you could set out a plan or you could put certain kinds of programs into effect, what do you think would be the most helpful in improving USF either in terms of affirmative action programs or recruitment of minority students or faculty?

Pride: I've always been concerned about . . . I know that many black students know that they need the help and don't seek it because they don't like labels or something attached to them. Some years ago, before Project Thrust came into being and we were getting rid of the library in SVC, I wanted that to be a study center for all students on the University campus and it wouldn't be delegated to a certain group of people. Project Thrust and Special Services are limited by income, especially Services. Although I understand we have a lot of white students who are there, which shows that they need the help as well. I just wanted to see a center on campus that could assist any student. Many faculty members don't think we need to have this. They feel that when you come here that you ought to know. And that is not true. Why are you paying to get an education? I'll never forget when I first went to school at Columbia University in New York. I was a country boy from down
south and black too. I didn't know anything about schedules and what I should take. One of the noted teachers of reading in the country was teaching at Teachers College and she was my advisor. I went to ask her what she recommended. She said, "Young man, just sit down and decide what you want to do." Well I didn't know. And you go to classes and instructors always say, "What do you think?" Well I came in to find out what you think, not what I think! So I would love to see that in the recruitment of minorities, that they would have a more relaxed feeling that I could come to the University and there's a big center to be called whatever, that I could get help if I couldn't get this problem solved. Professors don't take the time to sit down with students. They don't have the time to deal with individuals. So where people are employed, whether they are graduate students or students who could assist any student in helping them solve their problems. That is what I visualize on campus. That is pertaining to minorities. I would like also to see black faculty and administrators in some of the key roles on the University campus. We have them in offices. I don't think we have any blacks heading anything. We are always Assistant II. We are known for that and you know what that means? Everything! We don't have any heads of anything. I don't think we have any assistant directors, like in Financial Aid or in Admissions. So I would like to see more of us in roles. We can think too if given the opportunity to do so. I can't think of anything else right now.

**Hewitt:** Those sound like good suggestions to me.

**Pride:** And if we have people like we have now, and I mean to give praise to our president, who is willing to listen to you. We, the Black Faculty Caucus, have met with Greg O'Brien, the Director of Academic Affairs, and then met
with the president expressing our concerns along these issues. They have been willing to listen. They say that they want to know and they don't know if we don't tell them. And of course if we don't tell them, nobody bothers. There is where I'm saying they want to know. We have been involved in the community by establishing a black faculty community liaison, inviting leaders in the community out here. We have had several things over in the Sun Dome. We are at the point now of wondering where to go from here, of involving black people in the community and the University other than at a social function. We need to get up data as to how they can serve the community and how the community can serve them. So we have had Bob Morrison, who is the assistant to the mayor, and other people of echelon in the black community to come out here. So the University is making some efforts. We are very proud that the president went along with the Martin Luther King seminar. By the way, I am going to a meeting next week in Tallahassee on the governor's committee for the celebration of the Martin Luther King holiday. And I got the Martin Luther King Award out here at USF last year. This was given at the gym during the basketball game. Well I was very surprised to get it and was very please.

Hewitt: Well it was well deserved.

Pride: Well, I tried while I was here to do all that I possibly could. As I said I sat on so many committees and planned different things. I'm not on as many as now because we have other people who can also serve.

Hewitt: Well thank you for taking your time out today, and I hope in the next 25 years we continue to make significant progress.