

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH M. WILLIAM HOWARD, JR.

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins the fifth oral history interview with the Reverend M. William Howard, Jr., on April 11, 2019, in Lawrence Township, New Jersey. Thank you very much for having me again.

M. William Howard: Pleasure having you, Shaun.

SI: Thanks again to Mrs. Howard for providing such wonderful sustenance.

MWH: And, for the record, let me say again, that even after the interviews are over, I'm going to invite you back, so [that] I can have lunches. [laughter]

SI: I would like to talk about your work leading into your time on the Board of Governors. It seems like your involvement in higher education goes back at least to the McGreevey transition, or would you put it at a different starting point? [Editor's Note: James E. McGreevey, a Democrat, served as Governor of New Jersey from 2002 to 2004. Reverend Howard served as a member of the Rutgers University Board of Governors from 2004 to 2014, during which time he chaired the board from 2007 to 2010.]

MWH: Well ...

SI: In New Jersey, obviously.

MWH: I actually served a brief while on the board of what was then Trenton State College under Governor Byrne. Governor Byrne appointed me to that board. In the interim, that is to say, before McGreevey appointed me to the Board of [Governors of] Rutgers, I had been, as you know, president of the Theological School. [Editor's Note: Trenton State College in Ewing, New Jersey, became The College of New Jersey in 1996. Governor Brendan T. Byrne served as Governor of New Jersey from 1974 to 1982. Reverend Howard served as the president of the New York Theological Seminary from 1992 to 2000.]

SI: Sure, of course.

MWH: So, I don't think McGreevey knew about Trenton State. He had met me in my role as pastor of Bethany. When Dr. Vagelos resigned from the Rutgers Board, he spoke to me about filling the unexpired term. That's when I agreed to do that, but I had served on his higher education transition team. So, that was for McGreevey, Corzine, and, even later, the current governor. Somehow, I'm not sure what motivated Byrne to appoint me, because, by that time, I had had no leadership responsibility for higher ed., but, by the time McGreevey appointed me, I did.

[Editor's Note: Jon Stevens Corzine, a Democrat, served as US Senator from New Jersey from 2001 to 2006 and Governor of New Jersey from 2006 to 2010. Philip D. "Phil" Murphy (born in 1957), a Democrat, took office as Governor of New Jersey in 2018. In 2002, Governor McGreevey appointed the Commission on Health Science, Education, and Training, chaired by Dr. P. Roy Vagelos, retired President, CEO and Chairman of Merck, who served on the Rutgers Board of Governors from 2002 to 2004. The committee was charged with reorganizing the state

higher education system. The plan that emerged from their work, identified closely with the chairman as its primary architect and known as the Vagelos Plan, recommended merging Rutgers University, the New Jersey Institute of Technology and UMDNJ and creating three public research universities in the northern, central and southern regions of the state. A Review, Planning and Implementation Steering Committee, also chaired by Dr. Vagelos, began meeting in January 2003 to take steps to implement the plan, but these efforts collapsed by December of that year.]

SI: You mentioned last time that, on these transition boards, there is often an appearance aspect, a need to show constituents they are represented. Do you remember, particularly looking at the McGreevey transition team, was there anything that you pushed for? Was there anything that they were trying to get you or your fellow transition team members behind?

MWH: Well, that's been so long ago, I don't remember. By that time, the Commission for Higher Education had been abolished and there were clearly concerns--not so much to reinstate the commission--but to have the point person, the governor's point person in higher ed., being, let us say, in the governor's cabinet, so that higher ed. would have a voice close to the governor. [Editor's Note: In 1994, Governor Christine Todd Whitman (in office from 1994 to 2001) abolished the Department and Chancellor of Higher Education, which had provided governance for the state's colleges and universities since 1967. In their place, the Whitman Administration created the Commission on Higher Education and the New Jersey Presidents' Council.]

That may have been an issue, but what I can say more directly about McGreevey's transition was that it was smaller and it had really major people participating, a small group of people. Could Governor Kean have been--I think he might've been--appointed to McGreevey's higher ed. [transition team]? He was, by that time, at Drew. If my memory serves me, it seems to me that Governor Kean was, like, our chair, Dr. Susan Cole, President of Montclair [since 1998]--it was a relatively small group of us and we had really substantive conversations about higher ed. [Editor's Note: Republican Thomas H. Kean served as Governor of New Jersey from 1982 to 1990. He served as President of Drew University from 1990 to 2005. Susan A. Cole has served as the president of Montclair State University since 1998. Earlier in her career, she had held the posts of President of Metropolitan State University in Minneapolis/St. Paul and Vice President for University Administration and Personnel at Rutgers University.]

Corzine's higher education transition team was huge. I was a vice chair of his transition in general. So, I was often in meetings where there were a rather large number of people. The higher ed. component, obviously, was a subset of that, but maybe it's because of my involvement in the larger group, I don't have as vivid a memory of the higher ed. function.

I would say that those groups can be useful, but they're not meant to be groups that sort of shape the governor's policy on something. You can give the governor's team some insight into things, details. You can float some constructive ideas, particularly as it relates to implementation of policy, but these are ideas that you share with them. It's not a waste of time, but if people think that they're going to write the governor's script for higher ed. or the environment or the economy, that's not true.

Now, sometimes, really meaningful things happen, such as--this is an aside, because it doesn't directly involve my experience--but, in the Christie Administration, he had a group on economic development that heavily involved business leaders in the state. They proposed what has become Choose New Jersey. Now, I was one of the founding members of Choose New Jersey, but that's because Dennis Bone, who once headed, I guess by the time he took over, it was Verizon, used to be New Jersey Bell, but Dennis asked me to become a part of that. That continues under the current governor--Phil Murphy continued this. [Editor's Note: Christopher J. "Chris" Christie, a Republican, served as Governor of New Jersey from 2010 to 2018. Choose New Jersey, a nonprofit, economic-development organization, was founded in 2010. Dennis Bone served as President and CEO of Verizon from 2000 to 2012.]

Now, this is important because there used to be an entity, Prosperity New Jersey--was it Prosperity? I think so, Prosperity New Jersey, something like that--that basically promoted the state to industry that is not located in New Jersey and, also, helped to keep people who were here, in an industry or a business that was located here, to remain here. It was not because the administrations wanted it to be, but it turned out to be sort of perceived as a partisan thing. So, when McGreevey ended his time, the program ended. [Editor's Note: Prosperity New Jersey, a nonprofit corporation, was created by executive order by Governor Whitman in 1995.]

The position of the business leaders was, it ought to be essentially non-partisan and it should continue beyond one given administration. That was a big test, and Phil Murphy has continued it. The objective, of course, is the same--to promote New Jersey as a great place to locate your business, and so on. All that to say, sometimes something substantive and lasting might occur in that kind of group.

SI: I am just curious, going back to McGreevey's committee, since the Vagelos Plan would become such an important part of his policy early on, something that did not quite work out, was there any inkling of that sort of plan? Was that part of their policy at that point, or did that develop later?

MWH: Was that the part of what--you mean McGreevey's part?

SI: McGreevey, yes. When you were in your meetings, was that discussed or anything along those lines?

MWH: Well, no. I think I will have to say that I don't have a memory of that. I have a really strong memory of lots of discussions about that, but not in the transition. Now, if it were, it's just something that slips my mind, but, being in Newark, the whole issue of the medical school, "What was the place of the medical school?" and all kinds of higher ed. issues were always in the air.

There were advocates of something called "the University of Newark." There were people who actually, I wouldn't say they were open advocates, but they certainly would not have been sad if Newark, Rutgers-Newark, had become independent of Rutgers. I don't see how that could've been so viable, but, nonetheless, that spirit was running around. Somehow, the medical school

would become a part of that. All of that was in the air, but I don't remember it being a subject in the transition.

Now, Vagelos was a very strong advocate of this, some brand of unification, and there've been several iterations of this that, as time passes, I find it hard, unless I went back to review certain documents, to recall what plan he really promoted. He had a big interest in the unification of "the University," in quotes. McGreevey, being a politician, once he understood it would not fly, he--I wouldn't say abandoned it--but he stopped pursuing it. This, I gather, was pretty disappointing to Dr. Vagelos and he decided--I'm not sure if he would say he resigned in protest, but he did resign somewhere around that issue. He had a standing interest and knowledge of higher ed. I think he went on to become a board member at Columbia, something like that.

After I joined the Board [of Governors], this continued to be a source of discussion, not so much at the board level, but, being in Newark, there was a lot of talk around that. What you see today with the medical school--though I would say Rutgers in New Brunswick was very much interested in the component of medical education in New Brunswick, because in the past it had been connected to Rutgers. They wanted that back. Chris Christie said, "I want you to take over the medical *schools*." [laughter]

[Editor's Note: In April 2011, Governor Christie appointed the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey Advisory Committee, chaired by Dr. Sol Barer, executive chairman of Celgene, a biotechnology firm, and a member of the Rutgers University Board of Trustees. The Barer Committee was charged with making recommendations regarding the reorganization of medical education in the state. The Barer Committee issued an interim report in September 2011 that recommended merging into Rutgers portions of UMDNJ's New Brunswick-Piscataway Campus--the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, the School of Public Health and the Cancer Institute of New Jersey. In its final report in January 2012, however, it made several controversial additional recommendations, including merging Rutgers-Camden into Rowan University and creating a New Jersey Health Sciences University and several autonomous units out of the remnants of UMDNJ in Newark, which sparked a heated public debate.]

Somewhere before all of that pressed on this question, Corzine actually authorized the creation of a totally new medical school down south. Do you know about that? [Editor's Note: Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, created through executive order by Governor Corzine in 2009, opened in 2012.]

SI: Rowan?

MWH: Rowan, yes. I don't know how that's worked out, but that was very controversial. Rutgers wasn't really--I mean, at least emanating from the president's office--they weren't trying to get all of the medical school, right, but Christie's agenda called for that. I would say, from my point of view, that may be one of his lasting contributions, I think as a positive thing. It was a bit unnerving, like a big challenge, but I think, in the end, it was a good thing.

It was not a riotous discussion in the Board of Governors. I'll tell you, after the unification of undergraduate education in New Brunswick, the football stadium might've been one of the

biggest issues that we dealt with. [laughter] Now, there were other issues, but the unification of the University with the medical school was really something the governor almost imposed on us. He said, "You take it. I'm not giving you the New Brunswick element--I'm giving you the whole thing. Work it out."

I think that had a big influence on the selection of Dr. Barchi to be president. I don't suggest that was the only thing, but that was a big issue. He knew about medical schools. [Editor's Note: Rutgers University's current president, Dr. Robert Barchi, took office in 2012.]

SI: Before we talk about that, let us go back to the beginning of your time on the Board of Governors. You joined in 2004. How do you prepare for a job like that?

MWH: Did I start in 2004?

SI: You were on from 2004 to 2014.

MWH: I think it was 2003 to 2013.

SI: Okay.

MWH: I think that's right.

SI: All right.

MWH: You're reading from my bio.

SI: Yes.

MWH: Now, Leslie, do you remember Leslie?

SI: Yes.

MWH: Fehrenbach. She gave me this chair, and you know what? You're right, [laughter] 2004 to 2014. [Editor's Note: Leslie A. Fehrenbach served as the Secretary of Rutgers University from 2003 to 2015. Reverend Howard is referring to a Rutgers rocking chair, traditionally given as a gift in recognition of a person's service to the University.]

SI: All right.

MWH: And you were asking what now?

SI: How do you prepare for this role? You obviously had a background in higher education, but this is a little bit of a different role.

MWH: Well, I also had a background in moderating major, I mean major, organizations. When I was in my thirties, as I think we discussed, I was president of the National Council of

Churches, which made me chair of the Board of Governors, the governing board, as it was called. You're pretty much ready for the UN if you moderate that. [Editor's Note: Dr. Howard served as president of the National Council of Churches from 1979 to 1981.]

SI: Okay.

MWH: Lots of personalities, a lot of opportunity to learn how you manage a meeting of sometimes disparate perspectives, intelligent people with background knowledge of things, and so on. So, that was an asset at Rutgers.

I was not unfamiliar with Rutgers, because I had served as a campus minister at Rutgers, at Livingston, in the early days. I'd had encounters with Rutgers, but I had to learn a lot about Rutgers. I was, I mean, to say the very least, quite impressed with what I learned. The University was leading, or near leading, the nation in various fields that never occurred to me, like philosophy. I never knew that.

As chair of the board, eventually, you work very closely with the president and the president is the executive leader of the University, so, getting acquainted with the leader, getting acquainted with your fellow board members. Now, that was the spade work I had to do, but I came knowing that I had to do this, the culture of organizational leadership, very important, learning the sources of revenue, becoming acquainted with opportunities. For example, the level of alumni giving at Rutgers, and, I would say, the level of outreach to those alumni, it is a far cry today than it was in those days.

One of the things that we did early in my tenure, working closely with Kim Manning, was to clarify the public image of Rutgers. Back in the day, almost every department in Rutgers, every University-recognized extracurricular activity, had a logo of its own. Do you know this? The Department of So-and-So had a logo, the Department of So-and-So. [Editor's Note: Kim Manning has served as the Vice President for University Communications and Marketing (originally University Relations) at Rutgers University since 2004.]

The image of Rutgers was so confusing to the outside. That block "R" that you see now, which we all take for granted, that was the result of money spent. There were lots of hard discussions, a lot of work to unify the faculty and other components of the community around certain things, lots of back and forth dialogue.

So, that was a major achievement. You have, I think, three images. You have the sort of formal image of the president's office, you have another sort of image, and then, you have the "rah-rah" image, the block "R," the popular one, the one that's connected to sports, and so forth. When I heard that Rutgers had a quarter of a million, I think, in those days, living alumni in New Jersey ...

SI: Yes.

MWH: ... They had a whole bunch more outside, but a quarter of a million in the state, and we never really, in the systematic way that I was accustomed to, we weren't asking much of them.

So, I think, today, everybody, when they get a diploma, they are members of the Alumni Association. You used to have to buy a membership. Everybody gets the magazine. You used to have to subscribe. Then, of course, McCormick launched the Capital Campaign, which I think was ultimately concluded under Barchi. That was the first really "knock the ball out of the park," serious capital thing. [Editor's Note: Dr. Richard L. McCormick served as Rutgers University President from 2002 to 2012.]

These are the kinds of things you have a predisposition [toward] and some level of knowledge of how these things work, but, when you're in the laboratory, you're also learning by doing. That would be, I would say, my experience working with the Board of Governors. That was Bill Howard's thing. I mean, I always worked with people and moderated differing views and pressed people to stay on the agenda.

I remember, when I came to the board, if a group with some kind of complaint wanted to speak at the board, they could just get up and speak. They could dominate the conversation, and the board [meeting] would go on. We'd be sitting there at seven o'clock, waiting on people to shut up--that sounds horrible, doesn't it? [laughter]--but I said, "No." I mean, if we're not going to vote on something at a certain meeting, why are people commenting? If we're about to vote on something, people should be able to get up and argue their case, for or against. If we're dealing with a very substantive and maybe emotional issue of great concern to the community, why can't we have public forums, outside the context of a business meeting, where we learn about things like tuition increases and all kinds of issues that emerge? The board can come out, if they want to be a part of this robust exchange, and hear and learn.

I went to several of them, and other board members did, too. We weren't under pressure to decide, but when we were at the point of deciding, we would have this background. That brought such order to the meetings, because somebody with a gripe about what happened at their dorm, they couldn't just get up in a meeting and start talking about how the faucet was leaking.

I would say that some of this is the result of being in a leadership role in what I would say [were] much more raucous organizations than the Board of Governors. You had good people. When I started on the board, you had people really devoted to Rutgers. Most of them were alumni. They were very jealous about the University's autonomy, which made me very comfortable, because, when Governor McGreevey asked me to serve, one of the things I pressed him on was, "Do you want me to serve, or do you want to send messages through me?" I said, "Now, if the second one is true, I'm not your guy." He assured me that he would never interfere, he was confident of my background and values, and so on. He never interfered.

Governor Corzine reappointed me to the board, never interfered. We had board members like that. I hope that's still true, because, even though the University relies heavily on the state for support, if you just let the academic people run the University and keep that freedom of speech and inquiry going, you're going to have a much better university.

Politicians--not individual politicians, but the culture of politics--seeks influence wherever it could find influence. If you don't have that clear line, you'll have influential politicians persuading the dean to appoint their cousin to be professor of English literature and they dropped

out of high school, see. So, you keep that autonomy. I was able to give a lot of my time, with the excitement and willingness, because I felt confident I was serving with people with a similar point of view.

SI: We will talk about the football stadium. In general, when did you first come to understand or be aware of the role that athletics plays at Rutgers?

MWH: Well, right away, it became clear to me that, sometime before I joined the board, there were board members, alumni, who had spearheaded an effort to bring big sports to Rutgers, what they called "revenue sports," basketball, football--really, football, but basketball and football.

They weren't as proud as they wanted to be of their University's place in this world of college sports. You would hear people talk about how they would come to a Rutgers football game and they could go in and take whatever seat they want, it was so empty. Given the historic role of Rutgers in the game of college football, they envisioned Rutgers having a more robust program.

So, Schiano had been employed before I came and this trajectory was underway, but I came in right around the time when the teams were beginning to win, the football team. Stringer was well underway, getting herself established as a great coach, but, now, Schiano was beginning to show this in football. They were winning games and, eventually, they were invited to play in bowl games. [Editor's Note: Greg Schiano served as Rutgers University's head football coach from 2001 to 2012. He returned to Rutgers as head football coach in 2019. Basketball Hall of Famer C. Vivian Stringer has served as Rutgers University's head women's basketball coach since 1995.]

Things were heating up and the vision of Rutgers being a big player was kind of materializing. They were in the Big East at that time. So, the coach had a pretty ambitious outlook. He had the special house built. He was making certain, what I would call, "big college sports" type demands. "You wanted me to bring this type of performance to Rutgers, this kind of record--this is what we've got to have. The head coach has got to have a home where he can entertain and he can do this and this." So, we built that house. You know about that house? Well, what is the status of that house now? [Editor's Note: In 2007, Rutgers provided a no-interest loan and University land in Piscataway to Greg Schiano to build a home. In 2014, the home was sold to private buyers, after Schiano became the head coach of the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers.]

SI: I am not sure.

MWH: Yes, but it was ...

SI: I do not think the current coach is there, but I am not sure.

MWH: Yes, quite a place.

SI: Yes.

MWH: But, then, the stadium was deemed to be inadequate. Different proposals were coming forward about how we could add this, how we could do this. By the time Jon Corzine was well-established, I would say, in the office, we had a full-blown proposal.

We needed a stadium expansion. We had all kinds of architectural plans. Tony Calcado was brilliant at presenting these plans. Of course, the coach was very much involved in this. He wanted things that Rutgers was not accustomed to, but the Penn States and the Michigans, they knew all about this--exercise rooms and lounges. I mean, I don't even remember all of the things, but it was a way to [compete]. It had components of the stadium where season ticket holders could come, like a little private place, venues, all of this to move us toward the big-time sports thing. In those days, the stadium was like a horseshoe. Do you remember that?

[Editor's Note: In January 2008, the Board of Governors approved a 102-million-dollar plan to expand Rutgers Stadium from forty-two thousand seats to fifty-six thousand seats. At the time of the plan's approval, seventy-two million dollars was to be raised through bonds that would be repaid through ticket sales, and the remainder would be generate through a private fundraising campaign headed by Governor Corzine, who personally pledged one million dollars to the campaign, and New Jersey State Senator Raymond J. Lesniak. In December 2008, after the original financing plan faltered, Rutgers announced a plan to borrow all of the funds needed and scaled back the new total number of seats to 52,454. Antonio M. Calcado serves as Rutgers' Executive Vice President for Strategic Planning and Operations and Chief Operating Officer.]

SI: Yes.

MWH: So, I guess it's closed in now, right. It's like a little bowl. Rutgers still has one of the smallest stadiums, but we were in the Northeast, a heavily populated area. We wanted to be big players.

So, I remember, when we wanted to go for this stadium, one of the things we said would be our goal was not to utilize any money from student fees to pay for the stadium. That was important. Governor Corzine, somewhere early in this process, became an advocate for [it]. He was very supportive, very supportive, putting a sizable--and don't quote me on the figures, because I can't recall--but a sizable amount of money to help with the construction expansion of the stadium.

Right around that time, the state was in a retrenchment mode. The state was out of money, cutbacks. The governor was forced to walk back that commitment, but, because he had made the commitment and had been so public about it, and I think, because he was very supportive, he volunteered to raise the money himself, without realizing, at that moment, that there were limits on gifts that he could solicit from people, his friends, and so forth. So, that really didn't fly. I think the governor wound up giving maybe a million or a couple million dollars of his own personal money to the stadium, but this idea of a state grant or a sizable fundraiser, independent of the Rutgers Foundation, it never happened.

So, we wound up having to, I guess, float bonds to pay for the stadium, but still with a commitment not to charge against student fees. Now, when we took that vote, as policymakers for the University, I think we're very responsible, because we were getting very modest fill rates,

stadium fill rates or attendance, as the basis for covering our financial obligation. The football team was hot, so there was no reason to believe that you wouldn't meet those numbers. Let me just say, I don't know how things are going today, but I will say this is a great example, at least during my tenure, of "the best laid plans of mice and men," if you know that expression, because, right away, it was evident that this thing was costing us a lot of money.

Now, we had this very big controversy, really big controversy, where it was almost like a showdown between the athletic director and the president. Bob Mulcahy, you know that name?

SI: Yes.

MWH: And Bob, I don't know if he resigned or he was fired or something, but, anyway, Bob went away. Bob was very popular. After Bob was terminated, we got this great young guy, Tim Perneti.

I liked Tim, and Tim wanted to pursue something that I think had started a little bit before he came, but it hadn't taken off. I'm relying on my memory here, but Tim wanted us to be in the Big Ten. I think that was something the athletic advocates, really, they just salivated at the thought that we could be in the Big Ten. Tim succeeded at this. He later stepped down over some controversy. It was debated then whether it was the kind of thing that should've precipitated his leaving, but, nonetheless, he left, but we're in the Big Ten.

[Editor's Note: Robert E. Mulcahy, III, served as Director of Athletics at Rutgers University from 1998 to 2008. He was fired after a series of articles in the *Star-Ledger* and several investigations into corruption in the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics. Tim Perneti became the Director of Intercollegiate Athletics at Rutgers University in 2009. He resigned in 2013 after it was revealed that Rutgers Men's Basketball Coach Mike Rice was abusive towards his players. Rutgers began playing in the Big Ten Conference in 2014.]

The Big Ten is like the Mueller Report--it's going to be our savior, [laughter] oh, boy--but it's still saving us, right. I mean, we haven't quite fallen over that line. I think we're still in a deficit position. We haven't learned the trade of big-time sports. I don't even know whether it's the size of the stadium or the universe of season ticket holders; I don't know how to understand how to finance or bankroll this kind of thing on a continuing basis, but I keep reading, and I only know from reading, that Rutgers still hasn't quite turned that corner.

That's essentially it. I mean, there were controversies, some of which I'm not remembering, I mean, big controversies, where we brought in lawyers. Maybe you know something about these things, you could ask me questions that could trigger my mind.

SI: Sure. First, I want to ask, when it comes to an issue like athletics, are there other entities that try to reach out to you and influence your thoughts, or is it all coming through the usual channels, all your information about the athletic policies?

MWH: Nothing unseemly, no, nothing unseemly, I would say.

SI: Yes, or just hard lobbying.

MWH: No, no.

SI: Okay.

MWH: No. The only time I experienced something resembling that was when there was a big controversy over whether Rutgers in Camden would remain a part of Rutgers. You remember that controversy?

SI: Yes.

MWH: That was when I got a lot of mail, a lot of calls, from everybody you could imagine--not so much people who were trying to assume control over the University, but the people who wanted it to remain as a part of Rutgers. Oh, boy, in fact, I have a T-shirt that I wear now that the Camden people sent me, because it says, "Rutgers-Camden, still a part of Rutgers," on the back. They were proud of that, but that was the one which got a lot of what I would call "arm-twisting" appeals.

Maybe there was one other, something--I mean, the undergraduate education unification thing ... [Editor's Note: In April 2004, Dr. McCormick and Dr. Philip Furmanski (Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs from 2003 to 2011) created the Task Force on Undergraduate Education, chaired by Dr. Barry Qualls of the Rutgers English Department, to conduct a comprehensive examination of all aspects of the undergraduate experience on the Rutgers' campuses in New Brunswick and Piscataway. In July 2005, the Qualls Committee issued a report entitled, "Transforming Undergraduate Education: Report of the Task Force on Undergraduate Education at Rutgers-New Brunswick/Piscataway." The report recommended merging Rutgers College, Douglass College, University College and Livingston College into what became the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) and turning Cook College into what became the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences. On March 10, 2006, President McCormick submitted recommendations based on the Qualls Report, but also shaped by the ensuing public debate within the Rutgers community, to the Board of Governors, which approved the reorganization.]

SI: I know Douglass alumnae and other folks who were supportive of Douglass were very vocal in their disappointment in how things turned out.

MWH: Douglass more than any other entity. I thought they did a wonderful job of arguing their case, but you also had some really incredible human beings on the faculty there. There was a man who played a prominent role in the committee who was a very beloved person at Douglass. I'm looking at his face. I can't think of his name, but he was very big on the integration. He had *bona fides* as a strong supporter of Douglass, but he was not supporting the Douglass position in the debate. Linda Stamato is another important voice in all of this, but they made their case well, I thought. It probably helped to shape what eventually would happen at Douglass.

[Editor's Note: Linda Stamato, DC '62, GSNB '77, is Co-Director of the Center for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution and a faculty member at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. She also served as Chair of the Board of Governors and Acting Dean of Douglass College. After the undergraduate colleges reorganized, Rutgers established Douglass Residential College as a residential college for women within SAS.]

I think, in the absence of their intervention, we may have had something resembling what we have, but I think it's probably stronger. I think, in hindsight, it was a very historic decision. I think that was, among the various contributions of Dick McCormick, that has got to stand out as one of the most important, because you then resolve the sort of AAU [American Association of Universities] identity, which from the time of our previous president ...

SI: Bloustein?

MWH: Bloustein, the faculty, from the '80s, had been a part of the AAU, but the students weren't. We used to say, "Rutgers is a university whose faculty has no students." The faculty is a Rutgers University faculty, members of the AAU; the students were owned by their respective colleges, in terms of curriculum requirements, graduation requirements, admissions standards. That resolved all of that. [Editor's Note: Dr. Edward J. Bloustein served as President of Rutgers from 1971 to 1989. In an effort to transform Rutgers into a leading public research institution, in 1981, the University merged the faculties of the independent colleges into a single centralized unit, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS). Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, was invited to join the Association of American Universities, an organization for the nation's leading research universities, in 1989.]

Then, to have, at each campus, and especially at Douglass, a robust program in the development of women's leadership and various other things, to me, was amazing. Now, one of the realities is, we love tradition. I'm from a college where if they stopped offering any courses, we would still fight to preserve the school because tradition. We love that thing. I get it, I get it, but we had a precipitous decline in applications to Douglass. We had something like some inordinate percentage of leaders at Rutgers College [who] were women. So, that argument for a degree-granting academic institution, separate unto itself, was under great challenge. Then, the central University was subsidizing certain things.

Now, I would imagine that the focus of the women's identity and place, and so forth, it must be exploding at Douglass. I mean, the things I've been around Douglass since that happened have been just a confirmation that it was a good thing.

Now, it had growing pains. Take Livingston, for example--I had a prominent educator in Newark come to visit me at the church to say that they regretted this unification plan, because it was being discussed at that time--because, as she put it, Livingston was a kind of gateway to Rutgers for her students.

Think of what that tells you--well, just think of what that tells you. Then, there was the prediction that if Rutgers unified, if it had a standard sort of threshold for admission, and so on, it

will become less diverse. That's not true, is it? So, I think it was a theory. Who can be sure, when you're initiating things like this, how they will really turn out? But I think the verdict is in.

It was an interesting time. When I sat in those public discussions and listened to the women from Douglass, alumni and students, they were great advocates for their school.

SI: Within the Board of Governors itself, were these issues divisive?

MWH: No.

SI: Okay.

MWH: No, no. I can tell you that, as I think about it, I cannot think of any issue that divided the board. Sometimes, the board was more animated in its response to public debate, when people would come in. I remember once, we had a--what was that about?--the meeting was in Newark. Maybe that was about undergraduate education--no, no, no, here's the other controversy: the non-revenue sports. Rutgers had quite a vast array of, essentially--well, I wouldn't say they weren't varsity sports, but they were not revenue--like rowing or fencing, something like that.

SI: Yes, they called them the "Olympic sports."

MWH: Yes, okay, Olympic sports, and we had students who really excelled at this. They were outstanding, but, in the question of economy, not just uniforms and fielding the teams and travel, but practice space or a locker room space, and so on, you look across the landscape at similar universities, state universities, large size, they had nowhere near the number of these non-revenue sports.

Rutgers, which is quite an old university, with traditions that accumulate over the years, there's, I think, an appreciation for this, a healthy appreciation for this, but, also, Rutgers is an aspiring university. It has certain models out there that they want to, not emulate *per se*, but they look at them as a guiding light. I think Ann Arbor [University of Michigan] is one. There might be others. They were looking at these other universities and seeing that they maybe had a third fewer of these sports, but there were alumni who were absolutely determined that we weren't going to eliminate these sports. That was a big one. Now, does your experience with Rutgers go back that far? [Editor's Note: In 2006, Rutgers University announced it would be reducing men's heavyweight crew, men's lightweight crew, men's fencing, men's swimming and diving, men's tennis and women's fencing to club team status.]

SI: Yes, I have been there since the late 1990s.

MWH: Okay, so you remember.

SI: I was a student then.

MWH: The revenue sports. Incidentally, as I said, there were people, on the board and off the board, sometimes people with means, who were willing to give money to support big sports. There was also a movement against it.

I mean, there were people who were saying, "This is going to erode the academic climate that we want. This will take the emphasis off what we are really about." That was big in the faculty. That was helped a little bit, in the earliest of days, when we were really cranking this thing up, when the Dean of Rutgers College, the academic dean, marvelous guy--I can't think of his name--was appointed the chief advisor to the athletes, academic advisor. [Editor's Note: Dr. Carl Kirschner, a Professor of Linguistics and former Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, served as Dean of Rutgers College from 1994 to 2006. He served as Chair of the Academic Oversight Committee for Intercollegiate Athletics (AAOC) from 1997 to 2016.]

SI: Dr. Kirschner, Carl Kirschner?

MWH: Yes, Carl Kirschner, yes. When he was appointed to that role, some people said, "Oh, okay," because they had confidence in Carl. Carl was very devoted to this role, but when you look at the kinds of stories coming out of Rutgers now with athletes, whoa, man, I don't mean to smear the whole program, but you hear stories, people on trial for some of the most heinous crimes, right.

I mean, you see that. I don't say these people are guilty, but that's not what you want. That's not the package you're thinking about when you think about big sports, but you got that--but that was one of the issues that people would [bring up]. I remember that meeting in Newark, some very capable alumni, I don't know if they filed suit against the University, something like that.

SI: They may have.

MWH: Yes, it was huge, yes.

SI: I know the Rutgers 1000 ...

MWH: No, as a matter-of-fact, I was identified in a suit. [Editor's Note: In the mid-1990s, Rutgers 1000, comprised of faculty, alumni and students, organized to persuade Rutgers to withdraw from Division I athletic competition. In 1998, the Rutgers Magazine rejected a Rutgers 1000 advertisement, leading to a lawsuit, *Rutgers 1000 Alumni Council v. Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Et Al.*, decided by the New Jersey Superior Court in 2002, which Rutgers 1000 won. Reverend Howard, as Rutgers Board of Governors Chair, was named in the *McGovern, Jr. v. Rutgers, State University of New Jersey* (2012) case. The case involved whether or not the Board had violated the Open Public Meetings Act, which the New Jersey Supreme Court decided in favor of Rutgers.]

SI: Yes, that was the Rutgers 1000. I think it had to do with an ad they wanted to run in one of the publications, and the publication denied it.

MWH: I don't remember the details.

SI: Yes.

MWH: But, that Rutgers 1000, that rings a bell, very sophisticated group. They were strong advocates of their position.

In general, the board, at least in the time that I served, I never felt, if there were any pieces of information, any substantiating data on any recommendation that I wanted, that the administration was reluctant to give it. I mean, some of the most interesting, well-presented presentations, for example, were on the stadium. Calcado produced excellent presentations, costs, things laid out in cost.

Now, revenue projections--and any revenue projection in a market where people voluntarily choose to do or not to do are just projections--they may not have panned out, but they were never exaggerated. They'd never say, "You should vote this, for bonds, because we're going to have ninety-seven percent attendance." We wouldn't have fallen for that. The attendance was much more modest, and we had a proven track record of exceeding those targets over a few years.

So, it was reasonable to assume that you could approximate that in the foreseeable future, but there was always a community that resisted what they thought big sports would do to the Rutgers they envisioned or the Rutgers they had known.

SI: You have these varying arguments--on the one hand, the effect on academics, on the other, raising Rutgers' profile and potentially getting more ...

MWH: Applications.

SI: Yes.

MWH: Rutgers started going to those bowls, applications went up. The question is, who was applying? Were they applying because they wanted to go to the tailgate parties, or were they applying because they wanted a degree in physics? No, but I do think one of the concerns was that we want to raise the profile.

Well, we have almost a flood of kids going to Penn State from New Jersey. At the Starbucks where I go, the kids know me pretty well. They talk to me about their college plans and all of that stuff. I was in a conversation a couple days ago, a young lady determined to go to Penn State. I said, "Well, you're going to go right past a great university on your way to Penn State. What's this about?" You think about it--Penn State is known. It's in the bowl games, it's on TV. I think that's a reasonable hope.

Then, you see so many of our star athletes, especially in football, playing for two years and going off to the NFL. What is that? You can argue, "Well, you gave this young man a great opportunity to earn a big paycheck for his family," but is that what the University is for? That's a valid argument, too. We had those kinds of conversations. We had great faculty representation on the board during my time, and they would often bring these arguments to the table.

SI: Was there any one thing, or group of things, that really affected your thinking on an issue like that? You are kind of a neutral party.

MWH: Right.

SI: You are not an alum or a former faculty member.

MWH: Right, right.

SI: What swayed your thoughts one way or the other?

MWH: Interesting. On the issue of football, I'll say, I remember sort of saying to myself, "The train has left the station, Bill. You've got an expensive coach. The train is gone. Now, is it practical or advisable to try to reverse all this, or, since it's left the station, do you have an obligation to help maximize what it can be?" That's where I found myself. I think I might've been in a different place, philosophically, if I had been on the front of this, when it was being stirred.

In terms of, "How big does Rutgers want to be?" the extent to which Rutgers is relying on the cash flow of new students, all of these are questions in the balance when you're talking about the really big-time, high-visibility things like these sports, getting on television and appearing in bowls, and the coach or athletic director flying around in the private planes. That was also a big issue. You can't operate at that level with your coach flying on a commercial aircraft, on a scheduled airplane, you can't do it if you're doing recruiting.

But, that had left the station. Then, what do you say, "Wait a minute, that was a wrong decision five, ten years ago. We need to recall that and start all over again." I didn't see that as a viable thing to do. That would be my thought.

Yes, if you wanted a Rutgers of ten thousand students, all brilliant, academic kids--my kids, all of my kids, went to small, non-athletic schools. It was fine. They chose those schools, by the way. I remember, one of the schools actually fired the football team while one of my kids was a student. My kid never came home to complain about it, so, that's the [difference]. My kids were more interested in the library, maybe, I guess.

The other thing is that, often, in the non-revenue type sports, performance in athletics can be actually equated with good performance academically. Because of the revenue dimension and the option for moving forward to [the] professional category, unlike, let's say, rowing or fencing--I dare say you have people in those sports who are Phi Beta Kappa, and so on--but the revenue sports would be predominantly people who, ideally, they'd like to get noticed. Most of them won't be, see, but they'd like to be noticed at another level. That's why you have some of them leaving after a couple of years. After they've distinguished themselves, before they get injured, they get a good contract.

SI: You became chair in 2007. How did that come about?

MWH: My colleagues voted me in.

SI: Okay.

MWH: That was it, and I served for three years, but, each year, I had to be reelected.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MWH: Yes, I was elected three consecutive times, each year. Why they elected me, I have no idea. I'll say that Al Gamper, my predecessor as chair of the board, and a very devout Rutgers alum, he liked me. Even before I came to the board, he heard that the governor was--was it? maybe I have this--yes, I think even before I came to the board, he heard somehow that I might be named. He came to see me, and [it was] a little bit embarrassing to see how much he knew about me. He said, "I hope you will agree to do this," and he was just very supportive. I think he may've had some role in recommending this, but Gene O'Hara, who was a very prominent member of the board, several others--I don't want to try and recall all the names, because I'll miss someone--we worked very closely together. I think they even imagined that I knew what I was doing, you see, [laughter] but we weathered some interesting storms there, around athletics. [Editor's Note: Eugene M. O'Hara, UCN '62, retired CFO of Prudential Insurance Company, served as Chair of the Board of Governors from 2001 to 2004. Albert R. Gamper, Jr., UCN '66, former Chairman and CEO of the CIT Group, Inc., served as Chair from 2004 to 2007.]

Now, after my term as chair concluded, I still had a couple more years on the board. So, I served with Gerry, who was a chair for a while, Gerry and Ralph Izzo. Ralph Izzo was my immediate successor, but Gerald, outstanding Episcopal layman--I can't believe I don't remember his name, I'm looking at his face--but I served with both of [them]. [Editor's Note: Reverend Howard served as Chair of the Board of Governors from 2007 to 2010. Dr. Ralph Izzo, President and CEO of Public Service Enterprise Group, Inc., who earned an MBA from the Rutgers Graduate School of Management in 2002, served as Chair from 2010 to 2013. Gerald C. Harvey, RC '72, an attorney and former Chair of the Rutgers Board of Trustees, was elected Board of Governors Vice Chair in 2010, after which he served as Chair from 2013 to 2014.]

Now, as my term was really winding down, it was Gerry who was confronting the issue of the Board of Trustees. The State Legislature was very livid. I'm not even sure why, but they were out to do whatever they could to undermine the Board of Trustees. So, a decision was made that we could preempt a lot of this by having our own thinking about how the board should work, and so on, but we couldn't impose this, because the Board of Trustees rested on its own bottom.

The state couldn't abolish it. The only leverage the state really had was to withhold funds, but if you wanted to have the Board of Trustees be, say, a more manageable, less raucous type of group--I mean, these are terms that other people would use about the board. They were mostly just really devoted alumni of Rutgers, but it was huge. I mean, it was a big group. So, we knew that this would be a train wreck if we kept on this path, the state bearing down. At the same time, we wanted to protect the integrity of the Board of Trustees. So, Gerry asked me to chair a committee to recommend how we deal with this issue. Are you familiar with that?

SI: A little bit.

MWH: Yes. It was called something, the Committee on something related to the Trustees [Joint Task Force on Governance]. Oh, man, that was a delicious experience, and I don't mean, like, good delicious. It was just all over the place, but we had a really, really wonderful spirit, open and detailed type conversations about the history of the Board of Trustees, about its positive function, and so on.

I came to the board with some kind of background as an activist and interested in justice issues. So, a lot of people would throw things at me, that they'd thought I'd be a soft guy. So, they would say, "You know, Bill, if you look at the Board of Governors and you see diversity, where do you think that comes from? It was the Board of Trustees." The Board of Trustees produced more women, more minorities to the Board of Governors than any gubernatorial appointment. I was sort of a fluke. I didn't think I was the first African-American appointed to the Board by a Governor, but I don't know. I mean, you'd have to go back a ways, and I resonated to that.

I always felt the Board of Trustees had a valuable role to play in the life of the University. Now, it didn't matter what I thought about that, because they were a reality, in history, written down in the law, but I also agreed in my own mind that this was a valuable group, because they played a role in the autonomy/integrity function that we talked about before. They were guarding the reputation of Rutgers through thick and thin, and we needed that.

We worked out what I thought to be an admirable formula for dealing with this and I think, ultimately, the Trustees received it well. It showed respect for them and it left certain decisions up to them, but giving them a rationale for why we wanted to pursue this.

When you're trying to get compromise among human beings, you can lay out what you're after and pray that you'll recognize what you get as something similar to what you were trying to accomplish. It's never quite exactly as you hoped, but it wound up going, like, to the Legislature. Somebody called me up one day and told me that the Senator, Senator Sweeney, was referring-- they got behind what we were. The State Legislature, they embraced, or at least the leaders embraced, what we were proposing. [Editor's Note: NJ State Senator Stephen M. Sweeney, a Gloucester County-based Democrat, has served in the New Jersey Senate since 2002 and has served as Senate President since 2010.]

It became the Howard Plan, okay, the Howard Plan. I didn't want to be stuck with that, because I felt like the politicians would use it to beat up on people who may be still deliberating on how they felt about it, see. You could essentially polarize the thing, and then, it would have my name associated with it--didn't like that. [Editor's Note: Reverend Howard chaired the Joint Task Force on Governance. Their report recommended reducing the size of the Board of Trustees from fifty-nine to forty-one voting members and preventing dual membership on the Boards of Trustees and Governors. In December 2014, the Board of Governors approved the plan and Senate President Steve Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto introduced mirror bills into the State Legislature. In February 2015, Governor Christie signed the bill into law. In 1956, the Board of Governors became the governing body of the university. At that point, the Board of

Trustees, which had been the governing body since 1766, took on an advisory function, with certain fiduciary responsibilities over assets of the university in existence before 1956.]

We had one member of our committee who had a sort of minority report. I have, both with the Death Penalty Study Commission and this particular issue, experience with this. In the churches, let me say, churches, they're much more raucous than this group. I was very accustomed to minority reports being included in major reports. You have an addendum with a minority report. In both instances, I would have people who supported the dominant decision who wanted to shut these people down, "Oh, no, no." [Editor's Note: The New Jersey Death Penalty Study Commission, created in 2006 and chaired by Reverend Howard, studied all aspects of the death penalty and its effectiveness. It submitted its final report on January 2, 2007.]

I remember Senator Russo--God bless him, he's passed away now--he had seen his parents, his parents were killed by an assailant. He was also a leader in the State Legislature and the governor appointed him to this, or someone appointed him, to the Death Penalty Study Commission. He was a very worthy participant. He was very civil, and so on, but he had a different take on this than I did. His own loss was an ingredient in his perspective. [Editor's Note: New Jersey State Senator John F. Russo, an Ocean County-based Democrat, served in the New Jersey Senate from 1974 to 1992 and served as Senate President from 1986 to 1990. He authored the bill that reinstated capital punishment in 1982.]

So, in the end, after--we had prosecutors, we had a sheriff, we had families of deceased people, other than Senator Russo, we had a mayor, I think, somewhere in there, we had some civic groups that were focused on death penalty--all of these people agreed that we would go for the end of the death penalty, life without the possibility of parole, but no execution. The public advocate was a part of this, too, the state public advocate.

Senator Russo said--and, by the way, he served with me and I served with him on the Board of Governors at Rutgers--he said, "I'd like to have a minority report." I said, "But, of course, John. Why don't you prepare your draft and let's go over it?" Other members of the committee, some of whom had sacrificed some of their ideological perspective to be a part of the agreement, said, "No, no, we don't want that minority report. This is our report."

The Legislature received our report with that minority report, in my view, far more warmly because we showed evidence of respecting the view of--what do you say?--not dissident, but someone who would vote differently. What did John Russo want? He said, "I don't believe [in it] and I hope we shall never use the law, but I think we should have one on the books." Well, whatever your opinion may be of that line of thinking, it was totally harmless, but it made him feel better even about the whole thing.

In this report on the Trustees, we had a member of our board who thought we didn't go far enough--we should stick it to them. I mean, that's not a proper representation, but that's essentially what he was saying, but to what effect? I mean, we have no authority over the decision to reduce or increase the Board of Trustees--so, what's the point? Our obligation was to present a fair set of ideas, that, ideally, they could see the fruit of this line of thinking. We often had the chair of the Board of Trustees sitting in with us to understand our thinking.

That was our report and one of the things it did was resulted in an increase in the size of the board. Only the governor appointed [people before]; now, I think the Legislature has some kind of role, I don't know. Plus, they appointed advisory committees, I think, to the separate campuses. [Editor's Note: According to the by-laws instituted in July 2015, the Board of Trustees consists of forty-one voting members. Of the forty-one voting members, twenty charter members (of whom at least three are women and three are students) are chosen by the Board of Trustees; sixteen alumni members are nominated by the Nominating Committee of the Board of Trustees; and five public members are appointed by the governor with confirmation by the New Jersey State Senate. The president of the University is an ex officio, nonvoting member. Two faculty and two students are elected by the University Senate as nonvoting representatives.]

SI: Yes.

MWH: I don't know what difference that has made.

SI: Some kind of community boards, too.

MWH: Yes, it might've made a great difference, but I was not around very long after that to see what might be the fruits of that. That's essentially [it]. I don't know if you want to press any other point.

SI: In terms of how the whole reorganization issue came about, it seems like, basically, the moves from down south and from the advocates for Rowan were kind of a surprise. Was that how it felt from your perspective?

MWH: Remember, Corzine--I shouldn't say out of the blue, but it felt out of the blue--that Corzine authorized the medical school in the south. That was a fly in the milk. If you talk to Dick McCormick, he'll tell you about--you remember Phil Furmanski?--Phil Furmanski, Dick McCormick had a visit from a very prominent politician in South Jersey, and some would argue there's only really one. [laughter] I shall not utter the name, but he came to Rutgers and gave the president and his top guy there, Furmanski, an ultimatum regarding some kind of relationship with Camden. They didn't buy it, which, to me, was the right, very right, decision.

Then, he went to Corzine and got this agreement. That muddled the waters. Chris Christie came in and elevated the whole thing. I mean, he just sort of--and I don't know that, I can't say, I'm sure this was part of the governor's argument, that he was improving the University by having a research medical institution integrated in a great research university--but he probably had some financial motives, savings, because, at that time, he was really trying to shake up higher education. I know that he wanted to essentially abandon Thomas Edison. [Editor's Note: On July 1, 2013, the New Jersey Medical and Health Sciences Education Restructuring Act went into effect, integrating Rutgers University with all units of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), except University Hospital in Newark and the School of Osteopathic Medicine in Stratford (which became part of Rowan). Thomas Edison State University is a public institution located in Trenton, New Jersey, founded in 1972.]

[TAPE PAUSED]

MWH: The thing had been in the works for a while, but it seems to me that Christie came in and really pushed it over the line. Then, we had Barchi, who immediately began to develop a positive relationship with the governor. Then, he hired the chancellor, who I believe is based in Newark, who was quite an experienced medical school administrator [Dr. Brian L. Strom, the inaugural Chancellor of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences].

The transition, the successful integration of the medical school, I mean, for what little I know, because I don't know the details, it seems, by now, I mean, it went quicker than expected. I think that we all assumed that it was a really heavy lift--and I'm sure it was--but there were competent people in place and it seemed to go away as an issue.

Being in Newark, I, of course, had some connections--not connections, but interactions--with the medical school, Dr. Johnson, the dean of the school, everything I sensed from him. In fact, I think it was last spring, I spoke at their graduation. So, it's a done deal, and that, to me, is, as I said before, one of the major achievements--I don't know if the governor would say that, maybe he has other things he'd like to highlight--but, from my point of view, we don't talk about that anymore. [Editor's Note: Dr. Robert L. Johnson served as Interim Dean of New Jersey Medical School beginning in 2005 and became The Sharon and Joseph L. Muscarelle Endowed Dean of New Jersey Medical School in March 2011.]

Dr. Cantor was ultimately hired at Newark. She hit the ground running, very popular, taking a lot of great initiatives to advance the visibility and prominence of that campus in the City of Newark. I assume Camden is coming along, and New Brunswick, it's New Brunswick. I imagined, as I think others might've, that it would've been a little bit more of a rocky road than it turned out to be. [Editor's Note: Dr. Nancy Cantor became Chancellor of Rutgers-Newark in 2014.]

Athletics, though, continues to be on our front pages, not always for the best reasons. That's a problem we still have to somehow--I don't know if "fix it" is the right word--but we have to grow in this role of managing big sports. Even the seasoned veterans have a breakout scandal, now and then, as you could see with Penn State.

SI: One of the ongoing issues that we have talked about a bit was the declining level of support from the state, financially, that was affecting things like tuition.

MWH: Right.

SI: There is obviously a lot of debate and a lot of protest. Is there much more that you can really do on the Board of Governors than just figure out what the best policy is to cover the expenses? How do you handle that issue as it keeps coming up?

MWH: Yes. For example, there was a time when the state would attempt to mandate what level of increase we would vote and they would leverage--they would attempt to leverage--this. They would say, "If you stay below three percent, we'll give you so-and-so." There's no appetite for

that in my time. People looked at the numbers, they knew what the contracts were, they knew what the costs were, in general. They took the money here and they had to plug the hole. That would be the tuition.

I think one of the realities of a Rutgers--and, by the way, this issue of declining support by governments in states for their state university, it's all over the country. California, I mean, we should thank God we're not California. I mean, California has gone [downhill]. When I was in college, you could go to Berkeley without paying tuition. Do you know this?

SI: Yes, I have heard that.

MWH: Yes. It's not true anymore, but Rutgers is still the bargain that you want to have. I remember when we went over the twenty-thousand mark, tuition and fees, twenty thousand. People who had gone to Rutgers twenty years ago, they said, "Oh, wow, twenty thousand." My daughter has been out of college for over ten years. Her last year, I paid forty-five thousand dollars. So, imagine what the people going now pay, see.

SI: Sure.

MWH: Fifty-five, sixty-five--I don't know what they're paying. So, Rutgers is still a tremendous bargain in our area. Maybe we would love to cost five thousand dollars ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

MWH: I was saying something; I lost my thought.

SI: That Rutgers is a bargain.

MWH: It's a bargain.

SI: Yes.

MWH: I say this to my church, where I pastored--it wasn't *my* church--but we had a huge program focused on black colleges. We raised money for them. We'd feature black college choirs. Our college committee favored the black colleges. I'm an alumnus of a black college. I know the value that that school had for me--but I often say to families that can ill-afford paying a lot of money, "Don't go past your state colleges and universities going to a place that's twice as expensive." I think I paid fifteen-hundred bucks for a year to go to my school. Now, it's forty-thousand or whatever. I don't know what it is, but it's expensive.

If you're interested in the sciences, the laboratories, the engineering equipment and the computers and all of that, these small private colleges, especially black colleges, can't compete with the facilities at a place like Rutgers. Now, if you're studying history and philosophy and literature, I don't know that Rutgers could touch my school, okay, but, in the sciences, when it comes to sophisticated laboratory equipment and stuff like that, no comparison.

Ultimately, we don't want kids to come to college and leave with no perspective about their own role in society, but you also want state-of-the-art exposure if you're studying astronomy or oceanography. I know when I was there, Rutgers had some kind of robot going under the ocean, all of that. These little schools can't compete, if you're interested in those subjects.

That's controversial though, because people, they're wedded to tradition. They never get an argument from me, because I dig tradition, but I'm from an all-male school that judges alumni success based on whether your sons come to the school. If your sons come, you're successful. If they don't, I don't care what you do, you're a failure, right. [laughter] So, I'm a failure. Both of my sons chose to go to different schools because of what interested them and what they thought they could get from the places they chose. They'd both visited my school and gave me the proper respect of at least pretending to be interested, you see. [laughter]

I think, in my opinion, a young woman from New Jersey today, wanting to have a top-flight exposure to academics, would go to Douglass. It's one of the sad chapters of our history that segregation built some tremendous institutions and, now, they're being destroyed because schools that historically weren't eager to have these students are now bringing them in and can provide the wherewithal to support them, yes.

SI: When you take over the chairman position, does that change your job or your workload?

MWH: Yes, you attend more meetings, especially small meetings. I spent a lot of time with the president as the president is crafting certain things he wants to advance to the board. Under the best of circumstances, the chair of the board is acquainted with the president's interests. If there are problems that we want to resolve, sometimes, you meet like that. Sometimes, the president would come to Newark and spend time with me in private sessions. When he wanted to terminate someone that was well-liked and it would produce a little rumble, he didn't want me to be surprised. If he wanted to start a new initiative, it would involve [meetings].

Of course, when there were public forums where, like I mentioned, special forums like [for] tuition increase, and so on, I, as chair, felt obligated to be present, so [that] that the students would know that at least the chair of the board was representing the board that was going to decide on these things. I would say that was about it. Going to Camden, sometimes, I was invited to speak to a small group of people. I even went to Camden on one or two occasions to address classes, [as] professors wanted. Now, I'm the first African-American chair, so, there's a little bit of that going on, but it was in the best spirit.

Remember, the president is our executive leader, but there were occasions when the president would want me to appear with him, when there was a controversial issue, at a press conference, right, but the chair of the board's role is not really what I would call an outside role. You want the president to be the focus, but, other than that, a lot of reading, a lot of documents, a lot of financial reports. Although the school that I led was a smaller institution and it was private, Rutgers was just a bigger scale of the same music. So, I knew the process very well. The details are there to be mastered.

SI: Was there anything else you would like to add about your time on the Board of Governors?

MWH: I was glad when it was over.

SI: Okay. [laughter]

MWH: I had a swell time. I enjoyed [it]. I learned a lot. I hope I contributed one or two things. Dick stuck me with Future Scholars and I'm very proud. Maybe you read about his attributing this to me, but I think that Courtney McAnuff really is the architect of that wonderful program. [Editor's Note: The Rutgers Future Scholars Program, launched in 2008, identifies promising rising eighth graders from economically-disadvantaged backgrounds in New Brunswick, Piscataway, Newark, Camden and Rahway for mentoring and other academic-support programs over the five years leading to college. Students who remain in the program and successfully meet Rutgers' admissions standards receive full tuition to the University. Courtney O. McAnuff became Rutgers' Vice President (now Vice Chancellor) for Enrollment Management in 2006.]

At the end of ten years, it's time that you move on. How I left the board was a bit awkward. My term ended and the governor didn't hasten to appoint a replacement. So, I was there waiting for that for a while. I was in conversation with the governor's office, because I didn't want to appear as if I didn't enjoy the role or appreciate the role, but I also wanted to let them know I had some other things I needed to do.

So, eventually, after several rounds of, "Hold on, Dr. Howard, don't worry, we are working on it;" they even asked me to recommend people. I sat down and sent them a list of ten people from different parts of the state. Finally, I just said, "I hate to say this, but I've got to go." Then, of course, they appointed someone. I don't know who it was, but they did. So, I enjoyed the time, but, after, really, a solid decade, time to go and time for new people, new ways of thinking.

I also felt, I have to say this, Shaun--this is not fair, because it's based on mere impression--but I just felt that the old Rutgers defenders weren't around anymore. I felt more comfortable on the board when they were there. I could hear the voice of the governor a little bit more than I wanted to hear around the table. I will say, maybe it's unrealistic, and, truthfully, I think it probably is, but I'm a believer in the non-interference. We get a president, you stay out of the president's way. You advise the president. When you don't think the president is doing a good job, you fire the president.

I think the state should be that way. If they want to debate whether they want to give us money, fine, but, ideally, let this be over measurables, not under-the-table political arrangements, and so on. I don't think we're there, but there are always dangers. I'm least comfortable when I feel that happening. There's so many talented people in New Jersey who could serve in this role and, when these people who are there now leave, other good people are available.

Jon Corzine, when he was leaving office, the Legislature and the power players in New Jersey put such restrictions on him about filling vacancies. It was customary that when a governor was leaving, he could appoint some people on the way out the door, but they really put the clamps on him. We had a conversation about filling, I think, two posts on the Board of Governors. He could only pick these people from some few counties.

He was very interested in appointing women. I was out of the country. He called me on the phone and he said, "Could you think of some women from these counties?" I don't know any women from Warren County. I mean, I'm sorry, I just don't. I don't know if Warren was one of them. So, we put our heads together. We'd talk about, "What about them? What about this one?" Corzine wound up appointing two men. One of them was Joe Roberts, a former Speaker of the New Jersey Assembly, came out of South Jersey. The so-called--what's that guy's name, the so-called boss down there? [Editor's Note: Democrat Joseph J. Roberts, Jr., served in the New Jersey General Assembly from 1987 to 2010, representing parts of Camden and Gloucester Counties, and served as Speaker of the Assembly from 2006 to 2010. Roberts joined the Rutgers Board of Governors in 2010.]

SI: Sweeney? Norcross?

MWH: Norcross. [Editor's Note: George Norcross III, Chairman of Conner Strong Companies, Inc., an insurance company, was, at one time, Chairman of the Camden County Democratic Party. Norcross is also Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Cooper Health System and Cooper University Hospital in Camden, New Jersey.]

SI: Yes.

MWH: Yes. Joe was one of the finest board members. He was a speaker. We sat next to each other. He was a very fair-minded guy. It's easy to stereotype people, but there was another male appointed. I don't know who it was, but he wound up having to appoint men. Jon is a very good guy. I often wish he had stayed in the Senate. I guess it was frustrating to him to be in a minority there, no power to speak of. He was a good Senator.

As I look back on the Board of Governors, it's a net positive. My regard for Rutgers, wow, was, by the time I left, very high, whereas, going in, I didn't have a bad opinion of Rutgers, but there was just so much of the details I didn't know.

SI: Let me take a quick break.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Now, we want to turn our attention to the Death Penalty Abolishment Committee on which you served. You were appointed to that by Governor Corzine as well.

MWH: Right.

SI: How did all this come about?

MWH: Well, first of all, the Death Penalty Study Commission, let me talk about how that came about. I think that's something that came out of the Legislature. If you take a look at the report, you'll see that the Legislature was interested in answers to seven or eight questions, very specific questions, about the death penalty. The governor was an advocate of the abolition. The

Legislature wanted to have the answers to these questions in order to take an informed vote. The commission was charged with getting those answers and reporting to the Legislature and to the governor the answers that they found.

Now, I'm not going to rehearse every single one, but things like, "Is the death penalty a deterrent to capital crime? Does the death penalty bring closure to the aggrieved families of victims? Tell us about the cost of the death penalty, and how does that interfere with prosecutions of other crimes in a prosecutor's office?" very relevant questions. If you look at the questions, no one wonders, "Why do they want to know this?" right?

SI: Yes.

MWH: These questions were very material in informing thoughtful judgements about the issue, and that was our purview--no question about the morality of the death penalty or anything like that. It was these things, public policy-type things.

Now, I'm a pastor of a prominent church in Newark. I speak English pretty well. I'm accustomed to dealing with all kinds of people. So, I don't know exactly how I got into a lot of this stuff, but, for example, I was on the committee to choose the Superintendent of the State Police. The attorney general, the deputy attorney general, former governor, Governor Byrne, we were a group of seven or eight people. I'm in that group.

I don't know why they wanted me in that group. I certainly asked inconvenient questions. I pressed--it's not like they're looking for someone who [said], "Whatever you say." Believe me, there are testimonies to that effect, other than mine, okay, [laughter] but each governor has been directed to me or something. I don't know. I mean, even Phil Murphy, at least two years before he announced, he was having coffee with me on a fairly routine basis. "Who should he talk to? What should he read? What are the issues?" never asking me, "Will you endorse me?" right, but he was looking, somehow thinking, "Maybe Bill Howard could shed some light." Why they thought that?--don't ask me. You have to ask them.

Now, why did Corzine appoint me to the Death Penalty Study Commission? He never asked me what my views were on the death penalty. He just appointed me to the committee. We had great people on that committee, Justice Coleman, James Coleman, former New Jersey Supreme Court, fantastic guy. He knew so much about the legal process in thinking through death cases, and so on. He was just a remarkable, brilliant man, but, right across the board, you had really interesting people. [Editor's Note: Justice James H. Coleman, Jr., served on the New Jersey Supreme Court as an Associate Justice from 1994 to 2003. He was the first African American to serve on the State Supreme Court.]

Very few of them were, evidently, philosophically opposed to the death penalty. I might've been the only one, but I don't know, because they probably didn't see that from me. I had issues with the death penalty *per se*, but what I knew is that I was not there to discharge my personal perspectives as a Christian minister and impose them on this process. The State Legislature asked me and the others to look at these questions--and did we ever do it.

We held public hearings. I think we heard from over seventy-five different groups and individuals. We had documents and books, I mean, papers, reports and books. I remember, we interviewed Dr. Charles Ogletree [Professor at Harvard Law School since 1985] because he had written a book on the death penalty. We had the video [Internet-based video communications]--he was at Harvard and we were in Trenton--talking back and forth. We had advocates of the death penalty; people argued that it deterred crime. I remember there was a guy from John Jay College who brought some kind of argument that he could prove, and so on.

Actually, we concluded that you could not be conclusive on the question of deterrence. There are good arguments on both sides. We didn't say, "But, we..." We didn't do bar, see. [laughter] We didn't say, "There are arguments on both sides, but here's what we conclude." We reported the arguments on both sides.

We found that if a county had a death case, it almost put the rest of the office on hold. It was so all-consuming, it was so expensive, you could hardly pay attention to bank robbers, or whatever, because you had a death case, see. We had prosecutors who could testify to the truth of this. We had the prosecutor from Ocean County, the prosecutor from Passaic County.

Families were there, two families, aside from Senator [John Russo], who were there because they had lost a relative. They attested, [if] there's a death case, they never get closure. Because the Constitution requires such a lengthy process of rehearing and re-verifying and re-this and appeal, and so forth, people are convicted of a capital crime and, twenty years later, they're still in court. Meanwhile, the families are re-living their tragedy all over again. So, the question of closure, no, you don't get closure. It's very expensive. We answered all those questions. I think we added one, and I don't remember what that was, but all these questions are in the report.

We had one dissenting vote in our recommendation, and that was the minority report from Senator Russo. The Legislature then received our report, I think, like, in December, I'm going to say, if my memory serves me. For the next year, they debated this. Sometime toward the latter part of the year, they agreed. I remember going to the ceremony to discuss our process, talking to the legislators, and it went through. The governor signed it.

New Jersey was the first state since the death penalty was reauthorized--it was determined to be unconstitutional in the late '70s, I think, and states had to redraw their laws. In fact, Senator Russo was the author of the reauthorization bill for New Jersey, I think in the early '80s. So, New Jersey was the first to abolish it after it was reauthorized. A number of states now are struggling to figure this out, but I would say, if they haven't, and maybe they are, they should certainly look at these principles, because they really are government principles. They're good government principles. They're not ethical principles. [Editor's Note: In 1972, the US Supreme Court ruled the death penalty unconstitutional in *Furman v. Georgia*. In 1976, the Supreme Court reevaluated and ruled that the death penalty was constitutional under certain circumstances. New Jersey abolished capital punishment in December 2007, after the Death Penalty Study Commission completed its work.]

See, as a clergy person, many people are surprised to hear me say, "I think a non-sectarian state is the best way to guarantee religious freedom." Our country, and just take New Jersey, we have

over a hundred different religious formations. I don't mean denominations; I mean fundamentally different religions. We've got people who are Wiccans. You know what a Wiccan is? All right; we got people who believe in nothing, Naturalist or atheist or whatever. They're all citizens. They have every right that I have, right?

So, whatever discourse we have on these policies has to appeal to some kind of human concept that we share. It can't be based on a quotation from the Book of Isaiah. In my view, you do violence to the whole structure of the thing we have to fight to preserve. So, as we heard testimony, some of the testimony came from religious groups. I think they presumed that I was biased in favor of their perspective, but they never knew. They could assume that.

I think people incorrectly assumed that I was in the chair because I was a religious personality. Now, did my colleagues think of that when they chose me to be chair? I don't know. It was never discussed. Was the governor thinking of that when he appointed me? I don't know, but it was never discussed. I, on the other hand, was guided by the Legislature's questions.

Now, one of our colleagues voted for this decision, but she was concerned that if we chose to go with to end the death penalty, but to have life without the possibility of parole, that prosecutors would move more causally toward charging people with capital crimes. I don't know if that's proven to be true. I don't know. That was one of the concerns. She chose not to have a minority report, but that was a strong conviction.

My real gut thing was, on a non-religious point of view, having been involved with the Innocence Project--you know that one?--and having been exposed to the frightening number of people who had been exonerated because of new technologies, I said, "Well, if you didn't kill them, if you found out ten years later they weren't guilty, they'd still be alive and you could let them out. If they were dead, all you could say [was], 'Oh, my God, what a horrible mistake.'" The person would have lost their life. [Editor's Note: The Innocence Project, a non-profit organization founded in 1992 by Peter Neufeld and Barry Scheck, fights against wrongful convictions.]

How we find people guilty, it's the best thing we have, but we should never think that it's a certain deal, [that] it's certain, so [that] many cases are judgment calls. So, you think of that, because the finality of the death penalty--though, listen, oh, my gracious, to hear the heinous things that people do taking somebody's life, I mean, violence and the gruesomeness, and the heartache and pain they cause people, you have to be there. You have to take that into your account, but, as a black person, I'm thinking, "All of these people dead, lynched, unduly imprisoned and executed because they couldn't afford a good attorney," simple as that; anyway, just a little commentary on my part.

SI: By the time you were on this committee, it was well documented in the jurisprudence that African Americans are more likely to get the death penalty or a stiffer sentence.

MWH: But, the irony--thank you for saying that.

SI: Yes.

MWH: Because it's true, but the irony was, we had no black people on death row in New Jersey at that time.

SI: Okay.

MWH: It's interesting, but you know what? The class dynamics were there.

SI: Okay, yes.

MWH: I have to say, one of the most puzzling things throughout my childhood, right on through, is, "Who speaks--who really speaks--for poor white people in America?" Black people have Martin Luther King and Al Sharpton, if you like him, and Jesse Jackson, all of these, Malcolm X and Paul Robeson. Who speaks for the poor white man, poor white woman? That's who was on death row in New Jersey. Who speaks for them?

There was a guy, a white guy in DC--I remember him, I can't think of his name now--who was not a white nationalist type of guy, but he was fighting for the white working poor. He wanted to align himself with other groups, not white, who were fighting for poor people. He died early, I don't know, maybe died of some kind of disease, but who speaks for these people, who are not promoting the Klan and some other stuff like that?

I don't know if you ever heard the name of Anne Braden [(1924-2006), a Civil Rights activist and journalist]. You've heard of her?

SI: Yes.

MWH: From Kentucky. I knew Anne. Anne was one of these people in the South. She was strong on racial justice, but she was a big advocate for the white poor. These were the people who aligned themselves with Dr. King in the [1968] Poor People's Campaign, see. That's an unresolved issue. The poor, alienated white person in America almost has nowhere to go but to the skinheads or someplace. There's no hardworking, solidarity-seeking group saying, "We poor whites, let's align ourselves with the poor Puerto Ricans." It's amazing how race has put so many people at a disadvantage.

In my hometown, I might've told you this, in Americus, black kids would be going to school in warm coats and breakfast in their stomachs--not well off at all, families that didn't have cars, but we were well-fed and well-cared for. It would be cold and they would have Vaseline on our cheeks to keep from being chapped. We would pass the houses occupied by poor whites. They would run out, poorly dressed, running nose, yelling the N-word at us. We would say, "What's that?" but that's the American legacy. I don't know if I have anything substantive to say any further.

SI: I was curious, in your search to answer these questions, did you look at examples from other states or did you just try to answer each question?

MWH: You mean in the death penalty?

SI: Yes. I know New Jersey was the first to abolish it, but did you look into how they implemented it in other states?

MWH: Well, the people who came to talk to us came from myriad states.

SI: All right.

MWH: They were often researchers, people who had done deep research on different parts of the country, different aspects. Oh, yes, we had, really, I would say, maybe a third [of] testimonies from, say, New Jersey civil rights organizations or religious groups or pro-death penalty advocates, anti-death penalty. The other two-thirds were legal experts, experts on gun violence or domestic abuse, like that. It wasn't that we were focused primarily on evidence or--not evidence--findings in research only from the Garden State.

We didn't have much of an example, as you can see, as pioneers. We didn't have other places we could look to, to say, "How did you guys do that?" because we were plowing new ground. I've wondered why, and I was in touch with our staff guy down from the Office of Legal Services the other day, because a kid from somewhere, I think in Montclair, wanted to interview me, high school kid. I meant to ask him if they are getting any calls from these states, asking for New Jersey background. You would think they might, but they have different contexts, different settings, that would vary from New Jersey a bit.

I think there's some fundamentals here that could lend themselves to intelligent dialogue on the issue, because when you resort to moral and ethical or theological or faith-based kinds of answers, you're just asking for a big argument. I mean, I was preaching to the same congregation for fifteen years. If I took two people out in the back of the sanctuary and asked them what they thought about God, it would be two different answers. [laughter]

SI: Yes. You mentioned that you had been involved with the Innocence Project.

MWH: Yes.

SI: When did that begin, and what did you do?

MWH: In one particular, I would say the inaugural involvement with the Innocence Project--let me back up and say, we're doing a lot of things at Bethany that would bring us to the attention of groups like this. So, in this case, there was a case of a guy who had been in prison for murder, for manslaughter, not on death row, but he'd been in prison for twenty-some years. He had been prosecuted in Union County.

Scheck, something Scheck--boy, oh, boy, as well as I know the guy, I can't think of his first name, but Scheck--he was a leader. He had friends and associates who knew about this guy, Bill Howard, in Newark. So, they got in touch with me and told me about Byron; I'll think of his name. They had determined that he had been unfairly prosecuted, unjustly prosecuted. They

needed someone to help him be reunited with his family. He had been in prison all these years and, in the early years, the family members would visit, but, long ago, the family connections had frayed. Now, we want to bring him back with his family.

We accepted to take responsibility for that. We organized an intimate meal function with him there, and we saw his family walk into the room. They hadn't seen him for years, and how they managed to, first, "Who? Which one is this?" and hug and cry and awe. Before that dinner--it was a luncheon--before that, we mobilized a group of interested people in the congregation over this issue. By the time he came to court, we were there in the courtroom. We were there on the day when the judge declared him free. So, not only were we helping in this process, we were teaching. We were giving lay people an opportunity to witness something like this happening, right.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: The name was?

MWH: Byron Halsey. [Editor's Note: In 1988, Byron Halsey was convicted of the 1985 sexual assault and murder of his girlfriend's two children. Halsey was released and exonerated through DNA evidence in 2007.]

SI: Okay.

MWH: Byron Halsey was that guy, and Byron and I remained in touch quite a bit after he was released. Eventually, after a few years, he got married. He moved to Pennsylvania. He was fully employed. My senator, Shirley Turner, got involved helping secure restitution for him, because there was some monetary support. [Editor's Note: Shirley K. Turner served in the General Assembly of New Jersey from 1994 to 1998. Since 1998, she has served as the State Senator representing the 15th District, which includes parts of Mercer and Hunterdon Counties.]

After that, of course, because that went really well, the resettlement, the reunification, all of that--and Byron actually was a regular attendee at my Bible study on Thursday evenings--Innocence Project, of course, would bring other cases to our attention. In fact, there were two or three people who had been freed prior to Byron's case in the Newark area that the Innocence Project felt would benefit from a relationship. So, there were two or three men, all men, who were in regular touch with me, sort of pastoral support, advice, sometimes just friends sitting around having a cup of coffee or something. In that setting, you learn how many human beings spend a generation in prison for something they didn't do, if you can imagine that. That's how we got involved in the money-bail thing.

We got involved in pushing for the end of money bail because, in my church, there are a couple of judges in the Superior Court and they would attest to the fact that there would be people in jail seven, eight months because they couldn't pay two hundred bucks to get out on bail. Now, there are a lot of people like this. This is not an exception, some pittance, something like if you took your friends out to dinner, that amount of money.

They would spend five to six, seven, eight months in jail and they would appear, finally. They get a court date. They go to the judge. The judge looks at the case and throws it out. "No case here," six months of your life stolen. The county jails were packed with people like this, poor people. Now, happily, I don't know if I sent that to you, I think I sent it to you, the report is out now. All the catastrophes that were supposed to happen, all the "Armageddon" predictions, none of that stuff. The county jails don't have as many people in them, only a few sort of minor mishaps with the folk.

So, again, when you take your stand on something like this, you have an idea of what you hope for, but you can't be sure. So, when the science comes out, the stats come out, and they are what you sort of hoped they would be, it's very rewarding. Now, the problem is, I had people who worked in the county jails. So, they have to lay people off because they don't have as many people.

SI: Wow.

MWH: And I depend on tithers, friend. [laughter] In other words, it's a cost benefit. You have to look at this. I had a couple guys who earned good livings giving money bail. They come to me and say, "Reverend, I thought you were my friend?" "Well, I am your friend, but there's a greater cause." I'm never a high-horse guy; I'm a fear-and-trembling guy. "So, okay, I took this stand, but, man, I'm not sure if it's right. Let's just see what comes of this."

Money bail; there's, every now and then, a threat to try to overturn the death penalty. The truth is, if it had been based on morality and some other ethereal arguments, valid to the people who hold dear those perspectives, but not to the general public, they could've overthrown it many times, but it's based on very concrete things.

Here's what I said at the conclusion. I was asked, obviously, by a media person, a question about, like, "What does this mean?" or something. I'm not sure what the question was, but I remember what I said to them. I said, "The tragedy is that the advocates of the death penalty, in the main, can't realize what they hope for with the death penalty. Do you see? They have a goal that the death penalty doesn't help them reach. Even if their goal is retribution, what retribution do you have if you discover, years later, you got the wrong man?"

It's sort of like advocates of overthrowing *Roe v. Wade*. I can appreciate, intellectually, opponents of choice. Okay, I can appreciate that intellectually, but I say to them, "If your goal is to stop abortion, I'm sorry, you can't achieve that by abolishing *Roe v. Wade*. You can abolish safe abortion, but I was around before *Roe v. Wade* and abortion was around before me." So, we have to help people see if what they're promoting will actually achieve what they're trying to achieve. Did I tell you my thing on gay marriage? I must've told you that, right? [Editor's Note: *Roe v. Wade*, a 1973 US Supreme Court decision, legalized abortion in the first trimester under federal law.]

SI: Yes.

MWH: That's the solution. If you don't believe in gay marriage, your only option is not to marry a gay person. You can't determine what somebody else is doing. If a woman is desperate and she's impregnated in some circumstances that she perceives to be unbearable, she's going to resort to something in private that you don't even know about. Very often, religious dogma has us tied up in knots and we're not able to acknowledge that we can't impose religion on other people. We can't make people believe. At the same time, you're stuck with them, because they're occupying the same territory. We're all walking on the same journey.

SI: I was curious, a lot of churches in the last ten to twenty years have dealt with the issues of, one, performing gay marriages and, two, ordaining people ...

MWH: Gay priests, or something like that?

SI: Yes. Was that an issue in your church at large?

MWH: No. I always lived in constant fear that it would be an issue, but I retired just before it happened to me. [laughter]

SI: Okay.

MWH: You hear that? I'm telling you how human I am.

SI: Okay.

MWH: I was always speaking directly to the question of homophobia, and so on, but I never had a gay couple come to me and say, "We want to get married." I knew that my days were numbered, and let me tell you why I was so fearful. I had made a decision that if they came to me, I would quickly agree, after counseling, and so on, if I felt they were--I mean, you have to have some sense of a couple's intent, and so on, no matter their sexual orientation. Clergy do pre-marital counseling. If all of that were done and I were totally persuaded [that] these were people genuinely committed to each other, and so on, I would say yes, but it would be in a different setting. I wouldn't hide it from the congregation, but I would not insist that it be performed within the sanctuary of that congregation.

Now, why? Bill Howard believes that, in most congregations, people are not very conversant with the Bible as a guidepost for moral and ethical conduct. Most decisions we make, especially the really important ones, are made in the gray area. Dogma invites black or white. It's very seldom [so]. Now, how do we treat that? We treat the gray area, which we call realism, with hypocrisy--bear with me one second.

SI: Sure.

MWH: I want you to hear this right here. I think it's still there. I erase my tweets after a while, but [reads from his Twitter feed], "No matter how hard one tries to be consistent, most human beings are far more complicated in private than what they reveal to the public." Now, the

absolute experts at camouflage are doctrinal believers, because their doctrine is either black or white, but they live in the gray area, the gray area--do you see that?

A very beloved woman in our church passed away not long ago. She was the wife of a deacon in our church. I was on the phone with him not very long ago. He's a big, I would say, advisor to the Boys Rites of Passage program in our church. Every now and then, the Girls Rites of Passage and the Boys Rites of Passage will come together and discuss a common subject of boys and girls. The subject at this discussion was pre-marital sex. So, apparently, based on his reporting, the subject got really nitty-gritty.

Somebody in the group, I don't know if it was a kid or an adult, said to a prominent woman, who's an advisor to the girls, "Madame So-and-So, did you ever have pre-marital sex?" Her response was, "We're not going to discuss me in this meeting." Do you understand? Now, what does the kid conclude from that?

SI: "Yes."

MWH: "Yes," but she doesn't have the courage to acknowledge. She could even say, "In hindsight, I think it was a mistake." Do you see? Maybe she could take that and work with it as a teaching moment--but, no, she's hiding the gray area. I wish I had one dollar for every person who believes strongly in something and, when confronted with a real, human predicament, they chose something a little bit off the path of what they really believe.

Now, abortion on demand, or casual abortion or whatever, I'm sure there must be people who resort to this, but I've known several women who've had abortions, but they always regret it. They don't necessarily think it was the wrong decision for them at that time, but they regret the fact that they had to resort to it. They're not proud of it, you see?

This is where we live, my friend. I could write a whole book of things about me that I wouldn't want in the front page of *The New York Times*, and not one of them would be that I murdered someone, you see, or that I robbed a bank, but there are things that don't comport with what I project in public. I wouldn't put myself sitting on the john on Instagram. I mean, there are areas of our being that are complicated, see. I think that's one of the dimensions of our moral crisis, because I think faith, faith and scriptural texts, give us a lot of resources to speak to this.

I have coffee every week with a scholar of ancient Judaism, Judaism of the Yemenite tradition. This is a guy who can recite the Book of Isaiah from memory. He says, "Bill, Judaism was never meant to be..." we were talking about the election in Israel and how these religious parties are lining up with [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu. This guy goes back and forth to Israel a lot. He says, "They're not really religious Jews. They think they are." He said, "Why do you think the Torah is so thick?" I said, "Gee, I don't know." He said, "Because there's so many people debating back and forth." He said, "Judaism is a dialogue. Faith is a dialogue. Life is a dialogue."

Look, today, I had to run an errand outside of Lawrence and I got out my GPS. I know where the place is so I know the route to take, but I like the GPS to tell me my estimated time of arrival,

right. So, I go down on Route 1 and, right away, the thing sends me down a different road. Okay, I sort of trust this GPS, so I took the turn. It took me a back way. I learned, later, there was a humongous traffic jam that would've had me very late for my appointment. We need a GPS to tell us when to turn corners and we need to have an idea of the straight road, but we're always going to be [making choices], see.

So, I think whether it's convening a meeting of a group of interesting but different people to reach a common solution--in the Board of Governors, in the Death Penalty Study Commission, chairing a 250-member governing board of the National Council of Churches, with over thirty-one different denominational types, men and women, young and old--it's all based on this principle that I'm sharing with you now. Diplomacy is based on that. Political dialogue and solution [is] based on that.

Our national crisis is born of a failure to understand, "This is the way forward. Tell me what you believe. Let's hammer out a little bit of this, a little bit of that," and, finally, we come to the joy of reaching a common solution among people who think they are very different. It's an amazing experience. The Death Penalty Study Commission people were genuinely excited to hand in our report, and they would've sworn that they were in different poles when they started. You heard enough from me.

SI: Okay. [laughter]

MWH: Is this it? You got everything you need?

SI: Unless there is something else you want to add.

MWH: No, no.

SI: Okay, thank you.

MWH: I'll have you here all night if you let me add. [laughter]

SI: Thank you very much.

MWH: Yes.

SI: I appreciate today's session and all the sessions. It has been wonderful. Thank you very much.

MWH: Thank you, and I hope it's been something other than just a job for you to do this.

SI: Absolutely.

MWH: Yes.

SI: Yes. This is the greatest part of my job.

MWH: Yes.

SI: Getting out and meeting people and ...

MWH: Right.

SI: ... Enjoy a nice lunch. [laughter]

MWH: Right, right.

-----END OF TRANSCRIPT-----

Reviewed by Jesse Braddell 8/23/2019

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 3/12/2020

Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 3/16/2020

Reviewed by Bill Howard 8/14/2021