CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

<u>Omotade Akin Aina</u>

Columbia Center for Oral History

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PREFACE

       The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Omotade Akin Aina conducted by George Gavrilis on May 30, 2012. This interview is part of the Carnegie Corporation of New York Oral History Project.

       The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Q: It's May 30 [2012]. This is George Gavrilis. I'm here for the Carnegie Corporation [of New York] Oral History Project that is being implemented by the Columbia Center for Oral History. This session is with Tade Aina. Good morning, Tade.

Aina: Good morning, George.

Q: Tade, for the record, would you state your full name.

Aina: My full name is Omotade Akin Aina.

Q: Now, is it okay if we go by first names for this session?

Aina: Yes, by first names. A shortened form is Tade. It's like Anthony and Tony.

Q: Okay, wonderful. Off the record we had started with first names, so if it's okay with you, I'll continue that.

Aina: It is okay.

Q: Okay. Thank you very much. Tade, tell me, where were you born?

Aina: I was born in Lagos—June 26, 1951—and grew up in Lagos. My parents are Nigerians. My mother is from what you'll call the Afro-Brazilian-Nigerian community. And I went to primary school in Lagos. I think it was just the era, the transition, from the colonial to the post-colonial era. So very, very colonial, very British. I went to a couple of primary schools and finally ended up in a missionary secondary school known as the Methodist Boys High School, all boys. It was founded in 1878. From there I went to what one might call the premier high school—public high school—but modeled after the elite British schools. It was called King's College, Lagos. It was modeled after the Harrow College in the U.K. [United Kingdom].

I finished and then went to the University of Lagos, where I studied sociology. In those days you had small classes and it was a kind of sociology that was very humanistic because I had the opportunity to study a lot of other disciplines, to study anthropology, to study economics, to study psychology and to study philosophy. I did, first, my bachelor's at the University of Lagos. I did my Master's at the London School of Economics [LSE]. And I did my doctoral work at the University of Sussex.

Interestingly, I came to the United States as a young man in 1968 to a leadership project for young people. I was in high school then. It was a Louis August Jonas Foundation camp—Rising Sun—that was located somewhere in Rhinebeck in New York, upstate New York. It had fifty of us—fifty international kids and fifty U.S. kids, one from each state of the United States. It's

interesting, I've been trying to track some of them. But the one that I remember is Olof Palme who was the son of the prime minister of Sweden who died. I'm not sure whether Keith [M.] Ellison, the congressman, was not in my group. I never paid much attention to it. I actually started trying to pick it up now in a little bit of nostalgia, now that I've come back to live in the States. Because after that, I never came back to the States. I just went straight on to the U.K. and all. The first time I came back to the States after 1968 was 1981. So there was a big gap. I was pretty much focused both on Africa and working out of Africa. The first time I really have come to work in the States was only 2008. So that, in brief, is my background.

I also had a background in which there was always a tension between literary aspects of my life. I would say there were three trajectories. There was a professional scholarly aspect. There was a literary aspect that dabbled in poetry, playwriting and theater, amateur theater. And then there was an activist aspect that worked with what is now known as civil society organizations. Because I remember that I was actually instrumental to the founding of one of the early environmental groups, not the normal—now it is difficult to use the word—"tea party." In Nigeria, when we used tea party, we talked about the old aristocracy, almost colonial aristocracy that have tea parties to raise funds for conversation and things like that. So we were the first group that was more intellectual, more radical, more insistent. People thought we were strident in those days. We were different from the old National Conservation Foundation [NCF]. We were called NEST, the Nigerian Environmental Study and Action Team. So that's something. And that's important because it was that aspect of me, my engagement with social justice and with the struggles around social justice, that actually finally led me in the directions that found me in philanthropy. It's a very strange track. So that's a background for you.

So I finished my B.Sc.[Bachelor of Science] I went off to the U.K. in 1976 and did my Master's at the LSE. And in 1977 I went into Sussex and then came back to Nigeria in 1980. I was one of the—I've always been a scholarship boy. I was a recipient of what was known as the Commonwealth Scholarships.

Q: How is that again?

Aina: Commonwealth.

Q: Commonwealth Scholarships. Of course.

Aina: They gave them to you, British Commonwealth scholarships. It's pretty competitive. And you're also supposed to finish your dissertation on time, which I did. I did my doctoral work in three years. I wasn't ready to stay anywhere else but Nigeria. Because that was a time of promise, we felt. I grew up in Nigeria in a time when there was hope. There was promise, we felt. There was a can-do attitude. And there was a feeling that you have to be back to contribute, to help to interpret your own society, culture and economy, to be part of the voice, and to work with every other person that wants to transform the society. So that was the beginning.

So I came back and stayed on in the University of Lagos till 1993. In the meantime, I had a couple of study visits. I did a year of sabbatical in the U.K. at the International Institute for Environment and Development [IIED] in London, which was next to the University College

London. Again, they were pretty progressive. It was a combination of both serious research policy, and activities in environment and development organization. It was actually founded by Barbara [M.] Ward. So that goes back as a long history—and, interestingly, supported by Carnegie Corporation, which I didn't know. And I got to know now—with the history of the Carnegie Corporation being written by [Patricia] Pat [L.] Rosenfield—that Barbara Ward, who for me was a very important role model, was actually a grantee of the Carnegie Corporation. [Laughs] So I was out at IIED for a year, I think '86, '87.

I also visited Sweden. I was in Sweden in Uppsala, the Institute for African Studies [Nordic Africa Institute], in 1990. Then I think I was here at Aspen Institute for the new leaders project— the pilot project for the new leaders project—that has now become a major leaders thing. So I was one of the people involved in the pilot project. It was in 1990. And then I also was in Oxford for the 21st Century Trust leaders fellowship. So I traveled quite a bit. But in 1993 I took the job at Dakar, Senegal, with what is known as CODESRIA—CODESRIA is the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa. I was the Deputy Executive Secretary. The institution was led by an Executive Secretary, who was Thandika Mkandawire. He's currently the Professor of African Development at the London School of Economics. I was Deputy Executive Secretary along with one other Deputy Executive Secretary. I was responsible for publications. I worked in CODESRIA for five years.

Dakar was a wonderful place to live in. If you remember the literary traditions of Léopold Sédar Senghor—the whole French philosophical and poetic school of Négritude—you know, Aimé Césaire, Cheikh Anta Diop and all of that school of thought. So I went to Dakar very dreamy,

you know, [laughs] and we lived in Dakar for five years. I worked as part of the leadership of a pan-African Social Science Research Council [SSRC] that insisted on giving voice to African intellectuals and being able to speak and do autonomous research that are really driven by African conditions and African priorities.

In 1998, I spoke to a headhunter, who actually was asking me for nominations for a position for the Ford Foundation [laughs] in Kenya. I was nominating like mad—just nominating others. We had a conversation and the first thing: "What about you?" [Laughs] "Are you not interested in this job?" And I said, well, I still have a year on my contract and da-da-da-da. He said, but I think you will fit this job. So I said, really? And she said, well, why don't you send your CV [curriculum vitae] and let me talk to the Ford Foundation. So I found out I was invited for an interview and I got the job. So I moved to Nairobi, where I became program officer for Governance and Civil Society.

Governance. Well, it's still a very problematic, I think, concept and notion for those of us who are serious old-school social scientists who believe in some kind of theoretical rigor. The notion lacks rigor, has not been effectively theorized. Somebody has to do the work to link the whole notion of governance with actually the mainstream thinking in political theory. That has not happened up until now in a very serious way. But foundations and civil society groups and governments and international organizations love the notion of governance. We're not sure whether it is democratic governance. Because, if you remember, I think it was a year—Samuel [P.] Huntington—I think he was also a grantee of the Corporation, who wrote *Political Order in Changing Societies*. The opening sentence there is it's not the type of governing that matters but

the extent of governing, in which he justified American foreign policy with regards to the South-Asian and Latin American military dictators. For some of us, it is not only the extent of governing that matters but the type of governing. So democracy matters. So when people talk about governance, at times they're not sure—can it be governance, democratic governance? So that was one of the things I had to deal with, to actually make sense of a governance and civil society portfolio.

Civil societies are so very interesting. Because there are very many uncivil elements in civil society, particularly if you look at it with regards to alternative organizations in society. I mean, if we look at some of the trends we have with fundamentalist groups that organize—with groups believing in guns and of that. I don't want to mention names but that was what I had to deal with in defining the work of the portfolio.

So I got to Nairobi, where the Ford Foundation kind of created a program—Governance and Civil Society—that was supposed to be practical and pragmatic. I had to leave aside my love for theory and philosophy. But I had to do some operationalization finally and then get rid—I'm going to come back to that here, too—because there's always the operational definition of what you're trying to do and how you'd map out the area. And it is, I think, a very important element of grantmaking and a very important element of the older time—the conventional foundations. Because they took the kinds of people who really have the—there's always an expertise, backed with an experience and a commitment—and then they threw you into a field with a broad parameter set by the foundations. At least they—my experience with the foundations in the 1990s, irrespective of what some people are saying in the debates—they are part of American

foreign policy there. Those of us who are foot soldiers, particularly in the field outside of the United States, know that there is some degree of conceptual and operational autonomy for the person who is the final pusher of the grant, the program officer.

So I did Governance and Civil Society in Nairobi. Two years later I was promoted to deputy regional representative. That was in 2000. In 2001, I was taken to Cairo—that was after September 11 [2001]—to be the acting representative in the Middle East and North Africa office. I was there till April. I showed no interest in the position because it was a particularly difficult terrain for me. First, I was not an Arabic speaker. Second, I—in many ways, the Arab Awakening today is very interesting because it was a very difficult region for me. This might be a part that we have to look at very close, but it's important in terms of my own experience of even the way foundations today are trying to engage the Arab Awakening. This was in 2001, 2002. And I remember speaking to a friend of mine who was in some work looking at Arab civil society, in which I looked at the region of that time. And he said—he reminded me because he's now dean at Bellarmine College, Loyola Marymount University in L.A. [Los Angeles] and he is dean for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. When I visited and gave a talk on internationalization last year—and it was in the heat of the Arab Awakening—he reminded the audience and me that we were sitting in my apartment facing the Nile at about 1:00AM or 2:00AM and I said to him, this whole region, none of the structures as presently constituted are sustainable, either politically or economically.

If you remember that the United States was investing about three billion dollars in Israel and about another three billion, annually, in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Jordan.

Patriarchies—not inclusive, not ready for renewal—and they're locked in a history of conflict that has no rational basis in many ways, except about land, traditions, history and too much bloodshed. And one of the things that you need in that place is a kind of liberalization that makes people rethink, what does it mean to have a regional interest? What are the ways to solve some of the old issues? And then there are notions there. There are notions that are very, very ideological and very symbolic that are trapped in the whole of that region. For me it was a very, very difficult region. The notion of—even notions that are normal words in this part of the world, where you use them, like "security," because it's a repressive notion in Egypt. "Occupation." You know? Words like "Palestine," the "right of return." And of course, "terrorist," and a lot—it was very, very difficult. And I remember that I—and I still think, in a very serious way—that's where, I think—strategies. We are beginning to develop a strategy on the Arab Awakening here.

Also, the side issue about foundations is that they pigeonhole you. So they don't even really find out what expertise—I think in a very interesting way, as liberal and as open as foundations are, they are not like faculties of universities. Because for them, expertise and knowledge often reside in authority in hierarchical nodes and these hierarchical nodes, to a great extent, do not have either the knowledge or the expertise, but they have the authority to deploy or command. So there are many things that—for instance, I think foundations need to learn how to make use of the resources within them. They have absolutely intelligent, creative, outstanding individuals. But they do not make use of them enough because they pigeonhole them. So, if you're talking about the Arab Awakening, an African should not know about the Arab Awakening—when that awakening was actually an African awakening. [Laughs] It occurred in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. [Laughter] So they don't even ask the African who lived there, who ran an office that

covered the place, and worked with one of the leading intellectual organizations that are engaged there—that have actually been talking about democratizing for thirty years, who has been talking about issues around identity politics, ethnicity, the nature of when you look at the equity, when you look at how difficult that region is?

Nobody's talking about Berbers. People talk about Arabs. But for God's sake, Tunisia is not predominantly Arab. Neither is Libya. Nobody's talking about the Bedouin Arabs. Nobody talks about women. Nobody talks about children. And we talk about democracy. Nobody talks about inclusion. Nobody even wants to really engage or confront transparency and accountability as issues. But we know institutions on the ground, on the continent, that have spent the whole of their lives—and we know people who have spent—we know, when you work with civil society groups. So that's interesting.

I've been to meetings here. I've followed webinars and things. I just get really, really worried about how stilted and how really, really underdeveloped the conversations are with regards to, oh, let's give them a scholarship. It's almost condescending and patronizing, the way the foundations in North America are reacting to what has happened. And look at what we are having now: democracy, democracy. Suddenly there was a need now to make sure that the Islamic brotherhood does not get to power in Egypt. And of course, how was that done? So nobody's talking about the transparency of that election. But there were issues that could have been raised before that people who use democracy for non-democratic outcomes—you need to really deal with that as part of the conversation, which Africans themselves are doing and Arabs and the people on the ground. But it's—

I hope this is not a diversion.

Q: It's a very relevant diversion, though, so it's a good one.

Aina: Yes. So this is part of, actually, my history. I came back to Nairobi. If they asked whether I would be interested in anything, I'd say no. I went back to Nairobi in 2002 as the deputy representative and then became representative in 2003.

What were the things we did in the Ford Foundation that had relevance for my transition here? First, in 2000 there was the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa. It's amazing how loops get closed. I was a program officer then and came here for the signing by the initial four presidents of the foundation—of course, my president here, Vartan Gregorian; the former president of Ford Foundation, Susan [V.] Berresford; the president of [John D. and Catherine T.] MacArthur [Foundation], Jonathan [F.] Fanton, who used to be at New School [University]; and the former president of Rockefeller [Foundation], [Sir] Gordon [R.] Conway. Those are the four presidents. I came with my vice president, Alison [R.] Bernstein, and the program officer for higher education who was based in New York, Jorge Balan. I was the guy from Africa. So that was the inauguration of the partnership and that continued.

Because the Ford Foundation used a very decentralized approach—the four African offices— actually we first managed the higher education program. It was first in South Africa, then East

Africa, now we're back to South Africa. That was something that was relevant to my itinerary, how I got here.

There were other things that we did in the Ford Foundation at that time that I think are very important in understanding, one, how foundations work; and, two, some of the issues that are—I think there's a continuity of that here in Vartan Gregorian's world view, and that is African solutions to African problems. Africa and self—I use the word "self-assertion." Some people use "self-determination." Self-determination is very, very politically loaded. Self-determination presumes an absence of emancipation. I think after emancipation, all political independence is about self-confidence and self-assertion, particularly with the new generation that sees itself in a particularly different way.

But one interesting thing was that I was instrumental—and we're just finishing a book that documents that era, it's taking so long to write—to what was known as the African Philanthropy Initiative, which was set up by the Ford Foundation. This had three key dimensions—local foundation building, which involved management, resource mobilization, and governance of foundations. The other one was building the infrastructure of philanthropy and civil society, which involved support organization networks and associations of grantmakers. And the third was enabling environment, democracy, the legal framework and all. But the key element of that was a challenge—and that's one of the ways I'm actually operating now, with the higher education work—was a challenge to Africans to know, to state that the poor also have resources. No matter how poor you are, every community has an asset and almost the Nietzschean sense of the transvaluation of the notion of donors.

Africans assumed—you know, the poor African in the village—the donor is always Western, the donor is predominantly Caucasian, the donor is a big institution, like the World Bank [Group], UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization], UNDP [United Nations Development Programme], the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the [Bill & Melinda] Gates Foundation. The donor comes in a—what they call 4x4—that's a big jeep, you know, the Pajeros, the Nissans and the Ford jeeps—and the donor in a condescending, patronizing way, dishes out resources to the recipients who are passive, who are submissive, who have no self-confidence to transform themselves. And we changed that with that initiative. We're actually helping African foundation building, even community foundations, in which the poor gave a shilling a day. There were groups in which community funds were built in which each household gave a shilling a day.

Q: Could you put that in relative terms? What is the value of a shilling in the local community?

Aina: The equivalent of one dollar in Kenya is seventy-five shillings.

Q: Okay.

Aina: One dollar is seventy-five shillings. And each local community in Kenya, for instance, in a particular community, gave a shilling a day. That was how fundraising was done—resource-mobilized. In about a year, you had seven million shillings. But the fascinating thing, then, was that the poor can also be donors. So the notion of donors was transvalued. So the poor

themselves, the man who'll give a shilling, is as much a donor as the World Bank, as the Ford

Foundation, as Carnegie Corporation. We're trying to do a bit of that with the higher education

program here, in the sense of considering them as partners. Because that's the beginning of real

partnership, when you see you bring to the table assets and your assets are valued and your assets

make you a partner and a counterpart in a collective project of development or transformation.

And therefore, you own it. So that when foundations or donors leave, there is sustainability. That

is an issue. Because that's actually one of the biggest problems with international grantmaking.

Exit strategies are not clear. Three quarters of the time, if you're not careful, there is no

community or context ownership and there's no sustainability. You create a relationship of

dependence rather than a relationship of transformation.

So one struggles with working on issues and programs that are defined—demanded. So it's

more—if you want to use much more sexy terms—demand-driven, demanded by the

constituencies. They are identified by them. They are the things they want to do and then you

work with them. And one of the things that I'm beginning to bring—and which Vartan agrees

with in a lot of ways—is what are you putting on the table yourself? Not ten million dollars of

investment over ten years or—but before then, tell us what you are putting on the table. And I

think I'm actually taking part of my grantmaking experiences and bringing them to Carnegie

now.

I was in Ford Foundation from 1998 to 2008. I was in Nairobi with a short stint of about four to

six months in the Middle East. And I thought the time was ripe to move on. There was an

impending leadership change. A new president had come on board, Luis [A.] Ubiñas, whom I

worked with because he was actually transforming the operations and he used us as a guinea pig. Because, if you remember, in 2007 was a major political crisis in Kenya. And I was there. At that time I was still on the ground. I was actually the first regional office to present to the board or the first board of Luis Ubiñas. And I had—well, you have notice for your board presentation—I'd had about six months' notice. We were doing this wonderful board paper about our achievements and accomplishments. This was to be January 31 or 29, 2008—the first board meeting. And then Kenya went up in flames in December.

Q: For the record, because—this audio recording, someone may be listening to it ten, twenty, thirty years down the road. Give them a little bit of context, if you could, about the political crisis in Kenya.

Aina: Yes. Kenya's political situation was very interesting because you had a situation where you had a pseudo-democratic government run by President Daniel arap Moi, who had been in power for twenty-four years, prior to the year 2003. He was vice president under the nationalist president, Jomo Kenyatta. I think Kenya had its independence—I need to get this right—I think it's 1963—under Jomo Kenyatta. Arap Moi was vice president, so he had been vice president for a long time. Then he became president and was president from, I think, 1978 to 2002—twenty-four years. So that's in '79 to 2002. 2002 was a forced transition.

But before then—and this is interesting because it's exactly what U.S. foundations are trying to do today with the Arab Awakening—how do you switch on, help switch on, the light for democratic change? Tremendous amount of investment. Actually, there was a lot of frustration.

The Ford Foundation had invested millions of dollars in constitutionalism in East Africa, in South Africa, in Zimbabwe, from around 1982. This kind of investment has been going on in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania. The Ford Foundation actually helped to build the infrastructure of civil society—These are some of the things where I was talking about the enabling environment. So you support human rights groups, you support women's groups, your support working people's groups, you support all kinds of groups because you want an intensity—an intensity of participation. So you have this. But you were dealing with what I will call an authoritarian regime. There were lots of breaches of the human rights situation. People were put in political detention. Groups were silenced. Lots of people were in exile. They were almost like a police state. This is what was run under Moi for a long time.

The pressure, the American—this is where occasionally it is also a coming together of the position of the United States foreign policy and foundations. Because we worked in 2002, 2003. The American embassy was also interested in what was called political liberalization because authoritarianism, in that sense, also has implications for the economies of the region. It had implications for transparency. It has implications for, even, development in many ways. So in some ways, the world view was in favor of political liberalization, multiparty politics, because Kenya was a one-party state. Kenya was a one-party state till about 1998, 2000. So multipartyism came into Kenya from around 1997, 1998. The first real multiparty election of any significance was 2002 and that led to a transition, in 2003, to a new government. Now, that transition was a very shaky transition because it was a coalition of opposition groups that really had no place working together. They just have to find a way of getting Moi's candidate off. What they wanted to do was make sure that the old regime got off. So there was a reconfiguration that

included intermediate figures from the old regime. And in 2007, this really came to a head because there was a split between the opposition group that had come into power in 2003. There was a contest now—a real serious political contest—for who runs Kenya. A lot of it was ethnicized.

I'm beginning to see the same thing in the United States. Where there is state power, even of the decentralized state—I don't mean the federal—but where there is government power, it's always hard to shift an incumbent government because they have all kinds of ways of ensuring voter registration—counting and all these other elements that come into the process of elections.

So that was the big problem. In 2007, the politics had become ethnicized. It was obvious that there wouldn't be a transition because you could not guarantee that the electoral politics, the elections, were going to be transparent, that they were going to be open. Part of the opposition had decided that they were going to react with violence if the votes were stolen. And that's exactly what happened. The votes were, formally, not stolen. But informally, there was evidence that things were not working. There were sleights of hand involved in this. "The more you look, the less you see" kind of thing. [Laughs] So then there was a reaction. People went up in the streets, people related to the opposition, in specific regions where the opposition had strength. There was a lot of blood-letting, a lot of burning and a lot of fire and all of that—real fire, I mean, real burning of tires on the streets, in the nature of open protests in the third world. And of course, reaction by the police, shooting and all of that. That was exactly what happened.

Now, as a foundation programming in governance, we were involved. We thought 2002, 2003 was going to be the critical period. So we had done all sorts of things. How do you negotiate? How do you work, in case there is resistance to change? How do you negotiate peaceful transition? We were caught unawares in 2007. Yet, we should have known because some of the people we were working with had early warning systems about violence in the communities, in rural communities, far away from the cities. So all of this came to a head in December 2007. There was a burning and it was really, really dramatic and traumatic. It had a lot of global attention. People can read this up, if they Google Kenya and this period.

So all the wonderful board presentation, the nice write-up about what Ford Foundation has been doing in East Africa—the struggle for women's rights, the struggle for sexual equality, which, in many ways, we worked in a very, very careful way. How to do you mainstream sexual equality rights within human rights? How do you work with groups fighting for sexual equality without really endangering them? Because this city, it's a different case from the United States. When people are out there—I mean, there were kids who, during the World Social Forum, manned the same-sex pavilions. And the television stations—we told them not do it—had public interviews with them. They were disowned by their families. Right the next day, their school fees were not paid. There were meetings that we organized with different sexual equality groups in Nairobi. Then, again, some naive people put the pictures on their website. And in Rwanda what happened? The FM stations—just almost like the same way they did with the 1994 genocide—identified them by name. And they were driven—they had to be evacuated to Uganda. And these were not professionals. These were ordinary people, poor people, hairdressers, beauticians. And it was not like they were lawyers or academics. So they were more vulnerable. Those were some

of the things I was coming to the board in New York to talk about—equal rights bills for women, for paternity, all those [laughs] really, really interesting things.

[Laughs] But then here was the whole region in flames.

So you had to submit your board presentation about a month before. So I submitted my board presentation before the explosion. [Laughs] So of course, I had to come to the board meeting and everything changed. So all of these wonderful slides, PowerPoint stories and the board paper, a thirty-page story—all that changed and we threw all of that into the garbage bin. I had to talk about this change in Kenya, this explosion. What does it mean for the region? What does it mean for programming? How has it affected our work? And how was our work related to it? And so that was what we did. And Luis Ubiñas used that as an entry point for beginning to reconfigure and rethink programming. So it was like, hey, guy, you threw your forty-page thing into the garbage. There is explosion, there's fire, there's blood on the street. And let's talk about that. What does that mean for the future, for the foundation practices, for the foundation work? For faith and hope in East Africa and in the East African agency? And all our investments in Governance and Civil Society over this past twenty years?

So that was what happened. I did that and I worked with Luis. But I knew by that time that it was time to leave Kenya. It was also time—after ten years in a position—it was time to begin to think about what next? And this opportunity came up. I got a letter from Vartan in November. At that time, Kenya had not exploded then. I was going to a meeting—it was actually the Peace and Social Justice program at the Ford Foundation in Brazil. I showed the letter to some of my

colleagues in the Ford Foundation and they said, well, it's the president of Carnegie Corporation, a wise old man, very well known for his work on the [New York] Public Library and a philosopher-king kind of person. Even if you're not going to take the job—I said, I'm not looking for a job—he said, well, at least reply him. Be cordial. You have to keep your lines of communication open. So I wrote a response and said, thank you very much. I'm actually occupied working on my presentation for my board in January. I'll be in New York in January. And I got a reply back from the vice president saying that when you're in New York in January, can you contact us? So that was the beginning of the conversation.

Then I think Vartan Gregorian, in a very, very aristocratic and old-school way asked Luis Ubiñas for permission to speak to me. So it's like this transfer in soccer. [Laughs] You don't want to approach a player without talking to the proper lines and channels of doing this. So I had a meeting—I thought it was about time but I gave a long notice—had a meeting in February with the Carnegie Corporation. I thought, well, I looked here and I thought that maybe this a good opportunity. It's a different kind of program but it's something I'm familiar with. It's Africa-wide, so it takes me away from just East Africa. I would love to do something Africa-wide. It's something that I'm interested in because it's part of one of my own primary constituencies, which is the academic world. Because I came out of the academy—I forgot to tell you that actually I became a full professor in 1993, full professor of sociology. I was actually the first alumnus of the Department of Sociology at the University of Lagos to become its first full professor.

So in that sense, I felt, well—when I went to CODESRIA, I didn't actually leave the academy and the world of scholarship. Ford Foundation was more activist. Here again, I thought, well, this

work will take me back into looking at that constituency. Working on higher education I still saw—and in my conversations with Deana Arsenian, who is a vice president under Vartan, and everybody—I saw it as an entry point for addressing the more fundamental questions of human capital formation and of development in Africa. I still try to do that in a very subversive way. I'm not the kind of person that thinks programming—I think programming and interventions are very many elements. I think foundation leadership, again, at times ascribe to themselves more powers than they really have in relation to the program officers. I think the real grantmakers are actually the foot soldiers, the most important element in any foundation work. We use the notion of the program officer but I'll talk about the grantmaker. That's where you find some vice presidents, even when they move to the level of being officers of a foundation, they still want to do grantmaking. One, it keeps you in touch with the nitty-gritty, with the real world out there. Second, many things come into play as a grantmaker. I will say they're the short-term, mid-term and long-term.

One of the things about grantmaking that I like is a strategic sense, a sense of the larger questions, a sense of the larger transformation and an understanding of how, chronologically within different time frames, you are experimenting with putting in place things that become levers that can actually help to bring about larger, more fundamental outcomes. Of course, there are unintended outcomes and unintended consequences and so when we talk about all of this impact—I think the impact and the metrics about impact—and this is one of the things we're talking about now in somewhat of an odd way, in which we are almost long gone. The impact of some of the things that we put into place many years ago are beginning to—I think there's a

timeframe. I think foundations, because of the way grantmaking cycles are either two or three years, we tend to be really oriented towards short timeframes.

Because of, at times, the changing nature of executive transition—and this is a really, really— this particular foundation is a very lucky foundation, I think. It's lucky in the sense that there is some degree of stability in the executive presence. Therefore, there is some degree of consistency of vision, worldview, philosophy and work. Even if themes change, there is a kind of continuity in worldview and a continuity in what matters and a continuity also in process. Because process matters in grantmaking.

One of the most interesting cartoons in the Ford Foundation is of somebody looking down 42nd Street and his pockets stuffed with dollars and he's throwing it out through the window. And there's another guy coming from behind saying, hey, this is not how we make grants. [Laughs] Grantmaking first begins from values and vision, a sense of contribution, of transformation. It's been micro-fragmented to a great extent now, particularly with the new grantmakers, with the new generations of—I have to be careful here—the new generation of foundations.

Q: Well, you have flexibility with the audio.

Aina: —Yes, a new generation of foundations that have a great sense of immediacy. I think the early foundations—Carnegie, we're a hundred years old, the Rockefellers, the Fords. Those foundations of the nineteenth century were set up by visionaries who wrote a lot. Andrew Carnegie wrote a lot, particularly. You can tell. If you go to the archives of the Rockefeller

Brothers [Fund] out at Pocantico [New York], you will notice that there's a lot of documentation for Ford. I think the three of them now have the archives—apart from, of course, the one in Columbia [University Rare Book and Manuscript Library Carnegie Collections]. You will see that there was a kind of visionary element and there was a sense of history. So the foundations were in perpetuity. Take this gift and do good with it, in perpetuity. To do—what was Andrew Carnegie—to do something in lasting good. So there's always the enduring element of the intervention. The enduring element of the intervention therefore means that the foot soldiers, the grantmaker—I use the word "foot soldiers" a lot or "program officer"—who is engaging the grantee, the partner, the counterpart, the people on the ground—has a sense of an enduring good and has a sense of how this fits into the larger questions.

So it's not just about higher education alone. It's about higher education for what? Higher education for transformation of societies, higher education as a vehicle that contributes to the improvement of human well-being, and gives a chance and opportunity to many people. Higher education that addresses some of the most enduring inequities in society. If you look at ten years of the work of the program—it used to be called International Development Program and changed its name to Higher Education and Libraries in Africa—if you look at ten years of that work, you begin to see, in the first ten years, when it was part of the Partnership [for Higher Education in Africa], it was strengthening African universities, it was women's scholarship and it was transformation. Each element of that had its own significant point. The strengthening African universities was as a result of the recognition by those four presidents who I met here—I was actually with them in 2000—that higher education is important to Africa. For Africans to be

able to really transform their societies, they need strong institutions that can create the capacities in which they can be their own interpreters.

What was happening then was in the context in which the World Bank was actually pushing the idea that for developing countries—Africa in particular—it was basic education that was important, if you remember the Berg report by Elliot Berg. The Berg report actually emphasized the move to basic education. There was a whole magician's wand of the discussion around the return on investment [ROI]. The return on investments was seen to be: better the ROI for poor societies if they invested in basic education and they invested in secondary education rather than tertiary education. Tertiary education—the ROI was more to the individual than to say—all that has been proven to be wrong now, today.

But the foundations came out as an autonomous force and a voice to say that higher education matters and we're going to lead by investing in it and we're committing ourselves to spending a hundred million over five years. That was a movement of the partnership. That was where the Corporation—and this was actually, in many ways, led by Vartan Gregorian. This was where Carnegie Corporation had its first set of programs from 2000 to about 2008 when I came on board. This trend in universities was to revitalize infrastructure, work with the university. A lot of documents have been produced—*Weaving Success* [*Voices of Change in African Higher Education*], I'm sure you've seen that and all of that. The other one that I thought was also addressing the larger question was women's scholarships. That was a major part of the ten years of programming, giving access to women who otherwise would not have had the funding to go to a university. We're not even talking of people who did not get admitted. We're talking about

people who had admissions, who were from poor families and marginalized families. That was a major plank of that ten years of work.

And then, the other plank was transformation in South Africa, 1994, end of apartheid. South Africa had really incredibly strange universities, first-world universities and fourth-world universities in the same country. I mean, there are still universities in South Africa I will work with, that were competitive in terms of history, in terms of capacities, with any university in the world. The University of Cape Town, the University Witwatersrand, Stellenbosch University, University of Pretoria, the historically white South African University, Rhodes University—small as it is—and University of KwaZulu-Natal. And of course, there were the historically black universities, there were the universities for 'colored.' You know South Africa was a very racially segmented society. Then, of course, the universities in the bantustans, which was one wave of the period of apartheid in which they set autonomous and separate development and then they give really, really incredibly poorly resourced and disgraceful institutions to the bantustans.

Now one of the works of the Corporation—I'm actually taking a look at that now because it was not us alone. A lot of the American foundations jump into the transformation. And when I came on board—I'm now doing a review of the transformation project. The transformation project was to help contribute to the universities transforming themselves from apartheid universities to a post-apartheid, non-racial society university. Atlantic Philanthropies was there. Ford Foundation, as usual, was there. [Andrew W.] Mellon [Foundation] was there, [Charles Stewart] Mott [Foundation] was there, we were there. Now I think four of us really invested heavily in transformation. There are questions about that and it's the questions I'm asking my colleagues,

who are the program officers involved in that. I think we had expectations about transformation––that, as foundations, we did not really develop a consonance with the expectations of the South Africans. I think we had timeframes that really, in terms of historical realities, do not normally go together with the timeframe for changing institutional cultures, community cultures, mentalities and hundreds of years of thinking.

Q: This is a very interesting point, if I may. Do you have a particular example in mind?

Aina: Yes. When we talked about transformation, we were thinking of race in the historically white universities and how they, through affirmative action and many other ways, were changing their structure in terms of personnel, in terms of enrollment and admission of non-white students, in terms of internal institutional cultures, in terms of rotation of multicultural, multiracial groups. And you asked for an example: Free State University in South Africa, about three, four years ago had one of the fraternities in which they were secretly videotaped in which a group of white boys were urinating into the mouth of a black servant. That's just the most dramatic and symbolic aspect of the change. But we still have a situation where a lot of housing is still segregated. You still have a situation where nobody needs to tell a black woman where she is going to be uncomfortable or suffer severe discomfort each time she becomes faculty because it was a combination of things. First, you have the old colonial thing about the staff club and the staff room, the faculty room. They were predominantly male, cigar-smoking and pipe-smoking, tweed-jacket-wearing. That was one. Second, they were very patriarchal, so even white women had a problem with that. Then you had a situation where there were ideas of excellence that were very racialized, ideas of accomplishment that were very racialized.

Q: For example?

Aina: For example, there were people where certain disciplines were not for people who were not of Caucasian origin. Or there were things like the bell curve—the whole debate that actually is also here. And it's interesting because the intelligence testing thing was part of the early contributions of Carnegie in the 1930s to South Africa. I think the early intelligence testing thing was really racialized in many ways, because when you begin to look at it, intelligence is more cultural than genetic. And if you test intelligence—I did because I did psychology. And don't forget that I was also an academic and there were debates around—look, if you're looking at sensory motor skills and what you call the carpentered environment—this is a very carpentered environment that we are in—you can see the symmetries of all of this. And you test an African child with cubes, with toys that are really, really culturally specific to this, where they—what do you call those things that fit together? It's not the jigsaws but the other ones, the cubes and all of those things—and you test the European child with that, you are testing a three- to five-year-old. Which toys are rag toys? Which toys are rags made into balls? Which toys are wheels that he balances with a still thing? And you are testing another child who has been made to sit down there, fit those things together, who lives in a carpentered environment, who has the understanding of symmetry and relationships between shapes in a different way. Then you will say, oh, yes, in terms of intelligence testing, this child scores higher.

Q: It's striking though because when you describe these problems in education and evaluation that are racialized, they actually sound like some of the debates we have here in the United States.

Aina: I think they are the same. I think in many ways they are. And I think we have to find a way of getting around it. I mean, there are issues, again, because that is already transposed to the level at which we operate now in higher education—the notion of excellence. I have a very, very strong interest and personal attention about the universality and the specificity of some of these notions. I think it is possible because I believe in the psychic—and this is not my statement— "psychic unity of humankind." That when you strip us—you know, the melanin and the skin and all of that—we are the same inside. And the culture, that makes a lot of difference. So there are certain things that are common to us across all cultures and all societies, even in terms of the way some of the rules that we make in terms of relationships—the rules of incest, the rules of mother and all of that—that you can see distinguish us from animals, in terms of actually the mode, the general—because there are certain societies that have adapted in a different way, in which they've gone against these rules for specific adaptive reasons. That's why I think also it's important to be able to teach evolution in schools. Because it's not just about people becoming human from lower species—what is the adaptive capacity and how societies and common cultures and communities have changed. So I think there are universal dimensions of excellence.

There is a struggle now in quality assurance, "fit for purpose." I don't know whether I buy that. Because I'm almost Platonic in the way in which I see the ideal. A good artwork is a good artwork. It does not matter whether it's made by a bushman—pardon my not-politically-correct

notion—whether it is made by the Kalahari people or it is a Pablo Picasso, because he took a lot

of even his own thinking from there. But you know there are universalistic elements of aesthetics

that strike you when you come into the Rift Valley—whether you are Caucasian, Catholic or

whatever—you are astounded by the vastness, by the symmetry, by the structure, by the ecology,

by the way—so there are things that strike you. It's almost, for me, at times—this is where the

poetic thing also comes into it. So it's just almost the same thing. Aesthetics can be culturally

specific but there are universalistic dimensions of aesthetics. It's also like the human smile. The

human smile cuts across when somebody [laughs]—it's okay with you, you can tell, no matter

what culture. When somebody's not okay with you, when they're going to come after you and

the look on their face when they hate you, cuts—is almost universal. [Laughter]

And I'm struggling with that—to see that in excellence, in quality, in aesthetics. We can find that

but we've not invested enough in that. Even in the testing, even in the United States—where

there are differences between classes, there are differences between communities, there are

differences between the races—you look at even the Native Americans, the First Nations and all

of that. I think part of the debates here—and in Canada and in Australia—are also part of the

debates in Africa. Whenever there's a confrontation—an engagement between aspects of Western

civilization and the other, non-Western—the dominant and almost hegemonic force of the

Western engagement leads to a situation where there's been no struggle to really find what is the

main point. That's an interesting aspect as well of the work in foundations and some of the work

in the academies, where people really care. And I think it's going to have implications for the

United States and for the world. I know there's a lot of insecurity, collective insecurity, about the

changing demographics of the United States—I sat on a board where after a board dinner, we

had one of the most incredible conversations—well, I sat on a number of boards, so they won't

be able to tell which one of them it is—

Q: [Laughs]

Aina: —where there was a fight about the changes. The UNFP [United Nations Population Fund]

just had the projections for 2050. There was a real fright about the composition of the world in

2050 and what that means for some of the institutions and ways of living that we value with

regards to democracy, human rights and all of this. And I had the unpleasant duty of telling some

of my very senior—in age and everything—board members that their reading of history and

civilization was inadequate. And if you look at the billions of Chinese, China's economic power,

the top ten cities in 2050—Lagos, Nigeria would be one of them—they thought this will lead to

a dilution of Western Atlantic predominance in values of democracy, human rights, economic

integrity and all that. I had to tell them that the key element there is about building institutions

and building values and that those institutions are not actually the prerogative of the monopolies

of Western Caucasian traditions—that actually Western Caucasian traditions have borrowed

from every aspect of the world. The struggle for us—for those of us who care—we'll see the

perpetual work in progress that humanity is and have a conception of humanity.

And a conception of humanity has a way in an appropriated Western tradition. Because if you go

back, you go back to Alexandria, you go back to Saint Augustine of Hippo, you go back to

Thomas Aquinas. As we begin to build, all of those things about what is it that constitutes the

humanistic conception of humanity—you know, it sounds tautological. It is not only—you know,

you say the Confucian is not there. But if you look at Confucius, you look at Buddha, you begin to look at all of this and to say, look, this is a work in progress. And maybe this is what the world is really meant to be—a world of inclusion, a world of tolerance, a world in which all the strengths come together to build better human beings and a better world. And that was why I supported in the Ford Foundation the World Social Forum, whose theme was, "another world is possible."

That's also important in higher education. It's important in the recognition that the pluralization of American society can only bring about the best in American society. But some people are so worried about the potential for that pluralization. And all the struggles we are talking about—I mean, I have some positions on some things. But the whole issue around ethics, around values, we need to rethink because some of them are culturally specific, just the same as I was talking about intelligence. Now you tell a village girl—a seven-year-old village girl has learned to balance some load or a pail of water on her head and can walk elegantly. Now you ask a seven-year-old girl in Massachusetts, in Cambridge or Boston, to balance a pail of water and use that as an intelligence test and tell us who has spilled. [Laughter] Voilà. So you see.

These are some of the things where I think that all of those things add to the making of a better world. This is where our programming—I still bring it back to our programming—it's a sensitivity there. Sensitivity in terms of greater access for women. When we look at equality, when we look at all of this, we also struggle, for instance, where we understand some of the really backward debates about sexual equality and the role of women in places like Uganda. But some of the work we did with the universities were around gender equity, gender policies,

nondiscrimination. This is the subversive element, the subversion of authoritarianism and the creation of open-mindedness. And that's the way I see our interventions in higher education.

Q: Could you explain that a little more for our listeners who, again, may be ten, twenty years down the road?

Aina: First, universities must function. So first, the societies must have universities. [Laughs] Because universities are terrains of this kind of—I mean, if properly conceived, they are terrains in which different groups of scholars—people would devote their lifetime to understanding and studying—just like the Carnegie thing—pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and understanding. Come together, find a space, find the leisure—the implied leisure—to think, to study, to do experiments, to engage each other, to disagree, to debate. And all of those values and skills, somehow students—either vicariously or directly—pick this up and go out as leaders. And having a society that allows and tolerates a real university, in terms of openness, in terms of inclusion, is actually on the way to being an open, inclusive and tolerant society. So for me, again, universities are beachheads of transformation. Really, if you look at some of the universities in the Middle East, they can also be beachheads of intolerance because they create the space where people can congregate and they can then use their force or their numbers to impose on others.

But the higher education work was revitalization, transformation and, particularly in South Africa, struggles with this transformation in terms of the building of a post-racial, non-racial society. We did a lot of work around libraries—in a true Carnegian tradition—public libraries in

South Africa. One of the fascinating things about that, which was interesting because there are very many models of libraries—at times you talk about access to knowledge. You can put libraries, mobile libraries—you can have camels and donkeys taking libraries to the villages.

Vartan Gregorian did not believe in that. Vartan believed in having libraries that are like cathedrals, libraries that are like basilicas that are there almost in perpetuity. They are imposing. And occasionally, when I look at the Twin Towers, the palaces, the big museums, they are a statement of confidence of a generation. So just like a library, even if it's a small library that's like a church but is a beautiful place, is a secure space for people to come in, to study, to find out information—we've invested in those in South Africa. The Public Libraries [in South Africa] program was also part of the Higher Education and Libraries in Africa program in which we built eight libraries. We built eight public libraries as part of the national libraries in South Africa. We helped to transform the libraries in the universities. So that's also very, very important element. It's part of the access to information and knowledge.

The library is also a terrain of nondiscrimination. You can commune with all the deities in the library, irrespective of your color, your age, your class, your creed. You have access to them, either on the computer screen or in books. It's between you and them. The texts don't ask you who you are. The texts open themselves up to you. And it's your interaction with the text that leads to your interpretation and what you take out of it. So the library is actually an institution of democracy and very, very interestingly, is an institution of openness, is an institution of access. That all is in a very important spirit of Andrew Carnegie, in terms of building libraries

worldwide and in terms of what we did with the university programs and higher education

programs and in the public library programs in Africa.

Q: May I follow up with a question about that? The program is remarkable in many respects but I

immediately had this question that bothered me. And that was the idea of selection, how you

select where to build the library. Not only where to build a library but also which country.

Because ultimately the higher education program operated in a number of countries, including

Kenya, where I think there was, perhaps, less success for the libraries in contrast to South Africa.

So could you tell us a little bit about the selection process, both country but also internal?

Aina: For the library program it was very interesting because I had come back to some of the

principles of process, ownership. You must build the library. We don't do brick and mortars.

There must be commitment from your provincial offices, from the different tiers of government,

to constructing and maintaining and sustaining the libraries. So there's almost a strong

state/strong institution notion. And the strong state/strong institution notion, that is related to

valuing libraries. So it was easier to do this work in South Africa, where there was a tradition of

community libraries, libraries in small provincial capitals, small towns, libraries that have been

endowed and owned by their communities and all of that. So that was why South Africa was

selected.

The other aspect was that when you even build libraries—and that's where the cathedral, basilica,

metaphor that I used earlier really comes in. You see, Vartan Gregorian has a very interesting

conception of that. He thinks that the poor deserve the best. So you build solid—first you get

their governments, provincial governments, to be partners. So that was how the selection

worked. Where we do not get receptive governments to be partners, we couldn't do it. South

Africa, it was easy to be partners. So they either renovate what was there or build a really good

one.

What we did in South Africa that was interesting was also we did a bit more in decentralization.

We built in slums, like in Cape Town, Khayelitsha and in Durban, in Pietermaritzburg and all of

that. We have the centers and the nodes and we emphasize access. Even the City of

Johannesburg library is in central Johannesburg next to a major transportation node. So the poor

people also have access to these. And one fact about public libraries in Africa is that, because of

the issues with higher education in terms of enrollment, there are lots of students who do not

have campus accommodation. So they come from the suburbs and they come from the slums.

You see, suburbia in America is wealthy. Suburbia in Africa is poor. [Laughs] It's a very

interesting appropriation of the notions. So they come from all the shantytowns but they go to the

public libraries because there's no electricity at home. We encourage the libraries to be open until

nine o'clock. But then there are also problems of security, for women and all. The library is seen

in the sense—when I use the world cathedral—that it's open to everybody, it's a secure space, it's

a light space, it allows all comers.

For us, access is very important. We'll want it to be of the highest standards in terms of the

aesthetics because the poor also deserve beautiful things. Like, one of the things in Khayelitsha,

very interesting, where there was a testimony from a woman who is about twenty-six with five

children and who says, look, this is the only place that I have space for myself. When I do come

here for one or two hours, this is the only place where I can be myself. I can read, I can engage, I am not overwhelmed by the burden of looking after my children. And this place is also secure because it's part of an urban redevelopment program. So they're built in safe cities, so there are streetlights leading to the place. This is one place nobody's going to sexually attack me, rape me or mug me. And this is Khayelitsha, which has the highest crime rate and the highest rape rate in the world. So the libraries were havens. You know, where you construct—when you go to 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue [in New York] or something, the library is a symbolization of a space where you have the repository of the knowledge of the civilizations you are part of, but where you also have the space to engage that knowledge in a secure and protected way—secure, irrespective of your race, creed, color, class—protected from disturbance, harassment, oppression.

And then it's also a safe haven for connectivity—one of the major things we did in Africa was the Bandwidth [Consortium] program, which we contributed to. And then connecting all the libraries to iCities [Information Cities]—the new technologies, the digitization, the connecting. When you go, you can dream with books. You can see different places with books. You can see the possibility of other worlds—so much so with internet, also. In fact, with the internet, you see them in real time and you see them in their true color—they used to say Kodachrome and Technicolor, now I didn't know what you say with internet because the reality of the color [laughs] too is really real. It's what it is, you know? So this is going to transform—

That's another thing that I think about in higher education, which is why there's a lot of investments in e-learning, in connectivity. Because, again, when your resources are different and

when you are a late developer, you need to be able to innovate in a way that transforms the very concept of what you're dealing with. California, Silicon Valley and a lot of the developments in the new universities are doing that. Africa, Asia and the rest of us, we all absorb the old. Because we are either French, British, Dutch, we absorb the old Western notion of the university. That notion has got to change.

That's part of the whole issue around internationalization. But it's not just internationalization. Stanford [University] wanted a New York campus—if you read the story of Stanford in negotiation with [Mayor Michael R.] Bloomberg—as well as a Dubai campus. So the university—people used to talk about town and gown. People came to the university. The university is beginning to go to people—open access, open educational resources, the various reconfiguration of site and space that the new technologies give rise to, the various forms of new interactions that cell phones, text messages—the whole new world that is almost like a magical world. I say, it's something very interesting. If my grandmother had been alive and she had one of those phones that are video and she stuck into me and she can see me and my lips moving, she would say this is witchcraft or magic. I remember [Bronisław K.] Malinowski's famous writing on witchcraft and magic, from Columbia—if you look at anthropology. It is really witchcraft and magic. Because seven thousand miles away and she calls a cell phone and there's a video Skype communication and she can see me and she can see her grandchildren waving, hello, Grannie. It's something. And it's real time. That is what magic was a hundred years ago. That's what witchcraft was. She would say that. Those are some of the kinds of transformations that are occurring—that, in higher education, we begin to see that will lead to the new reconfiguration, new modes of learning, the redefinition of sites and spaces.

Vartan encourages me whenever I talk to him. He says, you know, I'm a man of ideas and so that's why I discipline you guys to be much more concrete, to be very narrowed. I want you to be canalized. He canalizes us because he wants to see the beginning, the middle and the end. When I have my conversation with him occasionally and I go like this and yes. Because it's tax exempt money. It's Andrew Carnegie's endowment. We must be accountable for it. So we must discipline our imagination and discipline our ideas so we have really concrete programs. But what I'm saying is that, even within the concreteness of the program, there is the realization of the imagination in terms of what is happening there, where you talk about e-learning and e-platforms and access to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] open educational resources. Because we had a program with MIT iLabs in which real-time engineering experimentation was happening in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife [Nigeria], Makerere University [Uganda], Dar es Salaam [Tanzania] and Australia National Universities, in which we were training undergraduate engineering students across the board in those countries. That is imagination realized. For me, it's fascinating, some of the things that we are doing there. But that was the old program.

Now let me move you to when I came in 2008. There was this: strengthening university, women's scholarships and transformation. The mandate was, now, you look at our programming. We've done almost a decade of it. You need to reconfigure, think about where we should go next with the program. And I think I had a five-year time frame. So I jumped out there—consultations within the framework of the partnership, within the framework of the universities in the countries we work in. Where do we go from here? Should we continue doing the same old things:

strengthening universities, institutional capacity building? No. Or other questions that I imagined.

In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, I ran into some of the more interesting anecdotes. It was [Abel] Ishumi who was in charge of our program. He's a professor of education, Professor Ishumi. You know, you build central science labs, so you have shiny new equipment, you have renovated buildings, you have brand new buildings, you have computer laboratories. You have all of those things. So who will take this over from us? Average age of the African faculty: fifties. The proportion of those with terminal degrees: across the board, about 40% have terminal degrees. So you have an aging faculty. You have a massive increase in enrollment and doubling of the size of universities. With the rise of the privatization that the World Bank pushed, the emergence of private universities. When we were working in 2000, there were about three hundred universities on the continent. Today there are about seven hundred to eight hundred. And the work I am doing with the World Bank now, the last one, it showed there are about a thousand universities. So, massive growth over a decade, particularly. A lot of these are either private—they're not-for-profit, you know, fee-based, philanthropical. Then, of course, there's a couple of the for-profit. But basically, lots and lots of these universities are not-for profit. So who will inherit this world that you guys have helped us to rebuild? Who will take over these laboratories with all the shiny, digitized equipment? And these new libraries? And these wonderful computer centers? All of those things that you have helped us with. That was one thing that came from the African universities themselves.

There was a needs assessment by [Wisdom J.] Tettey, which was done by the partnership, which looked at the theme of developing and retaining the next generation of African academics. Because it's not just about developing them—it's about retaining them. It's about retention. It's about making universities a good place to work. It's about making them want to work there. It's about keeping them on the continent. It's about keeping them in the higher education sector in competition with the private sector. That gave us the seed of the new strategy. Wisdom Tettey did the study—I think he is somewhere in Canada—for the partnership and it's on the partnership website. There was a conference by the partnership in 2008 on the next generation in Accra in November 2008. All the consultations of the administrators and all, it's about the next generation—a deficit of personnel, of people. So that led to how we reconfigured the strategy. We said, after ten years of institutional strengthening, after ten years of the women's scholarship program, after ten years of the transformation, we are now moving on to a new strategy, which is developing and retaining the next generation of African academics, university leaders and librarians. So that was what we reconfigured the program in 2008 to and approved by the June board of 2009.

Some of it was building on what we have done already, fellowships. Basically, we had three entry points for the next generation work. The first entry point was to identify institutions that can be intellectual hubs and effective counterparts. Because when you look at this thing about autonomous thinking, about spaces on the continent where people will find counterparts, even when you talk about an internationalized and globalized intellectual and academic community, it's not all about just the internet. It's about places where you have a community of scholars. So we have vibrant intellectual communities. It's about places where workers—intellectual workers,

academics and intellectuals in Africa—can work without being in complete isolation. This is about really places, too, apart from just virtual places and spaces.

So we had to fold in a little bit. And don't forget that 2008 was the beginning of the massive recession. So when I came on board, the recession hit. The endowment went down. So there was a rationalization there that came out. You know, reduce the spaces where we work, look at how we can stretch the dollars. Get the maximum—Americans have that expression—for the dollar. I've forgotten what that expression is.

Q: Bang for your buck.

Aina: Yes. The bang for the buck and all of that. So I had to think about that. So we said, look, instead of five countries, this time we will work in three countries. Instead of eight institutions, we will work with four institutions that are centers of excellence and intellectual hubs, that have a tradition of excellence, that have the space, the capacity, the desire to do this kind of work. So we chose Ghana. The choices were actually determined by the institutions, not the other way around. The University of Ghana, Legon. Then we chose Uganda, where we have Makerere University. And then we chose South Africa, where we work with two universities, University of Witwatersrand and University of Cape Town. It's much more complex than that. People look at it and then they say, but your geographical footprints are wider than that. Part of it is the subversion of the program officer. [Laughs] Part of it is how actually we reconfigure the programming so that it will have optimal effect. So those are the institutional entry points. They are our core partner institutions. We have four universities that we work out of. So that's the

Excellence in Postgraduate Training, Research and Retention. Then research through doctoral programs, post-doctoral programs and master's—so our core institutions.

Then the other kind of entry point that we thought was interesting was disciplinary and thematic networks. Again, we had a hypothesis that networks are cost-effective ways of delivering excellence in post-graduate training and research, which build cohorts and groups, reduce intellectual isolation, provide opportunities for excellence and quality assurance, while at the same time cross national and institutional boundaries. We support two key networks around these. The first one is the RISE network, Regional Initiative in Science Education, which we do out of Princeton [University] Institute for Advanced Study, but which works with five networks in about nine countries in Africa. You have networks on water resources, you have networks on natural products, you have a network on materials science and engineering. You have two water networks and two natural resource networks. And you have this materials science and engineering networks working with nodes in about eleven universities and research institutes, and in one particularly interesting case, a tea center—you know, tea farm and research center in Malawi [Tea Research Foundation of Central Africa].

So this brings together, within each of the networks, students doing their master's and Ph.D. and the occasional post-docs across country. AFNNET, the African Natural Products Network, bring together institutions in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, with joint master's and some individual Ph.D.s in that area of natural resources. AMSEN, the African Materials Science and Engineering Network, brings together students and faculty in University of Nairobi, Kenya, in Nigeria the Federal University of Technology Akure, in Wits [University of Witwatersrand]—Wits is a

really dynamic aspect—and [University of] Pretoria, and I think somewhere in Namibia. So you have the spread of the networks. The universities still offer their degrees but the training, the faculty move around. There's a kind of mobility. The jury is still out whether it's the most cost-effective approach.

Will all of this still help retention? What we are seeing is that all these people are getting African degrees. And we actually have worked with them in a very fascinating way in which the issue of excellence—access to libraries, access to laboratories—crosses boundaries. Some of these networks actually allow you the opportunity to come out and work in a library or laboratory, partly on the institutional grants—you know, Makerere and University of Ghana Legon. For instance, in Legon, the Ph.D.s in mathematics go to Cambridge for eight months and work with top-flight mathematicians. And you know the role of Cambridge and a few U.S. universities in production of high-level mathematicians. So they have the opportunity to see what's new in mathematics. There's a refreshing element. The scholars are refreshed, revitalized and are engaged with international standards of excellence.

I still believe that in spite of the politics of international standards of excellence—I'm still coming to my tension that there are still standards of excellence that have international dimensions in terms of international peer review. People might say maybe the dominant centers, the metropolises, set the research agendas. Again, I don't think it's that way anymore. I think we foundations facilitate the possibilities, the opportunities, for the engagement of research agendas and research problems across settings. It does not mean that Columbia does not have an advantage over, maybe, Makerere. All it means is that the people in Makerere, in Columbia, are

honest enough and they recognize the nature of the flows of knowledge. I mean, if the Cambridge people were to give the grant to Cambridge—this is particularly in health science— microbes and viruses are international. [Laughs] They cross national boundaries. And other times, the way they operate, it is better to study them in their locale. Therefore, you need to develop counterparts who have the equipment, the knowledge and the understanding of the ecologies and the locales of this.

It's the same in social sciences, where the grant we give to social scientists, say, Craig Calhoun— who is now going to become the director of my alma mater, London School of Economics, who has just been appointed, who was president of Social Science Research Council here and the first American to get that position—understands that social science knowledge is now also determined by flows. Not stocks. They go across. Just like libraries. Libraries have changed. Libraries are no longer just about stocks and static collections but about flows, about the movement of ideas, about the movement of knowledge and that each engagement across boundaries strengthens recipients across the boundaries.

So, we use networks. We have another network called CARTA, the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa. That's another part of the entry point. Then we have competitive fellowships that are on dissertation completion, proposal, development. We have two of them. We have the African Humanities Program that we are doing with the American Council of Learned Societies [ACLS]. It's doing very well—almost two hundred fellows now, both post-docs and docs—to revitalize the humanities in Africa, based on the fact that the people cannot tell their own stories, those that do not have their own voice will always lack confidence in the

community of nations, in the human community. So the history of Africa, the literature of Africa, the poetry of Africa must begin with Africans, must begin with African production and reproduction. And this is true. The humanities, the poems, the plays, the theaters, the dramas, the histories of the people—you begin to really engage the voices of the people and the creativity of the people.

We have supported that. We've supported the revitalization of the humanities, both the traditional humanities and the new humanities. You know, film, it is a new—before, film studies was in the department of literature. Now film studies is becoming an autonomous department of its own. It comes with all this creativity, this creative and technical element, its own textual analysis—that you either use some of the vehicles and instruments of all literary studies but also new forms of studies. Because the text in the film is very different from the text in the novel.

Q: Of course.

Aina: We have also helped to revitalize older studies, like archaeology, that were dying. Archaeology is archaeology, although now you can actually also digitize the findings very quickly, rock art and all of that. So that's a lot of what we have done. It's amazing, the energy. It's amazing, the vibrancy that has been created with that work on the African continent and the reclamation of the communities of scholars and the reduction of isolation and the rebuilding of confidence in those areas in which governments—because they are more interested in science and technology—have not invested. They are encouraged, of course, by the World Bank and international development community that look at science, technology, engineering—STEM

[Science Technology Engineering Mathematics]—more than show interest in dance, in literature, in archaeology, in those things that give people a sense of history and connection and an anchor, in terms of who they are, as they engage the rest of the world. So we've supported that and that's been very, very successful.

Then the new fellowships that we have—

See, Africa is interesting. You invest in the universities, you invest in all of this. But if you do not have a condition of peace, a context of peace and security—just like what happened to Makere University in the period of Idi Amin in the '70s—the universities will be overrun. Vice chancellors and university presidents will be imprisoned. The halls of residence will be taken over by militia and soldiers. So even the work in progress that democracy is, is also related to the work in progress that peacebuilding and peace is. In terms of conflicts, in terms of tensions, post-conflict societies, there is a proliferation on the continent of Africa. The greatest threat—and that's the word I give for it, and I have my good friend [Stephen] Steve [J.] Del Rosso [Jr.] to also argue for it—the greatest threat to all of these investments is actually war and conflict. If we do not invest in our understanding of war and in peacebuilding and we continue to invest in all of these other things, we are really endangering our investments in terms of their sustainability and their long-lasting transformational effect.

So we have a Social Science Research Council doctoral and post-doctoral program that is around peace and security on the continent of Africa. I have a take on this—also related to the work we are doing with King's College London and the African Leadership Center—I have a take that

again comes from my work in Ford and in East Africa, a take in terms of the sense of the amount

of knowledge-building and knowledge production that is going on that is not actually brought to

the global arena. A lot of the knowledge building that is being done in NGOs [non-governmental

organizations], in civil society groups, around peacebuilding, around issues of rights, around

oppression and all of this—that knowledge forms a formidable gray literature that, actually, you

can connect. That's what the King's College program is doing—connecting in terms of the

formalization of the equipment with which you engage all that information by providing the

[International] Peace and Security master's at the King's College London and then the other year

at the African Leadership Center, and now this program that we are doing with the SSRC.

So the King's College program that builds the master's is a kind of pipeline. But it's also done

some work, a mapping, of who teaches peace, security and development and peacebuilding in

Africa, how it developed there, what are the standards of excellence. It's working with a cluster

of universities around that. There is the plan to have on the continent joint doctoral programs

with King's College in London and University of Nairobi and some other African universities.

Then our SSRC grant—it's a kind of intensification and acceleration of the process. We go out

there and stimulate the demand in this broad area for people still working in African universities

to complete their dissertations in this particular area. There's first and foremost the need for that

knowledge to be a self-conscious knowledge for Africa to understand. You're never going to

have effective development if you continue to have the disruptions, the destabilization, that come

with conflict and absence of peace and security, one. And second, to begin to bring to the global

arena—which is part of the work we are doing with IPS, International Peace and Security

program and Steve—African peacebuilding network. The postmodernists have pluralized

knowledge, so they talk about "knowledges." But us—the plurality and diversity of African

knowledge, produced and reproduced in terrains and spaces that global players cannot access—

and work with them within structures and institutions, formal structures as universities, higher

education, think tanks, research institutes. And this is a difficult one. Some people would say,

who needs validation? But validated internationally, in terms of quality and in terms of

credibility and engaged internationally.

That's one of the biggest crises of the West today, in terms of understanding the nature of the

new conflicts. The West dealt with guerrilla conflicts in the Vietnam War and the Cambodian

[Civil] War, the war in Colombia and all of that, where new elements—of course there were

European aspects, in Northern Ireland and, of course, the Basque region. So I want to also show

that Europe has some of those things too—wars that led to the changes in the nature of the

understanding of conflict. "Low-intensity operations," as some kind of general talked about it,

which the West has to understand. But there's a new one, which the War on Terror showed from

2001. But that had been going on for some time. Because before 2001, there was 1998 in

Nairobi, where there were the bombings of the American embassy. Then there was actually also

Aden [Yemen, USS *Cole* bombing], and all of those places.

Now how do these insurrections play out? What are the conditions that give rise to them? How

do they disrupt normal development, the processes of economic reproduction, that you need for

stability? Although some people have told me that you make the most amount of money in

unstable environments because those are the environments that allow for trafficking and allow

for—if you're talking about returns on investment, [laughs] you have massive and quick returns and it's all blood money.

So those are some of the things that our work is now beginning to explore with a new strategy. So we have a Social Science Research Council doctoral, post-doctoral, dissertation development fellowships and dissertation completion, and proposal development completion fellowships, tied around issues of peace, security and development.

Q: Wonderful. I think this is probably a natural stopping point for this session. We'll pick up on a lot of these in the next session this afternoon. It will also give you the opportunity to rest your voice a little bit.

Aina: Yes, to take a break.

Q: Thank you very much. I look forward to talking to you later today.

Aina: Yes. You can see that I like talking. Most probably, that's—

Q: That's a good thing. That's a good thing for oral history projects. Thank you very much, Tade.

[END OF SESSION]

Q: This is George Gavrilis. It's May 30th. I'm here with Tade Aina for the Carnegie Corporation Oral History Project, which is being implemented by Columbia University. Good afternoon, Tade.

Aina: Good afternoon, George.

Q: Tade, we spoke earlier this morning and we covered quite good ground and during that time, I learned a lot about the various things that you've accomplished and done from your studies to your work with the Ford Foundation and Carnegie. For the sake of this session, what I wanted to do is to start at the beginning to give context to what's to come after and ask you to tell us a little bit about where you were born, raised and what you studied.

Aina: I was born in Lagos, former capital of Nigeria—it's still presumably the largest city in Nigeria—in the transition period between the colonial rule and de-colonization in the '50s. I grew up in Lagos—basically an urban child. Many people claim to have their villages. I don't have a rural village. My village is in the city. I went to primary school in Lagos, Ladi Lak Institute— went to a couple of primary schools. I think I went to more than one primary school. And went to secondary school in Lagos, two secondary schools, where I did what, in the British tradition, is

called the ordinary and advanced levels for high school diplomas. Then went to university in

Lagos, the University of Lagos.

Q: Tell me something, when people think of Nigeria these days, they have certain images in

mind and quite often they're misconceptions. They know even less about what the country was

like when you were growing up there. Could you give us a little bit of the atmospherics of

growing up in Lagos, what it was like?

Aina: Yes, from a city that is about nine million today, it used to be a city of about a million at

that time. It was interesting because I did a lot of my actual post-doctoral research in urban

Lagos. I did urban sociology. It is a city of communities. When I was growing up—the core of

Lagos is known as Lagos Island. The settlements are developed around different communities. I

grew up in a community that is the Afro-Brazilian community and predominantly Roman

Catholic and Muslim. So where you have the tensions in northern Nigeria today, where there's a

tension between Christians and Muslims, we did not have those tensions in those days. My

grand-aunt was Muslim. My grandmother was Catholic. And you had inter-marriages. So I grew

up in what you call—the French call it—quartier. I grew up in the Catholic Quarters. Just not too

far from there is another set of quarters that is also predominantly for another group of people,

which is like the Methodists. Then you have Episcopals, the Anglicans. And then you have the

area as a core of the city that is the traditional religions, that people really produce the royalty

that rule the city.

So it was very interesting there. You had rivalries, you had soccer matches between the different groups, and then there was a more interesting one, in which—when you were young, if you tried to flirt with a lady or a man from across your quartier, the other boys in the quartier try to intimidate you, like throw rocks and things at you, when you are taking a stroll with your high school friend back to their own home or something like that. It was a really different kind of— it's not the kind of cosmopolitan, high-intensity, heavy traffic jam, lots of crime that it is today. So it was more segregated into different communities, cohesive communities. Everybody knew everybody else in those communities. That was the kind of Lagos I grew up with. And a lot of culture, a lot of music, a lot of theater. There was a lot of street theater. And a lot of magazines, like cultural magazines, *Spear Magazine*, *Drum Magazine* that had stories, beautiful black and white pictures. And scandals—a murder case was a big scandal or something. All the journalists would follow the crime and go to the magistrate courts and you have pictures of the murderer dozing off. There would be wonderful subtitles, the headline, "Murderer Sleeps During Court Case," or something. So that was the kind of Lagos it was. It was a slow, more easygoing city than what it is today. Today is a harsher context.

Q: We'll eventually talk about how the country has changed and put that in the context of some of the work that Carnegie has done. But before we get to that, there's also the subject of your education. You have a very interesting educational profile and you mentioned that you studied sociology. Why sociology?

Aina: I said to you that I was a scholarship boy. And when I finished my seven-year high school—broken into the five years, which is the O levels and the two years, the A levels, which

you guys call advanced placement kind of thing—I got a scholarship from ExxonMobil and the scholarship was for my position in the class, in terms of my location, and it gave me access to the University of Lagos. I was actually admitted to the University of Lagos for law. Now, my father was ready to pay my school fees but the first act of freedom is to not have your parents pay your tuition while you're in college, while you're in university. So I wasn't going to let my father pay for me to do law. He wanted me to do law. I really wanted to do English, mass communications. You see, that's part of my story because for my A levels, I did history, English and geography. I really wanted to be a writer. I wanted to be a poet, a novelist, a literary kind of person. But Mobil was not paying for anybody to either do English or do communications. They were ready to pay for me to do economics. So I went—this is a very interesting story—I went to the university, I registered. I went to the first economics class and it was quantitative. Here was this professor trying to do differentiation and integration and before you could take your notes, he cleaned off the board. So [laughs] you had about six weeks to change your courses, so I decided I wasn't going to sit through this economics class.

So what was the next best thing that my scholarship would pay for? Sociology. So I walked over to the sociology department and asked if they would take me. Given my grades, I actually had one of the top—nationally I was in the top ten category of people who graduate from high school in the arts, in the humanities, that year. So given my grades, I could get into any of the classes I wanted to do, except the sciences. I would get into any of the humanities—from law, sociology, economics. So sociology just took me. It was pretty easy for them. They just took me and I discovered a new life and a new discipline. But it's close to literature. In some ways, it's close to the humanities.

Q: How so?

Aina: How so? Well, it depends. It's an attempt to explain social realities. It's an attempt to explain the relationships between people. It's an attempt to explain interactions. And if you're the kind of person who is curious about the hidden motives or bases, of why people do what they do, the narratives in sociology are very, very attractive in that sense. It's amazing because I was taught by American trained and American scholars. My favorite, favorite, favorite professor, who admitted me, is a Fordham-trained American Jesuit priest who had both a Ph.D. in sociology and a Ph.D. in philosophy—Father Schuyler, Joseph [B.] Schuyler. And there were wonderful narratives. We read American surveys, C. Wright Mills, the story of Levittown. All those basic—so it's about stories and narratives. I mean, you got to the quantitative bits later and you got to the abstract concepts and theories. But it satisfied my curiosity.

Q: You mentioned earlier that your father was intent on paying your tuition so that you could study law. When your family realized that you were going to continue along the sociological path, what was their reaction?

Aina: This is fascinating. My father was very close to the dean of law, who later became Chief Justice of Nigeria. And they were friends. For almost eight months, they didn't know I wasn't doing law. So he met his friend, Justice Taslim [Olawale] Elias. He met his friend at a cocktail party, and he said, oh, my son is in your faculty. So the guy teaches the introductory class. The classes were not large in those days—thirty, forty. And he takes roll at the beginning of it and he

says, there's no name like your son. So he came back and had my name pasted all over the

campus saying I should report to the office of the dean of law. They thought I was a truant, I was

not coming to school, I was claiming to be in the university. So I went to him and he said, you

are supposed to be in my class, so where have you been? So I said, no, I changed—I'm in

sociology [laughs]. So that was how my family got to know that I wasn't doing law. But they

should have realized because I didn't take—they knew I got a scholarship and I didn't take—yes,

okay, I think that was the reason because they knew I got the scholarship and they thought the

scholarship was paying for law. But it wasn't.

Q: You continued your studies at the London School of Economics. And you also got your

doctorate from University of Sussex. Was that also in sociology?

Aina: Yes, it was in Sociology and Political Economy. And that has a very interesting story. In

the London School of Economics, I had some really good teachers too. One of them, who was a

specialist in sociology of development—I did my master's dissertation on development—was Ian

Roxborough, and he went off to Chile at the end of my master's, so I had to shop around. In the

U.K., you went for interviews for your Ph.D. from school to school. So I went for an interview at

the School of African and Oriental Studies in London, I went to [University of] Manchester.

Manchester was horrible. I came in through the back and I saw all the factories and ugly

buildings. And I took a train from London to Manchester. The scene was—there were dreary,

dreary, old industrial towns. And I didn't like Oxford. I didn't like the guy who interviewed me,

who said, you think you know what you're doing. But in Oxford, for you to graduate, you have to

go around the wine bars first [laughs] and at the end of your class, we would like to know how many wine bars you've been to.

But I loved Sussex. Sussex was actually the hub of progressive politics at that time. The former president of Brazil was there. There were lots of people from all over the world. It was the Institute of Development Studies. It was by the seaside, Brighton-Falmer. And it was summer when I went for my interview and the female students were sunbathing [laughs] on the rooftops of the hostels. So I said, oh, this looks like a nice place. And so after my interview and my lunch I said, oh, this is going to be a nice place to study. You know, the Institute of Development Studies had the best collection of minds in development studies at that time—Ronald [P.] Dore, a whole lot of people who went on to the UNCTC [United Nations Centre for Transnational Corporations]. So that was a nice place for me. So I made up my mind that if these people give me an admission, I'll definitely come back. And indeed—the interview at Sussex was also very pleasant. It started with lunch. Three people who were supposed to supervise me, Peter [C.] Lloyd and all the gurus in the field and they were both Latin American and African specialists. Well, you know Falmer was really nice and I relate to energies and vibrations from my environment. It was a very, very positive energy I got.

Q: And what was the subject of your thesis?

Aina: Industrialization and class formation in Nigeria, 1945 to 1975. And it started off—it was actually Weberian at the beginning but it ended up Neo-Marxist, Post-structuralist—the kind of things the dependentistas, the Latin American scholars and Samir Amin and company pushed. So

I ended up with a really, really, very, very French Marxist thesis, Althusserian in structure and the language, using concepts that are almost completely incomprehensible to any normal human being and trying to make sense of how actually the Nigerian ruling class never really became an industrial bourgeoisie. So that was what the thesis was about.

Q: And perhaps this is an unfair question but in the most naked colloquial language, what would you say the main finding of your thesis was?

Aina: The main finding basically was that you could see a working class was emerging but an industrial ruling class wasn't emerging because industrialization was foreign, not local.

Q: Did you return to Nigeria after you finished?

Aina: Immediately, almost. I actually got a job. It's amazing what my life would have been if I had come to New York then in 1980. I got a job at the U.N. Centre for Transnational Corporations, the new center at that time. But the Nigerian currency was as strong as the American dollar and the British pound sterling at that time. I was under thirty with a freshly-minted Ph.D., a fiancée at home in Nigeria—well, at that time, I'll say, I had a girlfriend in Nigeria. And I was looking forward to returning a young man under thirty with a Ph.D. to a university. So I wasn't even thinking—I didn't even wait for graduation. Graduation was going to be August. I submitted my dissertation in December of '79, defended January of 1980. I was on my way back to Nigeria April 1980 and graduation was July 1980, so I didn't even hang around.

Because I also had a job waiting. I had been given a job at the University of Lagos so I was pretty excited to return to Nigeria at that time.

Q: Could you describe for us what the university was like in the 1980s?

Aina: Very, very different from what we had to deal with in the 2000s and in late 1990s. In my experience, when I was a student at my university, there were twenty-five, twenty-six of us in class. By the time I got back, it wasn't too bad. The classes were a bit larger. But we still had manageable class sizes and enrollment. It was still—there hadn't been too many new buildings. It was still the wonderful design. The university is on the lagoon and the senate building, the restaurant and the science laboratory, the science faculty, were all built to look like ships with different decks. There was a terrace that joined the senate building that was a deck. It was a really beautiful university right on the lagoon and built into the architecture. I'm trying to remember—Alan Vaughan-Richards, who is a British architect, who settled in Nigeria. Wonderful architecture, very vibrant intellectual community.

I had some mentors, like my dean at that time. He was very, very colonial. He would light up his pipe and he would send for me and we would stroll the lagoon discussing [Émile] Durkheim and [Max] Weber and Karl Marx. [Laughs] He was very, very idyllic in that sense. Students were pretty challenging because there were not too many. They read the assignments. They came to class. By the time I taught at the University of Lagos from 1980 to 1993—and I kept going and coming back between 1993 and 1997. Actually, I withdrew my service in 1997. The changes were tremendous. The first six years were wonderful. Up to 1986 was wonderful. By 1986, there

was the economic crisis and so the devaluation of the Nigerian currency and all the attendant crises—you couldn't get journals. You had research funding when I started. You had conference support, so you could go to one international conference and three local conferences. So you felt really privileged. Then given the fact of a doctorate. You know, in a society like that there were not too many people with that kind of title. So you were treated with a lot of respect. Academics were respected, just like judges and all that. But by the 1990s, it was the people with money that became respected. There was a whole change in the structure and the mentality of the country. So it was a great time to be there and you felt a sense of mission, a sense of accomplishment and the feeling that you really could contribute to making some impact in terms of training people and pushing ideas.

Q: Why did you decide to leave?

Aina: Well, like I told you upstairs, I always had this wanderlust in me. I moved very rapidly. Every two years I got promoted. Then I got stuck at a particular point where—the equivalent of what you call the assistant professor, the senior lecturer in the British system. So the next two steps were associate professor and the full chair. And I had some mentors who said, look, don't go for the associate, go straight for the full chair. So I submitted my papers for promotion. By that time, I'd done my sabbatical, got some of—I'd been to a couple of other places. And between '84 and '93, I was still at one rank. I was still a senior lecturer. So I became a senior lecturer very quickly—in four years, which takes some other people six, eight years, ten years at times—and then I had to queue to become a full professor. By then, I started doing all sorts of things. I'll take

a grant from here, travel there. By that time, I also made up my mind that once I get the chair, I was going to try something else.

So in '93, the chair didn't come but there was a major change in Nigeria. There was the change in politics. The military supposedly was supposed to hand over to the civilian rule—Moshood [Kashimawo Olawale "M.K.O."] Abiola, who was a civilian democratic leader at that time. I supported him. I actually was in his social policy manifesto group. I helped to draft the social policy manifesto for him. And then when he won the election, there was a big crisis because the military refused to hand over to him and jailed him. I got involved with the activist movement, in which we had this concept of dead cities. You have complete and total strike. But our political analysis was pretty wrong because in a predominantly informal society, where you want to take artisans, craftsmen and workers out on strike, you must have a strike fund. And you don't have a strike fund for people who are not in unions. So if you don't have a strike fund, the strike will be broken. But we had this protest against military takeover and I was part of that. And I was also part of a—not a full frontally forward in National Democratic Coalition [NADECO] but I was part of a NADECO, that's what it was called. That engaged the military from 1993 'til 1998. And most of us had to leave the country. We had to go into exile. At that time, once this was going on—June 12th. It's the famous June 12th in Nigerian history, June 12th, 1992.

Then I hung in there and then got this job in Senegal, Dakar, which was also okay because it was in research and in the academy. I got a job with CODESRIA, the Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa, on the leadership team. I was deputy executive secretary and part of the executive secretariat. And I thought, well, this is interesting—a new part of Africa,

Senegal, Dakar. Very, very attractive in many ways because it has a very interesting cultural

tradition. One of the famous presidents of Senegal was Léopold Sédar Senghor, the poet—the

poet and philosopher. I said, oh, that would be interesting. Senegal had a lot of tradition around a

whole literary movement known as Négritude. And also, it was Francophone. I didn't have

French but being Francophone was very exotic and interesting. It was a chance to break away

from Nigeria at that time. So it was growing up from a different context. So I gave notice to the

university. Normally, I give long notices—another eight-month notice—and started doing French

classes so that I could speak French.

So I got to CODESRIA July 12th, 1993—a year, one month after the seizure, the disruption of

democracy in Nigeria, the democratic transition. I was put in a hotel for three weeks and after

three weeks, I was pulled out. I had to deal with my life immersed in the French environment.

And all my language training flew out. I always had these delayed reactions. People would talk

to me and then they will go away and then I'll say, oh, that's what they meant! There was always

delayed comprehension but actually, I picked up my French from living there—from the streets,

from working. But you see, there's something about CODESRIA—CODESRIA was a bilingual

environment. All the support people—those of us who were on staff of the leadership either

spoke French or we spoke English. But everybody else who worked with you, the project

managers, the secretaries, the support staff, were all bilingual. So you didn't get a chance to

really learn the language. I could read with the help of a dictionary. So you wrote your memos in

your primary language and the other person replied to you in their language. So my colleague—

the other executive deputy secretary, was French, francophone—wrote his memos in French and

I replied to him in English. And our secretaries understood both languages and things. [Laughs] So that was very difficult within CODESRIA.

But there you had to go to the supermarket, you had to go to the shops. So I picked up French. My family picked up French better. My kids actually were all completely bilingual. Because first, we didn't have money to send them to a really fancy private English school. We had four kids. The oldest two, because they were closer, we sent them to the American school, which was pretty expensive. Then the younger two—we immersed them in the French school. Today, all four of them are absolutely competent in both languages. So they picked it up faster. They even picked up the local language. They first learned all of the root words in Wolof, which is a local Senegalese language. So that was what happened and we stayed in Senegal five years, to 1998, where I ran the journal of CODESRIA, *Africa Development*. I ran the bulletin. And then I was responsible for the books. I was in charge of publications in CODESRIA.

Q: CODESRIA comes to become a program that I believe gets partially funded by Carnegie.

Aina: Now, yes.

Q: Under the Partnership for Higher Education. Could you give those who are watching this a little bit of context into what exactly CODESRIA means and what it is?

Aina: It's called the Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa. It was founded in 1973 as a council of the deans of faculty and directors of social science institutes in African

universities. And it changed—first, it was a conclave of deans that met to discuss their problems, both francophone, anglophone, deans across linguistic barriers. Then later on, it became an independent nongovernmental organization that actually pushed research and did a lot of work around research and policy. It had a very, very dynamic and really good publications policy. It was a space where African social scientists, particularly the younger generations, were able to do and test their own ideas.

You know, the colonial experience had many elements, which gets to what people coming from post-colonial societies were—a sense of trying to assert your own definition and interpretation of yourself, a sense of your own voice, a sense of being able to be your own interpreters, that nobody else interprets you or you interpret your people's stories and your own situation. CODESRIA was a platform for this kind of thing. It allowed African social scientists, particularly the younger generation at that time, to be able to do research and to be able to have African agendas, research agendas for themselves. Very interesting element. For instance, an African social scientist might really, really want to talk about authoritarian politics from dictatorship, but somebody coming from the United States, maybe coming from the World Bank, might really want to talk about markets and things like that. Okay, they both matter but you really are living under oppressive and difficult conditions. And what you're interested in is to do your research to look at how you can understand your situation. So you tend to have a situation where agendas—local agendas—tend to be different from attention of international agendas. CODESRIA gave the opportunity for African researchers to be able to formulate and carry out their research and their own local autonomously-developed agendas.

Q: Before we talk about the Ford Foundation that came after CODESRIA, tell me briefly, how many languages do you speak?

Aina: Interesting. I'm the worst person in my family because I speak English, I speak Yoruba, I speak a smattering of French. I think I get by with French. I mean, I can manage completely without saying a word of English in a French environment. And then I speak a bit of Creole, Pidgin. My wife speaks about two or three Nigerian languages and she speaks French and she speaks also Pidgin. So she speaks about five. Our kids—the girls are better than our son. Our daughters speak about six languages. They speak French, Spanish, English. Then they speak Wolof. They speak Kiswahili and there was even Yoruba there now. Because of their grandmother, they learned Yoruba, which is our local mother tongue. So you have this versatility with language in the family.

Q: A function of moving around.

Aina: A function of moving around, yes.

Q: Well, speaking of moving around, tell me about going to Ford Foundation.

Aina: In 1998, very interesting— Bishop Desmond Tutu's daughter, Naomi Tutu—I had been looking for her. She was the headhunter, the search consultant. I'd got a call saying the Ford Foundation is looking for a program officer in Governance and Civil Society in the Nairobi office. Do you have any nominations or suggestions? So I rattled off names and made

suggestions and told about the different qualities of these different candidates I had in mind. And we talked for about thirty, forty minutes. She told me about the job. I say, why don't they do this? And how are they doing that? And then she said, are you interested? And I said, no, I have a job. She said, well, send me your CV. Let's see. So I said, well, when I get to work tomorrow, I'll do that. So I faxed her my CV. So she called me and said, look, I want to put you on the list. And I said, well, our kids are still in school, all of those things. And she said, don't worry, Ford Foundation will take care of you. If they move you, they'll be responsible for. So the next thing, I got invited to an interview in New York, 43rd [Street] and Second Avenue here, with the Ford Foundation offices.

The interviews are normally for three days. I moved on to the next phase. You had the one that is the panel, then you have the one that is the reps [representatives] and directors and then you get sent up to the vice president and the president. I just kept scaling through and on day three, I realized I have a new job. And then I asked them, okay, are you going to move me to Nairobi? I have never lived in East Africa. We have never lived in East Africa. This sounds interesting. The pay was better because CODESRIA was an African NGO. So the conditions of service, the benefits are much better. So again, I gave notice. It took about eight months to transit. This was about six months because I was interviewed late November and I was offered the job just at the end of the interview. I had to come back and see how to tell the people at CODESRIA and I gave notice and I moved to Nairobi in June of the next year.

Q: You would come to spend about ten years with the Ford Foundation.

Aina: Yes, ten years.

Q: But it wasn't too much of a break afterwards because the Ford Foundation was already working on a partnership, the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa with the Carnegie Corporation. So before we talk about the partnership that you first started working on with Ford and then Carnegie, tell me a little bit about that first year with the Ford Foundation, in terms of your everyday work life and living in Nairobi.

Aina: Nairobi is also another fascinating city. It's actually one of the few cities in the world where you have a game reserve next to the city. You know, next to the airport there's a Nairobi game park [Nairobi National Park]. And if you're not careful, if you have a house nearby, a lion or a leopard could stray into your compound if they're disturbed. [Laughs] That's one fascinating thing. I mean, I watched Nairobi change over ten years, built up and all of that. Nairobi was also another one—there are certain cities that are pretty romantic, just like Dakar. Well, Lagos has never been romantic or fascinating in that kind of aesthetic or cosmopolitan sense. Dakar was because of the duality, the language and all of that. Nairobi was another one. The tourists came to Nairobi. The U.N. office for Africa is in Nairobi. It's very, very cosmopolitan. It's an expatriate city and a local-people city also. Then it has what we don't have in West Africa— plenty of space. And we don't have game reserves and parks. The military took over many of the regimes in West Africa and used the wildlife for game practice, shooting range practice. [Laughs] It is one of the ironies of the undisciplined military in West Africa. So you have that kind of experience.

So Nairobi was fascinating in that sense but also it was tough because, again, it was anglophone. It was English-speaking, so that was okay. It was a good job. The Ford Foundation had some very interesting elements. There was proper orientation. To become a program officer, a grantmaker, you had a proper orientation and you had a real-life mentor. Colleagues would mentor you. There was peer-mentoring. So you come into the foundation. You come to New York for three weeks of orientation on all aspects of foundation life. How to use the corporate credit card, not to buy your bottle of wine or your duty-free with your company credit card. How to do your expense reporting, how to make grants—also the values. You would pick that up later on. It was a non-confrontational setting. If you made a presentation and it was really, really not a good presentation, there were key words. People would say, oh, well, that was a very interesting presentation. [Laughs] When someone says, that's a very interesting presentation, you know that it's not up to par and things like that. There were all really interesting ways of dealing with it. You have to pick that up. You have to be able to read between the lines.

So you have the three-week orientation. And then you went back to the office where you're working and you have a colleague, who was also your mentor and peer and you work with them. So I had that in Nairobi. I had fantastic interesting colleagues in Nairobi—crazy. And crazy in a good way, crazy in a nice, positive way. Crazy colleagues—I had Mary Ann Burris, who had done seven years in China. I also had Nick Mengaze who had done seven years. Mary Ann Burris is an American from Seattle but she's Chinese-speaking. She did a Ph.D. in China, Oriental Studies. She was in the Nairobi office then. I had Nick, who had also done a Ph.D. in environmental science. And then I had Joseph [B.] Gitari, a British-Kenyan who did human rights work. Then I had Katharine Pearson [Criss] from East Tennessee as my rep. She was an

M.F.A., master's in fine arts, kind of person, theater person. Then she had been the executive

director of the East Tennessee Community Foundation.

So you had a really, really cosmopolitan office and then you had really good people working

with you. And so in that sense, work was great. It was discovery. You felt excited and happy to

go to work. The environment was really good. It was extremely politically correct because work

was where you spent eight to ten hours a day. So one of the ground rules was you never make

anybody feel not like coming to work, either through discrimination—we had a wonderful,

wonderful orientation program that also included a whole orientation on discrimination—sexual,

cultural, all those kinds of things, in which there are videos showing what you say or what you

put on your—pictures of naked woman on your table and disturbing your colleagues. Also a

wonderful, wonderful—it was actually just like CODESRIA. There was a wonderful feeling of

collegiality, camaraderie and a sense that you belong to a special breed.

I think that's one of the best things for creating a corporate identity, that you feel you are one of

the anointed. That was very, very Ford Foundation—every Ford Foundation program officer felt

they were going to try to work with groups of people to change the world, to contribute to

change the world. And so it was exciting. Don't forget, I was a program officer for Governance

and Civil Society. The other interesting thing about Ford Foundation was that you woke up in the

morning tomorrow and your colleague who was program officer had been promoted to vice

president. And maybe the directors who were supposed to be his or her senior, or the deputy vice

president and the reps, they feel very bad about that but those of us who are program officers,

that's good. It means that you can be recognized from any part of the foundation. So with a lot of

nostalgia, it was a great time to be in the foundation and we were doing interesting things. We were doing the democratization struggles in East Africa. We were doing the human rights work across various boundaries—the real issues around equality and equity. It was a great time. It was a good time.

So one thing was that I was never bored. There were lots of places to go. We kept going every weekend—my wife and I—well, the kids were growing up, so they could take care of themselves. You go from one place to the other and you visit. And you know, within East Africa, you have the whole cluster. You have Tanzania, you have Zanzibar, you have Seychelles. You have the Indian Ocean islands and then you have all the Rift Valley, right up to Ethiopia. And so it was a wonderful, wonderful landscape. And if you have a little bit of extra resources to engage there, it was a great moment to be there.

But it was hard work because—and then you had to get used to the American work culture. There was also the Kenyan work culture because there was a large group of people—Kenyans are very, very polite. They speak in whispers in the office. So coming from West Africa, where we talk at the top of our voices, this was new.

There's a very interesting book about Nigerians. We are very voluble and ebullient. The book says something about when two Nigerians meet abroad, they don't embrace, they collide, and recovering from the daze of the collision, shout greetings at each other [laughs].

So you came to a different culture, where people modulated their voices, where people are very, very polite prima facie, on the face—and where people are very different. So that was something to get used to. Then working in an American foundation, in an American, really liberal, progressive foundation, where you also carry a lot of prejudices and baggage, growing up in different parts of Africa. In that kind of context, you have to deal with prejudices around religion, prejudices around sexual equality, prejudices around racial equality. Ford Foundation was one context in which you were not allowed to bring your prejudices to the table at all. Whatever you felt—I mean, I worked with a grants manager, who was a very strong Roman Catholic, for eight years and until we were sending him off, when he was retiring at 65. I didn't know his position about abortion or contraception. He was a grant administrator in Ford Foundation because he kept that completely off the table.

It was a good—it was a very interesting context. So I enjoyed Nairobi, I enjoyed the foundation. In the foundation, I was able to stay ten years because you normally have two cycles, a contract of three plus four—three plus three because I kept shifting jobs. After two years, I became deputy regional representative. I moved up to the managerial level at Ford and then within one year, I moved onto the office for Middle East and North Africa. I moved to Cairo in 2001, just after September 11 to hold the office for about six months while they search for a new leader for the office. So I lived in Cairo but I didn't take my family to Cairo. My family was in Nairobi. I went off to Cairo and commuted. It was a four and a half hour flight. Occasionally, I came back every two weeks to the Nairobi office. But I actually was doing two jobs. I was still deputy rep. in Nairobi and acting rep. in Cairo. That was a completely different experience because I had to deal with the Middle East and with North Africa.

The work in that region covered Egypt and covered—we call it Palestine but it's called the Gaza and West Bank settlements—I didn't get a visa to go there because my first letter as acting rep. I asked to go to "Palestine." And Israeli authorities said, there's nothing like that. That does not exist. Then we corrected that. While we were there, you had a chance to go to Lebanon. Lebanon was recovering from the [Lebanese] Civil War but we programmed in Lebanon because lots of the refugee camps were in Beirut. That was one of the biggest refugee camps in the world. Then some other refugee camps were in Syria, Damascus. So it was also completely different. I mean, you know a bit of those parts of the world. It was a completely different experience, again, in that sense, of doing that kind of work. But then the political context was very different. Thank God for last year. The Arab Awakening, as it has been called. I used to call it the African Awakening because the Arab countries that really woke up were located in Africa, [laughs] not in the Middle East. They're not Arab Awakening!

So the context was very difficult. At the Ford Foundation in Cairo, all your grants had to be approved by the government. So we had this elaborate meeting twice a month with the assistant minister for foreign affairs. And she's francophone. She's Coptic Christian, beautifully coiffured, completely made-up, Coptic, completely bilingual. Correct in the old French diplomatic tradition—you come with your list of grants and they tick off. You tell them what institutions you are making grants to over lunch. It's always lunch at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I wasn't very comfortable with that kind of protocol. But I had to do it, which was one more reason I thought that was a very special position in the Middle East and North Africa. And it was something I would not love to continue.

But we found ways of making grants to the people we wanted to make grants to. So I came back to Nairobi and in 2003, I became the rep. The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa started in 2000. And it was here in this very building. I represented the Ford Foundation then because there were—how many of us came from the Ford Foundation? Susan Berresford, the then-president. Alison Bernstein, the vice president for knowledge, creativity and freedom. Myself, I was a program officer from Africa. And Jorge Balan, who was the program officer here. There were four presidents. My current president, Vartan Gregorian was there, representing Carnegie Corporation, the president of MacArthur, Jonathan Fanton, and the president of Rockefeller at that time, Gordon Conway. So this started the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, in which I worked, from the Ford Foundation angle.

Q: Could you give us a few details of that meeting, if your memory stretches back to that?

Aina: I remember that we were foot soldiers, so we didn't say a single word. The four presidents met. I think we had communicated and talked to each other. They had the vice presidents of the different foundations there who were supposed to work. But they agreed to work together. They agreed to contribute to the revitalization of African higher education. It was a very political program—very political in the sense that the rest of the world did not believe Africa should invest in universities and the private foundations did. The fascinating aspect of that was that three of the presidents of the private foundations were actually ex-presidents of universities. Jonathan Fanton was ex-president of The New School. Gordon Conway was ex-vice chancellor of Sussex, my old university. And Vartan was ex-president of Brown [University]. And Susan

Berresford—of course, she's been involved in Africa and she thought it was important. Anything that was going to make a major difference, she would always back. And Ford was actually the foundation that was most widespread on the continent at that time. It had four regional offices—five because it had an office in Namibia, too, and South Africa, on the continent.

So the presidents had agreed. They agreed that the first phase will be over five years and they will try to spend a hundred million dollars. They were reacting to the position by the international financial institutions—that's the World Bank, the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and the IFC [International Finance Corporation]—who are taking a position that it was in the better interests of Africa to invest in basic education, primary schools and secondary school rather than invest in universities and colleges. They [the foundation presidents] felt that no society can ever grow, can ever develop, if it cannot think for itself and it cannot produce people that can think for itself and solve its own problem. You begin to get a basis for being able to think for yourself and solve your problem through higher education. So they made that statement. They came together and then they left the rest to us—first, to the vice presidents and the vice president worked with the program officers and the directors across the four foundations to set this up. Later on, three foundations joined us over the years. In 2005, there was the renewal of the partnership.

Actually, it's fascinating because the partnership—the four foundations pledged a hundred million dollars and by 2005, they had spent actually more than a hundred million. They spent close to about $140 million, $150 million. They then went on to the second phase and in the second phase, they were joined by the [Andrew W.] Mellon Foundation. They were joined by

[William and Flora] Hewlett [Foundation] and there were three foundations. They were joined by Mellon and Hewlett and later on, Kresge [Foundation] joined the four foundations. So it became a partnership of seven foundations.

The initial thrust—the foundations had different agendas because there were institutional cultures that were different. So Carnegie worked in its own way. Carnegie worked really heavily, institutionally, in five countries at that time. I know that now because I'm here and I contributed to the reconfiguration. So I know that story. I know what Carnegie did between 2000 and 2008, just by the engagement with colleagues here and by reading up on the stuff. But Carnegie worked directly in five countries—Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and South Africa—and Carnegie supported eight institutions in those five countries. So Carnegie was really, really institutionally-focused—dig deep, stay long and work consistently and be focused. So in the sub-Saharan countries—Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria and Ghana—Carnegie supported what is called revitalization.

Let me go back a little bit. Before 2000, the key economic crisis had started in Africa for about two decades. Starting in 1974 with OPEC [Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries], when the sudden increase in oil prices led to the first major global post-war economic crisis, that was where the World Bank got involved with all of these countries and then led to what was known as the structural adjustment policies. The structural adjustment policies are the kind of thing that says, decrease spending, de-regulate, withdraw, shrink the size of government, shrink government investments, open up to the private sector—the kind of neoliberal policies that is really commonsensical now. But it wasn't commonsensical then because if you remember the

world, in terms of economic thinking, was broadly divided. The Soviet Union was still there—

don't forget that—so there was socialism, there was communism. Then there was social

democracy, which was basically Keynesian. The wealthiest states that you have in the U.K. and a

bit of Scandinavia—Sweden, Norway and a bit of Holland too—you have different forms of how

you deal with issues. So African countries could play between the more liberal, to the more

social democratic, and some of them were even communists. They were never real communists

but they claimed they were Marxist because they wanted resources from the old Soviet Union.

So that was the world in the '70s, from around '74 going forward. So the crisis occurred mid-

'70s. By the '90s, when they were coming there, these new adjustment mechanisms were there.

Cut out all this talk about states and governments. Everything was now market. Because it was

market, markets don't fund universities. I mean, you've seen the crisis in the state of California,

and some of the crises in the public universities here too—increased enrollment, reduction in

state support, high loans for students and all of those things where you don't have enough public

support for universities. Those were the crises in which laboratories did not have reagents,

equipment is no longer there.

So Carnegie really, really revitalized, transformed, helped to reconstruct laboratories, to build

computer centers and laboratories—and that was the new age, 2000, the late 1990s—the new age

of information communication technologies. From around 1993 to 1994, the email was coming

on. The desktop was beginning to emerge from the mainframe. The whole nature of working was

changing. So you could now talk about computer laboratories—and computer laboratories meant

you had about one hundred workstations. The desktop was a thing—it hasn't been displaced by

the laptops or the iPads or the little things that we all carry around now. But already, the fact of computerization, of connectivity, was coming in.

Carnegie, along with the partners, invested heavily—a substantial amount of money—in bandwidth connectivity for African universities. People here take all of that for granted. You go to a small college here—you are something, Columbia.edu. "E-D-U." You go to Connecticut.edu. I'm even reading now about how you can move your connectivity around if you subscribe to something. You can work from your bus if you're a student. I just saw that on the news yesterday. That is dreamland—really, really dreamland. In those days, even connectivity remains difficult because there was no bandwidth. It was very difficult for African universities— to even own an email account was a problem. The foundations contributed to transforming that. People are now beginning to take this for granted now, even on campuses. Of course, you have the clouds, you have the Yahoos, you have the Hotmails. You have all those things.

But the foundations did a major work with connectivity. For instance we, Carnegie Corporation, did fantastic work with revitalizing science laboratories—the Central Science Laboratory, at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife in Nigeria—which was a whole re-conceptualizing what it is to have a laboratory. In the old days, people had small laboratories—biology, botany, chemistry, biochemistry, physics and all of those—fragmented. But the whole concept is like the multipurpose building, that is the central science laboratory, where you could do your physics, you could do your materials science, you could do your biology, you could do your biochemistry, you could do all kinds of things with it. And the equipment is in different places. That was a Carnegie investment.

Another thing that was very important that was very interesting about the Carnegie intervention, which is different from the Ford Foundation intervention—from around 2000 in higher education Carnegie identified this cluster of universities and gave them planning grants. My old university, the University of Lagos was told it was $25,000. They thought that was too small. Why are you going to waste the time of the whole university to sit around on $25,000? But some other universities took the $25,000 each and used them for strategic planning and then came back with a proposal. So a handful of universities came back with proposals. There was the initial grant of $25,000 and then they did their strategy plans and then they came to Carnegie Corporation with what they wanted funded. So there was some kind of diversity in the different projects, the revitalization. Some people talked about the central science laboratory. Some people talked about the computer laboratory. And it was for the long run. It started around 2000. And some of them were just coming to the end—we came to the end of most of those interventions, the third phase, in 2010, 2011—very recent.

It was a decade of focused, systematic, consistent intervention followed by a kind of formative evaluation, an evaluation that followed and really identified dangerous points, identified problems, identified challenges, identified weaknesses so that they could be corrected. That was the interesting thing. The evaluations were not "gotcha" evaluations. They were evaluations that worked with you to see what wasn't working well and to stop or to correct mid-term what wasn't working well. There were three phases of the Carnegie intervention and the evaluation tracked all of the phases. I came in to actually do the meta-evaluation of all the evaluations and to get a final picture of what it was that Carnegie did in those ten years of support for universities.

I need to say a little bit about the different types of support. There were three planks of that particular kind of intervention. It was called broadly Strengthening Universities. But under Strengthening Universities, there was Revitalization of Universities. There was Women's Scholarships Program and there was the Transformation of Universities. The revitalization was basically the interventions that were done in Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana, the more sub-Saharan African countries where there had actually been tremendous deterioration and the decay of university infrastructure. They need to rebuild libraries, they need to rebuild laboratories, they need to create computer labs, they need to do all sorts of things. There were three South African universities and then five other universities—University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, Makerere University in Uganda, University of Ghana Legon was not bad, but there was University of Education in Winneba [Ghana] and then there was Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria and University of Jos [Nigeria]. Those were all the revitalization universities. Lots of things happened—new subscriptions to journals, new access to the bibliographic databases, digitization of books and journals, automation of the libraries. All of those happened.

Now, the other one that was really, really, interesting was how the South African universities were approached. The Corporation worked in three top South African universities. South Africa had a very interesting history pre-apartheid. There were historically white universities and historically black universities. Among these historically white universities were English-Anglo universities and there were the Afrikaans universities and they were the best resourced. Then there were the black and the coloured universities. So it was very stratified. You have blacks, you have coloured and Asians. Then you have white Anglos and white Afrikaans. You know,

there was apartheid and no intermarriages, all of those kind of crazy things across. Then no electoral rights for non-whites and things like that. But in 1994, there was also a war in South Africa, the War of Liberation. 1994 led to the release of Nelson Mandela and the formal end of apartheid. So the foundations, when they were investing in 2000, wanted to help South Africa transform its top universities so that South Africa was actually building a post-apartheid non-racial society—the Rainbow Society, as it's called. You also discover that rainbows have clouds and storms. They come after storms—the Rainbow Society. One of the things we did there was to help engage those universities. They come from interesting histories and cultures. They come from predominantly colonial European histories—very, very male-dominated patriarchal culture. The academy, the faculty, were men.

So it was not just a question of discrimination against blacks and racial—there was serious gender discrimination. Women were never comfortable in the common room. Some of the U.S. universities have the staff common room, which was very Anglo, very British. They have the senior common room. The senior common room was where the predominantly old men go smoking cigars and their pipes and women scholars had to be really male to be able to take them up. They are not welcome. So it was not even a question of your color or race. So you have these male bastions in the old universities—1880 universities, like Capetown, like Wits. We had to address that. The transformation was, how do we bring in issues of gender equity? How do we bring in issues of racial equity?

I guess we were ambitious. The foundations were ambitious. There were a couple of foundations that worked on this. Some of us were partners—Mellon, Kresge, Ford, the Corporation,

Rockefeller were partners. There were others that were not partners, like Atlantic Philanthropies.

We worked really, really, in a very assertive manner around trying to change institutional

cultures, trying to make the universities accessible in terms of enrollment to become more

multicultural, multiracial, multinational.

I believe that, one, there were design problems that we can see with hindsight. Then, secondly,

we were too hard on ourselves. We thought between 2000 and 2010, we should have really

massive results. In terms of the metrics and indicators, not enough changes have occurred. The

universities were not already sixty percent or seventy percent mixed. The faculty was still

predominantly white, old men. And all of those kinds of things. It's something to review. But the

foundations have also been a little bit timid about really, really evaluating that. We're just doing

a little bit of that now, the Corporation. We're doing a little bit of evaluation and research of our

transformation work. Some of the other foundations have not really come on board to do that.

Partly because there are success stories but party because we won't like most of what we have

seen. But I believe that impact—and that's a major element of what is happening today in terms

of the metricization of our work—evaluation is already central, like I told you. But all through

the Carnegie interventions in Africa, there was a formative evaluation going on.

Evaluation has always been central to the work of this corporation. And evaluation—there are

ways in which you can do evaluation. You can do evaluation as learning. You could do

evaluation as policing, in terms of policing the partner or the grantee. Or you can do evaluation

in the interest of foundation, not in the interests of the grantee. My own position is that you do

evaluations for accountability and accountabilities, mutual and collective. It should actually be in

the interest of both the grantees and the foundations. It should be mutual. It also should have learning and should also have, really, accountability elements. So we do evaluation for most of what we do with the work.

Then the third part, which I think is the feather in our bonnet, is Women's Scholarship. I mean, we invested heavily over ten years in undergraduate women's scholarships in the eight universities we worked in, in the five countries over the period of ten years. Young girls, who were smart—and we're not looking for people from outside to give them scholarships. We were giving scholarships to people who already gained admission into the university and who are going to be enrolled. But women would not have been able to have university education because they wouldn't have had the resources. Some of them—interesting stories. Some of them are really, really painful stories. Girls felt that they would have been married off by their stepfathers if they hadn't been kept in university by our scholarships. Girls were able to do engineering and the sciences. All kinds of stories. Some of the more interesting and unusual stories—girls would, even out of the scholarship stipends we give them, would deny themselves meals, would deny themselves cosmetics, would deny themselves new shoes and new dresses, even sneakers, so as to be able to send some money to their poor siblings to contribute to their in high school tuition.

So in many ways, we intervene in the lives of individual women or we were intervening in the lives of families and communities. You give somebody—in a very strange place like Uganda— you give someone a twenty dollar stipend and you thought they would take breakfast, lunch and dinner. There's a very interesting story among underprivileged students in Africa—they talk about minus one minus or minus one one. They're talking about meal times. So they don't have

three meals a day. Some of the students will not have breakfast, will have only lunch and a small snack for dinner, not because they are watching their weight but they are trying to make their stipends go farther because they're sending part of the stipends back to pay other people's tuition fees, to do other things to help their mothers, their parents, if they are from single parent families. I remember I was telling a story to a group about the scholarship and talking about how we showed a video clip from Uganda in which some of the testimonies the women scholars said, oh, I helped contribute to sending my younger siblings to school. They said, your scholarship must have been so generous. But they said, no. The thing was they denied themselves. So the stipend you gave them for them to be able to eat, they saved from that money. Instead of having a proper meal, they'll skip a meal so they could save money. It was that kind of impact, the kind of multiplier effect you had with the female scholarships. So that was one major plank and that's a plank that is so successful that we have been looking in recent times—in fact, we have come to the end of that program and we have had to do—again, some of the universities would not let this thing end. So Makerere University has set up a Makerere [University] Female Scholarship Initiative and a [Makerere University] Female Scholarship Foundation in which they are raising funds for themselves. We just made a matching grant to them last year of a million dollars, in which for every dollar they raise, we will match you two dollars, so that they can build that scholarship fund.

The other aspect of the work that the Corporation did that was transformational—really, really, really transformational—is the Public Libraries project. That is in the true spirit of Andrew Carnegie, who built hundreds of public libraries in the United States. The libraries were seen as very, very important vehicles of liberation, emancipation, access, individual and collective

transformation. I have a metaphor of the libraries as, apart from being havens, they're like cathedrals. They're like points of intervention. The way we worked with these libraries was that we were not—we moved away from the library in terms of access to poor people, by having the mobile caravans and all of that. The Corporation built solid structures in places, or helped to renovate solid, beautiful structures—well-equipped, digitized, mechanized, automated, connected. The principle was derived from the position of the president, Vartan Gregorian, that the poor also deserve beautiful things. The poor deserve to be in a beautiful surrounding. And it's a very transformational thing.

One of the libraries we have is in a shanty town in South Africa, Khayelitsha, in a township. Khayelitsha does not have very nice statistics in terms of crime and various things. But one of the things is that in the library, we are also having sections for preschoolers, for toddlers, for kindergarten. It's like playschool. There are beautiful, colorful toys and balls. They have pads and things, screens and things to play with. But before they get to the children's part of the libraries, they walked through the main libraries and walked through the volumes of books. So they see books. They see people reading. You begin, in a very subliminal way, to send the signals about a reading culture, about the library as a place to go. A library is also a very important place for the poor and the marginalized. It's a place where there's connectivity. There's a computer. There's internet. You could go and look for jobs, you could go read about advertisements, you could go write your applications for jobs. We supported that in places.

One other thing that is very hard for somebody here in North America to get, with regards to higher education, is the disparities between the lifestyle and the condition within a university

campus and the rest of society, apart from the minority of those people who are wealthy. Students tend to come from really poor and deprived backgrounds, where when they go back home, they cannot guarantee power supply because there's electricity outages. They cannot guarantee a supply of water, even in a pipe. They have to hang around the universities. If you want to do all your assignments, you can't take your assignments home and say, I'll wake up at twelve midnight and work until two in the morning. Or I'll start working at ten until midnight. You cannot because you cannot guarantee electricity. If you're coming from families where the room occupancy is seven to a room—I mean, it's hard for people to think about the fact that you can have a father and mother, three kids and maybe two other relatives, cousins, all hanging out in one little room, with a kitchen like a bed—what do you call, a bed seat [sofa bed?] here—with a kitchen and, at times, an external toilet and bathroom. So you're not going to switch on the light at midnight when six members of your family are trying to sleep. You either go read outside under the streetlights and be attacked by mosquitoes or you hang out there in the library, in the public library. So the public library was really, really a central vehicle, a central place for many things. It was such a transformer.

The interesting thing about the public library here—and one of the things that Vartan used to say—is that it's actually an equal opportunity place. The library does not care about your class, your socioeconomic status, your income level, your race, your religion, your color, your creed, your sexual orientation. You go into the library, you read, you interact with the books. You check the catalogs. You interact with a book. You can dream in the library. You can escape your shantytown background because you can read novels. You can read about better places. You can hope. You can engage the fact that another life, another world, is possible. And with the internet,

with the connectivity, you can not only just visualize that life from the reading that you do of novels, but actually click on sites that transport you to the different kind of worlds that exist for you. That's the transformational power of the library in poor, vulnerable, marginalized communities. That kind of intervention was very special for us and was much appreciated. We built eight public libraries. We contributed to the rebuilding, refurbishing, and equipping of eight public libraries in South Africa.

The reason why we did South Africa was basically, again, about commitment and ownership. South Africa provided us the opportunity because we were also thinking of the institutionalization and the sustainability of the projects. Libraries don't come just like that; they have to be consistently and constantly supplied with books, with bibliographic resources, information resources. They have to be staffed. They have to have power supply. They have to have electricity. They have to have cooling systems, air conditioners, for manuscripts and books. They have to have security. All of those mean somebody must deploy some resources. We don't pay for the staff. We provide the connectivity, the resources. We don't supply bricks and mortars. So we must have partners who will own the library, who will supply the extra staff. We encouraged, in all the eight libraries, a children's section. We were actually also very imaginative. It wasn't just the older children's section, where children go will go read—so your eight-year-olds and nine-year-olds—we actually went further down the line to toddlers and preschoolers. That meant new staffing. That meant new training. That meant new sections. That meant refurbishment. We needed partners who were able to do that. The local governments, the municipal governments, the provincial governments in South Africa were more willing than in

other parts of Africa, like Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria, where we were. So that was why

our public libraries program was essentially a South African program.

Q: Tade, the testimony you've just given speaks to remarkable impact and transformation and

between what you told us in this session and in the previous session, we now have a very vivid

mosaic of the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa. So as we come towards the end of this

session, I wanted to ask you a couple more questions. One of them is about the inner workings of

Carnegie, when it comes to talking about the initiatives. Given that the Carnegie Corporation has

higher education initiatives domestically here in the United States, higher education initiatives in

the former Soviet Union and so on, I was wondering what kinds of discussions you have with

your colleagues that cross regional boundaries. And to what extent they inform your work or you

inform their work?

Aina: Yes, we're part of the International Program and the International Program has the Higher

Education in Eurasia program. We are also part of programs in which what is done domestically

and nationally exists. So there are various arenas. I'm going to come to, actually, areas of

synergies, where there are various arenas where you get to learn and share about each other's

work. We have opportunities—we have program meetings, the international program meetings,

where we talk about our work. Then we have the board sessions, where we have the

presentations and we have the executive review sessions, where each grant coming up for

presentation to the board goes through an executive review. The program officers present

different grants and speak. So there's a whole lot of sharing there. Of course, we have our

communications and public affairs sector, in which you have the website and you have the internet, in which there's a lot of sharing.

Now, for us in the International Program, there's been actually a lot of crossovers. After the ten years of revitalization—and I'm going to come back to our program now because people will tell you that I need to put it in context—after the ten years of the revitalization work in Africa, I came in 2008 to move the strategy forward in another direction. After consultation and the needs assessment and visiting sixty-eight university campuses in Africa, talking to prominent secretaries, ministers, vice chancellors, faculty, foundation colleagues in the grant, we reconfigured our program to developing and retaining the next generation of academics and university librarians in Africa. So we moved to a next generation, we reconfigured. We moved out of five countries. We're still working in the five countries but in terms of principle and institutional partners, it was three countries. It was now Ghana, Uganda and South Africa. The work we were doing then was to have excellence and retention in post-graduate training and research. In that work, we had entry points. Apart from the institutional work, we work with disciplinary and subject networks to do doctoral work and master's work and have post-doctoral groups.

Now, some of work we did in Africa in this particular strategy had crossovers in terms of some of the work that had been done in Eurasia. For instance, we have a fellowships program with the American Council of Learned Societies, known as the African Humanities Program, which is to support doctoral and postdoctoral work in the humanities. The basis of that work, basically, was to reclaim the core humanities. Again, the intervention of the development agencies in Africa

had led to a way in which disciplines were not seen in their own purity. They were always instrumental. So when you talk about literature, it was literature for development. It was theater for HIV, AIDS. It was not theater as theater, as training for theater. It was not history in terms of capturing your own narratives, interpreting your own situation.

So this African Humanities Program, which we ran out of the American Council of Learned Societies—there had been a similar experiment with our Eurasia program in which there was a humanities program. We learned from the experiences in Eurasia and Russia and Eastern Europe. Therefore, what we did in Africa was built on that. It was basically doctoral dissertation completion and post-doctoral work. And we tried to work to build a community of scholars. We brought in supervisors. There were things they didn't do in Eurasia that we did in Africa because there were the specificities of the African condition. But there were the same managers—it was ACLS and it was the same program director. It was perennial epiphanies for him because he was working in Africa and seeing new things and then comparing them with what happened in Russia and places like that and seeing what worked in Russia and what did not work in Africa and what is working in Africa and did work in Russia.

So we've had those crossovers. A good example is also some of the work we did with IREX [International Research and Exchanges Board] which is support for leadership training in higher education institutions in Eastern Europe, which we're now doing with Africa and in which you bring people of promise to the U.S. for three to six weeks to go through universities and look at leadership elements and challenges. We're now doing that. In fact, we're giving grants that actually—first, the Africans by themselves and the Africans and the eastern Europeans and

Americans—there's a lot of cross-learning. There's a lot of relationship-building, networking and connections going from them.

Again, with the National Program. National program—there's a whole lot of school system designs. There's a lot of engagement with the community college. When you listen to the narratives around the community colleges in the U.S., they're so similar to the problems of the universities in Africa. So there's a lot of learning. Of course, in the area of technologies—bandwidth, connectivity, digitization and automation of all of that. All of those are works in progress. And how do you do this? Is it foundation, philanthropy, governments, civil society, markets? The National Program is experimenting with some of those things. Those are some of the questions that are important when you're thinking of ownership and sustainability.

For instance, our bandwidth program is no longer a philanthropic endeavor anymore because some of the countries, like Uganda—the universities have opted out of the foundation support because there are local providers, market-driven, that are providing—independent of the consortium—in a much more competitive and more what you would call a cost-effective manner. So people are opting out of the consortium to work with private providers. When we started the bandwidth connectivity work, people thought of satellites. Now people go from satellites to other forms of connectivity basically that are cheaper and more effective. So lots of things are changing.

Then, of course, some of the work we're doing in e-learning—I mean, TED [Technology, Entertainment, Design], the groups in California. The people that the National Program are

working with are some of the people we are thinking of working with in terms of platforms for

the delivery for learning and teaching. And the classroom is changing. I mean, I came in here and

talked about the studio environment. Part of what we are doing with the next generation of

academics now is that when I was in the classroom, I had to be a performer to keep my students

from falling asleep and from showing some interest in my lecture. There has to be a little bit of

theatrical elements—you know, the voice modulation, your body language, your movement and

the way you delivered your lecture. The center and focus as a lecturer—engaging with the

students, generating their attention. Today, you have a million and one ways when you enter the

classroom. You have the screens, you have YouTube, you have PowerPoints, you have direct

connectivity with the internet. You have something—I don't know if it's been developed in the

United States, which has been developed in South Africa—it's called the clicker, and where you

have the screen—if a student disagrees with lecturer, you hear BOOM. You know, they press the

button. It could be anonymous but if you want to be identified, then you can press something else

and then you have a question. University of Pretoria has developed that. It's all part of classroom

interaction. The professor of today must be versatile, technologically sophisticated, must be able

to engage in a ninety-minute session with all kinds of things. For that, amazing things are

occurring in the National Program. Amazing things are occurring here in terms of the

connectivity of all the New York high schools and the New York Public Library system.

It's the same kind of things we have done with what we call the Research Commons in African

universities. It's a current program. Research Commons is imbuing libraries with the

technological and managerial capacity to be able to engage the web—to be able to navigate

cyberspace and be able to access all the electronic bibliographical databases that are available

there. Now, it's more like an ocean. So you have stones, you have dangerous shores. You have

sharks, pirates—all sorts of things. You need some kind of guide. You need a disciplinary guide.

We are training new kinds of librarians in Africa to do that. We have a program for that out of

the University of Pretoria that is collaborating with the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor in

which we are training the next generation of academic librarians that are technologically

sophisticated and can work with the Research Commons. The Research Commons is basically

technologically-based, so you have all of the databases, but it's also aimed at supporting research

full-time, full-scale. And you have people who help the researchers navigate this.

But what we have done, we started off with connecting three of them—our main partners,

University of Cape Town, University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Witwatersrand. I think

we had three at the beginning. Then we included the three others, the top six in South Africa, the

elite universities—Pretoria, Stellenbosch and Rhodes. We helped them because there was the

leverage. For every three hundred thousand dollars that we gave them, they must probably put in

another two million—or $1.6 million. You have to build new sections. Then what we did, after

we had given each one of them a Research Common, was then to create what was known as a

research portal. A research portal then meant that if you're in Rhodes University—you're a

doctoral student or researcher working on any subject matter—you could not only access the

bibliographic databases of Rhodes Universities, you were also connected to the five other

universities or six other universities. Now we've done that for Makerere and University of Ghana

Legon. We have actually equipped them with Research Commons. If there's time and space and

the technological possibility, we would to connect those two with the other six in South Africa.

Already, the South African authorities are interested in connecting twenty-two South African universities. They came to us and spoke to me and said, look, you connected only the elite universities. Why don't you connect all of our universities? I said, well, what we're doing is a model approach. We work so that we have outliers—you can see how it works, if it works well and therefore can be an example for other people to replicate. So the South African authorities now want to build Research Commons. Several South African universities are developing their own Research Commons. The plan of the South African authorities is to connect all of them, or beyond the six. And can you imagine what kind of world that would be for a research student? Particularly, if you're actually in the less endowed, less resourced universities, you can sit in your own research common and access the bibliographic resources of the top-most universities, like the University of Cape Town? So that completely changes the nature of learning. It changes the definition of access too.

Q: Tade, thank you for that remarkably vivid answer to the question. And my last question is simply to ask you whether you have anything that you particularly want to discuss in finishing the session.

Aina: Interesting. I have been following the history of foundations in recent times, the history of philanthropy. I mean, you cannot but do that here. Vartan Gregorian is an historian. And this is the centennial—we had the centennial year last year. And the Andrew Carnegie book, Vartan's biography, the history of philanthropy—there has been quite a lot of movement there. Of course, when I was in the Ford Foundation, I succeeded my previous rep. in leading the African Philanthropy Initiative. So I'm actually really interested in how the system itself works. I believe

that we do need it in the United States today because the United States is the leading philanthropic context in the world.

The density of foundations here and the power of the foundations here—when you look at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, when you look at the interventions, the global reach of private foundations and the changes in terms of the history of foundations—we are the oldest in that sense. We were part of the Industrial Revolution foundations. We were created in terms of that major Industrial Revolution—steel, railroads, and the Rockefeller oil, minerals and then Ford automobiles. And now, we're with the internet, cyberspace, ICT [information and communications technology] city foundations. Each foundation is an accentuation, a reflection of the making of wealth and of the conditions and the dynamics of how wealth was made and therefore, reflections of the way the foundations work.

I think the world is changing. I think foundations have to begin to do a bit of serious introspection—but not do the introspection in a technocratic, easy way. I think we're still doing it in a very easy way. I don't think we're telling each other enough the hard truths about what works and what does not work. I don't think we're telling each other enough the hard truths about what the values are. I don't think we're telling each other enough about the underlying philosophical basis of philanthropic intervention—when so much wealth and so much power is concentrated in their hands and we are to engage the people who are poor, who are weaker, who are marginalized. We're not even pushing the values of humanity—not only of humanity but humility. One thing I was studying at the Ford Foundation is that because you give money away then you must learn humility. You must recognize the fact that you need to be humble because

are dealing with tremendous power. And if you're not naturally humble, you cultivate humility. I think it's one of the things that we need to talk about.

I don't think we're talking enough about what the practices, what the cultures of philanthropy are. The cultures are changing and we're not engaging ourselves because we give the money out to other people. So we look at other people. We're not looking inside at ourselves. We talk about equity. We talk about social justice. We talk about transformation. I think a major lesson for the future philanthropy of this country is to look at ourselves and to see how do the things that we preach to others, how do the things that we fund really affect the way that we are internally constructed—our own internal democracy, our own capacity for listening to each other, our own capacity for giving value to knowledge, to expertise, to difference, to diversity irrespective of how we are located in the hierarchies of these institutions?

Q: Tade, thank you very much.

Aina: Thank you.

Q: Thank you for lending your voice to the Carnegie Corporation's Oral History Project.

Aina: Thank you very much. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]