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IWU Council for Women
Illinois Wesleyan University

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2017 Council for IWU Womens Summit Recording: Debra Burt-Frazier and Kelly Fuller

Debra Burt-Frazier: This is recording of at the table recording our story, Debbie Burt-Frazier, class of '75 and Kelly Fuller, class of 80...

Kelly Fuller: ...2006

Frazier: ...2006 ...I'm sorry...[laughs]...

Fuller: ...[laughs]... it's okay

Frazier: ...for Wesleyan Council for Women, session on March 3rd, 2017.

Fuller: Yes. So we have a huge list of questions just to kind of sort through, so I don't know, do you wanna start a little bit?

Frazier: just start... just start.

Fuller: You wanna do the first question? Okay...

Frazier: You can give the first preference (??)

Fuller: Yeah... little background, I guess. My name is Kelly. My maiden name was Goodpastor when I was here at Illinois Wesleyan and then is now Fuller, now that I'm married. So I was here from 2002 – 2006. I came from the quad cities. My hometown was Molene, IL which is just on the western side of the state right off the Mississippi river, not nearly as exciting as everyone else thinks it is when you live right next to it and you cross it the daily basis ...[giggles]... kind of thing... um... but I came to Illinois Wesleyan. It was the very first school that I visited ever when I started my school visits and nothing else compared. So I kept comparing it to Wesleyan, nothing else matched... um... at the time, Wesleyan was the only school that I applied to go to, which probably was not the smartest decision in hindsight but I – everyone said you should have a backup school. I said, why! There's nowhere else I wanna go. Luckily it all worked out....[laughs].

Frazier: It sure did.

Fuller: So, yeah... so I came here and then I ... during my time, I double majored in International Business and French. I was gonna minor in French and then I found out I could fit the major in in four years, so I said, okay, let's do it...[giggles]... kind of thing, along with lots of other activities that I'm sure we'll dig into.

Frazier: Well, my story is a little like Kelly's in that I graduated from high school in 1971, John Marshal Harland that had the largest minority student admission ever. There were like 11 of us from Harland, our valedictorian, salutatorian, all among them and I only applied to two ...

Fuller: Okay.

Frazier: ...universities. One university and one college – Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa...[overlapping]

Fuller: [overlapping]... that's a good thing.

Frazier: ...and sight unseen, I chose Illinois Wesleyan because a good friend of mine – her name was Kathy Dancy - she was a sophomore at Wesleyan and she was our Methodist Youth Foundation Counsellor for Camp Wesley Woods. She stole all the benefits of Wesleyan so even before I saw it before I set foot on campus in August 1970, I – 1971 rather – I ... I was already in love with Illinois Wesleyan.

Fuller: Yeah...

Frazier: I'm from Chicago – Chicagoland area. Born and raised there and coming that 133 miles south along 55 and back then, it was much more arduous journey...[fuller laughs]... than it is ...[laughs]... now, but it was just far enough away from home ...

Fuller: Mm-hmm...

Frazier: ...yet close to home...

Fuller: Yep!

Frazier: ...to be perfect, and I never regretted it.

Fuller: Yeah. I was in the same boat. I came down 74, for two hours to stand, but that was the same reason, like August in a college, obviously, and the same, you know, the same district, I guess, or conference...um... and Augustana is 10 minutes from my parents' house so people were like, you're gonna go to Augie? Absolutely not! ...[laughs]... Mom and dad need to call before they come and visit...[laughs]... kind of thing. So two hours away was perfect, kind of thing, just far enough...

Frazier: Yeah.

Fuller: ...for sure...

Frazier: Oh, I forgot to say I was a double major when I began. I was English and Psychology but it was around my sophomore year that my advisor recommended because I had two completely different disciplines that I might want to consider the major one, and then minor something else so I chose English as the major, but journalism as the minor because it was not a major. You couldn't major in journalism but you could major in English...

Fuller: Oh!

Frazier: ...you could minor in it, so...

Fuller: Okay.

Frazier: ...that's what I did. But I don't regret that either because for the two years that I did spend in psychology, it helped me-

Fuller: -Oh, I bet, sure -

Frazier: -you know, in my career aspirations, so... that's a good thing.

Fuller: Yeah... that works.

Frazier: So now Kelly, what's your story? Describe one of your favorite things about the town where you grew up, only?

Fuller: Hmm... that's a very good question. It was not my favorite town once I came here. Well, I mean, just growing up there and being there for 18 years, I was like, Ah! It's not that exciting...[laughs]... I think what I go back for the most now, like having lived away from home for several time ...[Frazier laughs]... over 10 years, maybe right. There's still a couple. There's a couple that have closed, actually. But I do love some of the local food, like the local ice cream place which is Whitey's ice cream -

Frazier: -yes-

Fuller: And (5:37??) pizza and Rudy's Tacos and Hungry Hobo, which is a sandwich shop, Aida's Tacos – just all the local food places that I can't get anywhere else, are probably my favorite. I know growing up they did develop a civic center, a big arena – it was called the mark of the quad cities at the time and so that was really cool, like my very first concert was there, went to see (5:57-5:58??)-

Frazier: - ooh! -

Fuller: - when I was 10 years old...

Frazier: Wow!

Fuller: ...it was a very big deal ...[laughs]... so and then it since changes names but it's still there and they still have concerts and there's a semi-pro hockey team there, and you know, so going to hockey games. There was a semi-pro basketball team a long time ago, called the quad city thunder that – that's disbanded for a while now, so I think probably just doing that kind of stuff, I mean, they used to do this kind of big boat rigada on the river, like on 4th of July every year, which sometimes you'd go down to the parkway and watch the boats and stuff which is cool, so yeah .. it was ... I think I kind of took it for granted, like having the river right there because to me, it was just something you gotta get on the bridge just to go across... [laughs]... yeah, to get to Iowa. It wasn't all that exciting. But then you meet people who aren't from the

Midwest and they're like, Oh my gosh! The Mississippi, and I'm like, Meh! Right so I mean, I guess that is kind of cool. You just don't – you don't realize how cool it is when you're right there next to it...[laughs]...

Frazier: So like me being in Chicago appreciating Lake Michigan...

Fuller: Mm-hmm...

Frazier: ..You know, it's just awesome when you drive -

Fuller: - right -

Frazier: - when you drive through – like – when you're driving make sure you drive along it and glance over that -

Fuller: - I love like short drives.

Frazier: - and it is truly a great lake.

Fuller: Mm-hmm...

Frazier: But if you live there, I'm sure there are people who take it for granted.

Fuller: Absolutely! Yeah. I do love that drive on lake shore and I get to do it very often but coming and especially like in the morning, sun is coming up but it's not too busy yet, it's the coolest view.

Frazier: It truly is.

Fuller: Absolutely!

Frazier: I guess that's does lead me into my answer about the favorite things about my town is that it is truly an awesome place of art and beauty and landscape. I mean, Daniel Burnham, the great engineer architect of Chicago said, "Make no small plans," and by god, we did not

Fuller: True

Frazier: and so you can – you cannot go anywhere in Chicago especially in a loop...

Fuller: Mm-hmm...

Frazier: ...without noticing all those magnificent buildings and care and you know, the expert...ness of them...

Fuller: Right.

Frazier: ...and I do appreciate it and I appreciate the museums and you know, cultural centers and libraries and theatres...

Fuller: Yes!

Frazier: ... I know now-a-days, our claim to fame is something that you can be proud of, you know, the violence and – what goes on, the highest death toll in the country but it still does not deteriorate or take away – from me – the beauty of Chicago.

Fuller: Oh, absolutely!

Frazier: And I grew up on 27th street – 27th in state which is still there. It's a project called the Durban homes, and my building, 2710 is still there

Fuller: wow

Frazier: and

Fuller: that's cool

Frazier: and there's a school, Urban Prep is right around the corner and my son, who is a law student in John Marshall which is right downtown, he did an internship at Urban Prep and he would park his car right around the corner from 2710

Fuller: Oh, fun! That's cool!

Frazier: It was so cool and he would come home and say, "Hey Mom! I was right around your childhood building." ...[both laugh]...

Fuller: That's awesome.

Frazier: Maybe that was like our joke – our running joke is that I said, well you could probably see my window 'cause we lived in apartment 102. Our window faced north, that's, oh yeah ...

Fuller: That's very cool.

Frazier: But...

Fuller: Yeah, yeah ... I had the opportunity to do an evening event, since I do meeting planning at the shed, so the view from the shed at night, like overlooking the skyline is phenomenal, and you never get that because the shed closes at 5.

Frazier: Right.

Fuller: Either 5 or 6, so the only way you will ever be down there to get that view is if you're randomly standing outside by the shed or if you got an event you have a reason to be there and at night, it's the coolest.

Frazier: Yeah. And the music – they call it museum campus because the aquarium, the planetarium, the field museum – all of them, and then you can overlook so this field...

Fuller: Mm-hmm...

Frazier: ...and it is pretty awesome.

Fuller: It's so cool.

Frazier: Pretty awesome.

Fuller: Yeah. It was a lot of fun.

Frazier: So let's move to question number – do we say number 2?

Fuller: Yeah.

Frazier: Tell me something about where you are in the sibling order in your family?

Fuller: Mm-hmm... so I am the oldest. I was the first to go to college, the first to finish college, of course. I have one younger sister who is seven years younger so we had quite an expanse. I was, as I joke with her very regularly, I was almost an only child, because my parents had decided that they didn't want kids, you know, to be really far apart and so they were only ...[overlapping]... Well, no. I mean she was – they were trying, essentially, but they were only gonna try for a certain amount of time and they were like, if it didn't happen, then it doesn't happen and you know, life goes on. And she made it just under the way. So...[laughs]...yep... so I am definitely the oldest. I definitely have a lot of the older sibling traits, I think. I was in charge of her as the second mom when I was home. I think also because of that age difference. So there was definitely friction when we were younger but once I went to school, once we weren't living in the same house, you know and both kind of grew up a little bit, we have a really awesome relationship, so...[laughs]...

Frazier: Well, you and I have that in common, both of us, one of two, one of the pair and I too, am the oldest. My brother, I call him my bigger younger brother. He is three years younger than I but he is 6'5. He played football and he is an architect now, works for City of Chicago. I'm very proud of him. But growing up, it's like you said, the oldest was, my mom used to kid me and say, "He would do what you tell him to do quicker than you'll do what I tell you to do," because we were the original (12:29??) kids, before there was a term for it because my mother and my father are of Puerto Rico descent. He – they had separated and so we lived with our mom and I attended catholic school from kindergarten on through high school and we had to go to school and then after school we'd let ourselves in -

Fuller: Oh, wow!

Frazier: - make – do our homework, make ourselves a snack, watch television and so before they had a name for it ...[both laugh]... but we got – we got along famously. We still do and he is my best friend... and ... I think he is a great uncle to my kids ...[both laugh]... He has no kids.
(13:03-13:04??)

Fuller: Nice.

Frazier: But he is a good uncle.

Fuller: And he can focus on the nieces and nephews then ...[laughs]...

Frazier: Yes. Yes. He has one niece and two nephews. Yes.

Fuller: Very cool.

Frazier: Okay, let's see if I remember what our next question is.

Fuller: I mean I'm sure can we go jump around during wherever you wanna go.

Frazier: Yeah. What about that one which says, who has been the kindest to you in your life? That's interesting.

Fuller: I was gonna say – yeah – I don't have – I don't have anything that jumps out at me. I think different people have been kind in different ways...

Frazier: Yes.

Fuller: ...for sure.

Frazier: Right. I can't think of the one who was the most kind unless of course, you always defer to your mom...

Fuller: Right... [laughs]... it's probably a pretty common answer.

Frazier: Moms are pretty kind, you know...

Fuller: Right.

Frazier: She was. She was. She had a heart of gold. She – her zodiac sign was Li – Virgo. My zodiac sign in Libra. I was born in October. She was born in September and the Virgo is a loving, caring person yet a bit critical and she was a little bit critical, meaning that it was something she didn't like or bothered her, she had no qualms about voicing that

Fuller: Okay

Frazier: Then you know, and so, boyfriends ...[Fuller laughs]... Friends, anything, she'd let you know how she felt about it

Fuller: Right.

Frazier: But in terms of kindness, she taught me how to be kind. I can remember her instructing me to write thank you notes for gifts that I had been given and I passed that on to my children and she would always say, be sure to take that time to thank that person 'cause they did not have to do what they did for you

Fuller: Sure.

Frazier: but because they did, we need to show them a little bit of gratitude and ... in that (15:08??) write this quote

Fuller: Yes! Whether you wanted to or not...

Frazier: right. And now-a-days that is something that is so obsolete

Fuller: I agree. Especially a hand-written note, versus like an email or something like that

Frazier: You're not gonna find that...email maybe, phone call definitely but people do not do that and I try to pass that on to my children as well. Although nobody does it, those may be wrong ...[Fuller laughs]... but if everybody does it, it definitely doesn't make it right.

Fuller: Right. Yes. Yeah. It's been interesting to kind of see the evolution of just, I mean, I [got] a ton of handwritten cards when I got married, you know, here in...[overlapping]...

Frazier: Of course!

Fuller: ...a year ago, but that was probably the most I had done in years, you know, volume-wise kind of thing, 'cause there was a lot going on.

Frazier: And it is so easy. You learn that now-a-days with so much going on and people being so unkind that it is so easy to be kind.

Fuller: Mm-hmm.

Frazier: You just have to care.

Fuller: Right. Yeah. Be aware of that too, kind of thing. Yeah, I think... I don't know, I don't have any certain person that jumps out in terms of being kindest but yeah, I think, family – I think it takes a village as they say, so just everyone kind of contributing and raising their kids. I did a lot of camping with my grandparents when I was little, like 3-years-old little

Frazier: Really?

Fuller: But at the time because my parents were both working

Frazier: okay

Fuller: like weekends kind of thing so I didn't know that at the time but it was just, we're going camping with grandma and grandpa so they were really cool...[laughs]...

Frazier: yes. Yes. Your time with them – that days, you know, people don't get to spend time with their grandparents or those – their elders and if they do, often times now-a-days, the grandparents are parenting

Fuller: Yeah. Sometimes.

Frazier: for whatever reason, you know

Fuller: sometimes

Frazier: and that's...[chuckles]... that's not fair

Fuller: ...[giggles]... right.

Frazier: ...[overlapping]... 'cause they already raised their kids.

Fuller: Right? They already went through that. They shouldn't have to do around two.

Frazier: Right. They should be resting. You know, come and see (not sure) when they go home.

Fuller: Right? Exactly. They get to do the spoiling and all that kind of stuff, when they're grandparents. Yeah. I think that was – that was super helpful. Didn't know it at the time, but very helpful.

Frazier: Um... I think we skipped around...

Fuller: I'm sure we did.

Frazier: ... did we say, oh, what do you think your future holds? You get to go first.

Fuller: ...[laughs]... Well, I hope that it helps a very healthy child that's due in a few months, kind of thing. It's march right now, so... I'm expecting our first in August of 2017, which is very exciting. So it's a little scary. It's a little crazy but I'm just hoping that everything goes well between now and then.

Frazier: Oh, yeah...

Fuller: Let's see what happens.

Frazier: ...[overlapping]... and I can remember all the, you know...[overlapping]...[Fuller laughs]...30-something... actually, it would be 40 years ago because I had miscarriage first but then my daughter who would soon be 33 – yeah, those were ... those were trying times, some of them joyful times and your only wish was for a healthy child...

Fuller: Right.

Frazier: ...boy or girl, you don't care, you know, what the gender is. You just hope they would be healthy

Fuller: right

Frazier: ten toes, ten fingers, two eyes, two ears...

Fuller: Yes. Yes. Everything that is standard issue...[laughs]...

Frazier: Yes. Absolutely. And you know from your (18:49??) it will be so.

Fuller: yeah. Yep. So yeah, that's kind of our...immediate excitement, at least, for this year.

Frazier: Oh yeah. And your husband, I'm sure, he is equally excited.

Fuller: Mm-hmm...

Frazier: You know, dads – they play a big part

Fuller: Yep. Yeah.

Frazier: Now they feel like it or not, they do...[both laugh]... They think they take care of you while you take care of the kid, but they take care of the both of you while you take care of the baby...[giggles]

Fuller: Yes...[laughs]...Yep.

Frazier: Um... I think I hope for my future my hopes are more for my children.

Fuller: Yeah.

Frazier: They have my daughter, you know, that 33-year-old finds her true love or her mate and I see, give me some grandchildren...[both laugh]... my – my – my oldest son, my middle-child had already has done that. He gave me my first grandson and a youngest son who will soon be a lawyer and I know he anticipates having children he hasn't (19:55??) for me now, so I don't know...[overlapping]... if she is gonna be the one

Fuller: ...[overlapping]...see where that goes... yeah.

Frazier: I won't be too hopeful, but that – that's my – that I do have at least three grandkids...[Fuller laughs]... and that I keep good health even though I have a couple of (20:16??) conditions but I do keep good health and energy so I can enjoy that, you know, when they care (not sure, 20:23??)

Fuller: Yeah. Yep. That sounds good. My parents were in that same boat for a while, so I think very excited...[laughs]... there's finally something on the way

Frazier: it's between you and your sister, so...

Fuller: Right. And she is not anywhere near on any of that side...[laughs]... which she brought up when we got married too. She was like, thanks for taking the pressure off for the next few years easily.

Frazier: Yeah. She took the heat out. Yeah, now you got -

Fuller: -Yeah... so... absolutely!

Frazier: Um... what about ... I know this sounds a little (21:05??) at least to me, how would you like to be remembered? so that means-

Fuller: Right

Frazier: -you have to be gone ...[laughs]... to be remembered.

Fuller: Which is a little scary.

Frazier: Yeah.

Fuller: That is a good question. I mean, I think just someone that was kind of open – open and honest and helpful and... supportive – that kind of thing – there's nothing huge that jumps out but I think just all of those, you know, kind of put together, positive qualities...

Frazier: That's – that's – that's good because it's akin to what I would say that I hope that I am remembered well, you know, not – not – I don't have any reason to think I won't be but I guess I do want mostly to be remembered as doing good work now that I'm a teacher and I know I hold a much greater responsibility than other professions. I think it says in the bible somewhere that teachers will be judged more severely at the end because of what they know and what they should know and what they shouldn't pay us all and I do my best for my students to give it to them straight, use their tough love because a lot of times, you know, the students are a little (22:32??) about doing what they know they need to do but that doesn't stop me from doing what I know, what I need to do.

Fuller: Right. For sure.

Frazier: And I hope I'm remembered well. And that, yes, Dr. Frazier taught us, and I may not have appreciated it then but I do surely appreciate it now

Fuller: Maybe later.

Frazier: Yeah, that is why I'm hopeful. I mean, I don't care if they don't know it now. Or, I know it's no popularity contest 'cause I even tell them I don't care if you like me. I just want you to do the work. And so later on, they'd be really (23:08-23:09??) you were so hard on this. Because you really wanted us to know it, to be prepared.

Fuller: Right.

Frazier: I would tell them all the time, it's not just about here. The college is when you leave.

Fuller: Right.

Frazier: You go out into the world. All that you've learned here is what you need to be equipped with to survive out there.

Fuller: Yeah.

Frazier: It's like you have to graduate from here to survive out there.

Fuller: Yep.

Frazier: And so, these things go hand in hand. And they – my grandmother, bless her hard, she's gone and gone well, she used to tell me, you can show 'em much better than you can tell 'em.

Fuller: True. Sure. I would agree with that.

Frazier: And...[overlapping]... you know, it didn't strike me as being so true until you know, I teach in high school. I teach in middle school. Now I'm teaching college students that you can tell them and tell them the same thing over and over again. So finally, you just have to show them and let it speak for itself-

Fuller: -Right? It's true though-

Frazier: -cause it's just what you can do.

Fuller: Yep. Yeah.

Frazier: So I guess that's what I wanna be in.

Fuller: Yeah. Yeah. That sounds good. Just to say, it's not on here but I don't know if we should discuss any of this stuff we did when we were here at Illinois Wesleyan or stuff that we were like involved in, yeah cause I was gonna say that was a lot. I guess the most important, well what I

think the most important thing that I did was studied abroad. So I'm a huge advocate of that. It was a requirement for both of my majors so it was something I knew I was gonna do coming in. But I worked in the international office for a year and so I found how many students were sometimes discouraged from studying abroad, like by professors or different departments kind of thing sometimes, and I hope that is changed by now, but while I was here there were some departments that were known for basically saying that you know, you can't the same education or you can't get as good of an education if you don't take all of your classes here on campus.

Frazier: Really?

Fuller: Yes. Which was super discouraging and so it was – it was fighting a battle with certain professors in certain departments to really explain to students that if you do want to study abroad you can make it happen. You know, like, one way or another, you can make it happen. Credits will transfer. You can take, you know, certain classes in other places. You don't have to take them all here. So I'm really glad that I did that and I certainly urge every single student to do that. And as we were talking about – actually, it was one of my friends talking about living abroad and going abroad – it's the only time in your life when you can live abroad somewhere and not have to work and not have the same type of, you know, financial restrictions on you and pressures that you would have after you're done with college.

Frazier: Yeah. Plus you get a degree.

Fuller: Exactly.

Frazier: You're gonna pay but you're getting a degree, so it's different. Like I did internship at the Pantagraph when I was here and that was invaluable experience doing the city beach ...[Fuller laughs]...[incomprehensible due to overlapping]... but I got a grade. I didn't get paid but I got a degree and I got experience and something else you and I have in common is that I too was the first one in my family to see my college degree –my bachelor's degree-

Fuller: Yep.

Frazier: -and back then, Wesleyan was on 4-1-4 schedule.

Fuller: Okay, so yeah – a four month-

Frazier: -it had a four month semester, a January short term and then it had four month and they had travel back then also.

Fuller: Okay.

Frazier: Maybe not as much as they do now, but they did have it and they encouraged it. It's just that you had to have the finances to do that.

Fuller: Sure.

Frazier: And I had the best job on campus, as an RA from my last three years and so I didn't have to worry about that but I am now an avid traveler, you know, it's just...

Fuller: Yeah, you get that travel bug.

Frazier: Oh, I got it. I've got it Kelly ...[Fuller laughs]... and I'd go all over the countries, to Europe, to Caribbean. If I got the money, (27:21??).

Fuller: Yep.

Frazier: is a vacation travel, and so – and you're so right and then that there is a plethora of understanding you get from going to another country, seeing how other people live, things that you take for granted in your country , you see how somebody else is getting along without stuff that you take for granted.

Fuller: True. Absolutely.

Frazier: And so, there's just so much learning in not just travelling abroad but you know, experiencing other cultures and it's good.

Fuller: Yeah.

Frazier: It's a great thing and I would encourage that beyond Wesleyan.

Fuller: Mm-hmm... yes.

Frazier: So that might be...[chuckles]...since everybody is leaving-

Fuller: -[overlapping] everyone else is leaving. We probably have to leave to

Frazier: Yeah because it's 3:06

Fuller: Yup

Frazier: But I wanna thank you very much for sharing with me and you're welcome.

Fuller: Yup. Yeah. Thank you. It's fun.

Frazier: It was so much fun and hopefully our comments will help someone or at least, encourage someone who hears or reads them.

Fuller: Yes.