

The Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR TIM CARNEY

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Dan Whitman interviewing Ambassador Tim Carney. It's May 3rd, 2012 and we're on Capitol Hill. Ambassador Carney, you've done a lot of things. We're here to talk tonight about your recollections of South Africa and of USG (United States

Government) exchanges, and any other thing that you think might be relevant to this story.

CARNEY: OK.

Q: Why don't we start?

CARNEY: We might start with the reality that I had two postings in Southern Africa. The first one was in the kingdom of Lesotho from 1969 to '72. That was my second post to the Foreign Service arriving from Saigon, which had included the Tet Offensive. So I thought Lesotho would be tame. In fact, of course, Lesotho turned out not to be tame.

The elections, due as scheduled after five years, took place in January of 1970 and the, the government, the Basutoland National Party, decided to abort the elections in mid-count because they were losing. They used the judiciary to justify the declaration of the state of emergency. The Chief Justice, whose name I believe was Hendrickse, was a South African. The Lesotho Mounted Police -- there was no army in those days -- was entirely British officered. The opposition was thrown in jail, there were some serious incidents of violence, including a mini-rebellion by dissident miners up in the Malibamat'so region of the Maloti Mountains, at which the Lesotho Mounted Police threw hand grenades out of low-flying aircraft. So all in all it proved to be a surprising tour.

Q: I guess so.

CARNEY: About six months after I got to it I was forced to call the Regional Administrative Officer, who got an Inspector to come and ultimately relieve the chargé d'affaires (I was the number two of two) who had unfortunately become taken with drink, a process which had obviously been underway for many years, but which might have been accelerated by the stress of the situation at the time in Lesotho. In any case, I got to know a number of --

Q: I'm sorry, if he was removed, that makes you the chargé.

CARNEY: No, the chargé d'affaires was the Public Affairs Officer.

Q: I see.

CARNEY: Robert Cattell.

Q: Uh-huh.

CARNEY: Cattell.

Q: OK.

CARNEY: Because it was believed that -- in those days, of course, a Public Affairs Officer would not have been in the chain of command. But in fact, it was believed to be the sensible thing to do to keep the chargé d'affaires from carving me into little pieces for having turned him in.

Q: Oh my. I don't suppose it matters, where was the regional admin person posted?

CARNEY: In those years, there were charges d'affaires in the three former high commission territories, Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland. The AID (Agency for International Development) mission ran out of Lusaka. It was known as the Office of Southern African Regional Cooperation, OSARC. And the Regional Administrative Center was under the Counselor for Administration in Pretoria. I believe it was Leona Anderson at the time, sort of an icon in the Foreign Service. In any case, there was a lot of South Africa watching to be done from Lesotho. And I spent a certain amount of time in the nearest large South African town to Maseru, capital of the Lesotho. That was Bloemfontein.

Q: Right.

CARNEY: Which was of course one of the three capitals of South Africa.

Q: The judicial capital.

CARNEY: The judicial capital.

Q: Mm-hmm.

CARNEY: And at that time it was much more English than it became. The Bloemfontein Friend was a very well known daily with a considerable reputation. The town itself dated to I believe the mid 1850's when Captain Warden, who was the British authority of the time, decided that most of the agricultural lands of Lesotho should in fact be incorporated into the Orange Free State. And it was he who set the border at the Caledon River, thereby depriving Lesotho of huge acreage and a considerable population. Lesotho itself was founded by Sothos, who were on the run from Zulus. And they found a wonderful defensible hill called, called Thaba Bosiu that they defended against one of the Zulu clans that was itself on the run from either Shaka or his successor. So the posting gave me a look into Southern Africa. It brought me to the realization of the mix that South Africa was of the first and third worlds. It was, after all, the only industrial complex south of Milan in the hemisphere at Vereeniging, the iron and steel works.

Q: Vereeniging yes.

CARNEY: And at the same time, South Africa had a huge component of the third world.

Q: Right.

CARNEY: Indeed, that was one of the tensions between blacks and whites, which helped to undergird the concept and philosophy of separate development or apartheid.

Q: Mm-hmm.

CARNEY: That two-year tour ended with my dispatch back to the United States. And I basically did not get back to the region for another 11 years.

Q: Well, then let's dwell on this first assignment, the Lesotho, Maseru, assignment just a bit. And in these two, or maybe it was three years a lot happened. But again, we're here really to talk about what affect, if any, U.S. government exchanges may have had. Were there such exchanges with Maseru in the early '70s?

CARNEY: I simply don't remember.

Q: Doesn't matter.

CARNEY: Don't remember at all. I -- it -- Bob Cattell would have organized them, probably with the chargé d'affaires.

Q: If there were, I'm sure they were not vast. Maybe as interesting or more so, you mention watching Bloemfontein from across the border. And you said it was more English at that time than it later became, more Afrikaner I guess.

CARNEY: Correct.

Q: So your recollections of Bloemfontein, which is a beautiful place --

CARNEY: Oh, lovely.

Q: -- and the home of the famous novelist, Cry, the Beloved Country.

CARNEY: Alan Paton?

Q: Alan Paton is from near there, yes, nearby.

CARNEY: I didn't realize that.

Q: And when you say you were watching it, did you frequently go to Bloemfontein? It's rather close, right?

CARNEY: Well, it's 90 miles.

Q: Yeah.

CARNEY: My record for the 90 miles was 58 minutes.

Q: (laughs)

CARNEY: I was much younger then and I was driving a, a two-liter BMW, five-speed gearbox with a limited slip differential.

Q: (laughs) Excuse me. The -- we'll admit the laughter here. This is very rich. This is very rich, yes.

CARNEY: Yes, 20 of those miles were on dirt.

Q: You know, dirt --

CARNEY: Exactly.

Q: -- in the dry season can be a great place to be.

CARNEY: No problem. No problem.

Q: Yes, yep, yep.

CARNEY: What's amusing is that on one trip I was going to the airport and I was really, I was really hustling because there was a conference in Pretoria. I came around the corner and there was a flock of guinea fowl crossing the road. And they almost got their revenge for my hunting of them, because two of them bounced off the windscreen. And the guinea fowl is a big bird.

Q: I know.

CARNEY: And I was moving about 75, 85 miles an hour. Luckily, when I ordered the BMW, South African assembled, I had insisted on safety glass for the windshield, which was not obligatory in South Africa in those days. Laminated glass, that is to say.

Q: Excellent, excellent.

CARNEY: In any case, there of course were the signs, "Whites Only," the shops that had -- especially all the bottle (liquor) shops divided sections between blacks and whites. There was no intellectual questioning to speak of among South Africans whom I met, or whites in Lesotho, oddly enough, that separation was a good thing. In Lesotho, the casino would accept both black and white custom. It was a Holiday Inn and Casino, newly opened, just after I got there or as I got there.

Q: So this was the heyday of apartheid. This was --

CARNEY: It was indeed. But apartheid also, it went more or less both ways, because I, as I recall I had an opposite number in I think it was Swaziland who was actually asked to

leave because he being white had a -- or found a Swazi girlfriend. And that was regarded by the Swazi as not the thing to do. Now, I don't know why they regarded it that way. That question is open to this day.

Q: Interesting. So the reverse -- Swaziland is a kingdom and was then, I suppose.

CARNEY: Indeed. Sobhuza II was still alive and very much in good health.

Q: So they perversely maybe or --

CARNEY: Or, or they were importuned by the South Africans.

Q: Right, right.

CARNEY: I just don't know.

Q: I'm thinking of another case of, of Brooks Spector. You may remember the name. Brooks Spector was a white U.S. diplomat --

CARNEY: Who wound up married. He's in fact been interviewed in your piece.

Q: Yes. And had to go to Swaziland to get married. So things had changed. This was about --

CARNEY: Eleven years, yes.

Q: -- 15 years later. OK, so --

CARNEY: It sets the scene a little bit. It indicates that I -- when I came back to Southern Africa 11 years later I had a base from which to evaluate what was going on, that enabled me to become more sophisticated in my analysis rather more quickly than is normally the case.

Q: Mm-hmm. Now, you said that you saw no sign of intellectual challenging --

CARNEY: Correct.

Q: -- the system. Did anybody, including you?

CARNEY: But of course we had had Sharpeville.

Q: Sharpeville, yes.

CARNEY: We had had Mandela's trial and -- by '72.

Q: Oh, '72, OK. Soweto was '76, yeah.

CARNEY: Right. I was aware that, that in South Africa itself there was considerable opposition.

Q: Sure.

CARNEY: But in those days I never met a member of the South African Communist Party in those days, at least not to my knowledge.

Q: I'm not asking you about your own sense of future, prophes --

CARNEY: Right.

Q: -- but did you detect any -- even if they weren't in favor of change, did it seem as if anybody was imagining that there might be change at some point?

CARNEY: Yes. Perhaps the thing that struck me most forcibly was just before I got there, I believe it was, the Minister of Bantu Affairs, Piet Koornhof I believe it was, was in Lesotho and roundly criticized in the South African press. And I don't know whether it was the English speaking or Afrikaans press, for having either dinner or lunch with members of the Lesotho government. And he told the press, "You don't think I enjoyed that, did you? I did it for my country." Or words to that affect.

Q: I mean, the government of Lesotho is black.

CARNEY: Correct.

Q: So if you're going to have dinner with the government, it has to be an interracial --

CARNEY: Exactly. But the fact that there was any criticism of it is perhaps indicative of the mood of the time.

Q: Sure, sure.

CARNEY: Yes. There was no such criticism anywhere when I returned in 1983.

Q: Most interesting.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: I want to leap ahead, but maybe is there anything more to extract from the earlier -- you say this prepared you and left you in a more sophisticated -- a quicker learning curve than might have -- you might have had without this Lesotho experience. Lesotho's a pretty isolated, I want to say miserable little place. It's almost like an Indian reservation.

CARNEY: Well --

Q: It's desolate, it's dry, it's mountainous, it's --

CARNEY: It's -- Lesotho is, to the extent there's agriculture, it's sorghum, Kaffir corn in the antique vocabulary of white South Africa.

Q: Kaffir corn -- that's quite funny.

CARNEY: It's used to make the staple grain. It's also used to brew Basotho beer, that thick white alcoholic beverage that's actually a bit on the sour side, but fairly refreshing. It will never replace Belgian properly-brewed beer. But it was drinkable, I can assure you.

Q: (laughs)

CARNEY: Now, there was an irrigation scheme at the time, under which a massive dam or pair of dams would be built in the mountains of Lesotho and water diverted into the Orange River.

Q: Mm. And --

CARNEY: And that was ultimately accomplished. And it was a major combination of hydroelectric and water for irrigation that took advantage of the heavy rainfall and those mountains of Lesotho that had so eroded the peaks. But I can't think of anything more relevant to say.

Q: No, no.

CARNEY: I was very young, junior then, and my curiosity was rather more engaged with the history of Southern Africa rather than the then present.

Q: Sure.

CARNEY: Because Lesotho was not -- I mean once the elections were aborted and you got effectively an emergency government of martial law in place there was very little interesting in the politics.

Q: So the authorities were Basotho, but you said that the British were actually staffing the --

CARNEY: Correct.

Q: -- military.

CARNEY: They were from the Overseas Development Agency, I think it was called. It was either ODA or ODM, because they switched in --

Q: Right.

CARNEY: -- a number of years later.

Q: ODA is the more recent one, I think.

CARNEY: I --

Q: Yeah.

CARNEY: -- can't remember.

Q: Yeah, I think so.

CARNEY: And just as I say, South Africans were in the judiciary and there was -- and of course Basotho were in the mines, because the South Africans sought to recruit non-South African blacks for the mines. It was deemed too volatile, too --

Q: The owners you mean, the white owners.

CARNEY: Correct. And the government.

Q: Yeah.

CARNEY: And so there was a mine recruiting effort in Malawi, Zimbabwe, I think Zambia, certainly Lesotho as well as Swaziland and Botswana.

Q: That's kind of interesting. They didn't trust people from their own country.

CARNEY: No, it isn't, "trust," I think isn't quite the right word. Foreign labor was cheaper and easier to control, diluting the impact of an all South African black mine labor force.

Q: Mm-hmm.

CARNEY: So I, I put my, I put this as a thesis rather than --

Q: Yeah, yeah, no, absolutely.

CARNEY: -- a theory. But I'm pretty sure that the 150,000 who were in the mines in 1985, '86 were none of them from South Africa. It may have been that black South African miners were phased out.

Q: It's interesting. It is interesting that they -- well, let's skip ahead 11 years. You went back.

CARNEY: I went back --

Q: Actually, let's do this. OK, we're now on the second section.

CARNEY: All right. This is the second section of our discussion, which we'll talk about the years 1983 to 1986 and perhaps later.

Q: Mm-hmm.

CARNEY: I arrived with my then brand new wife, Victoria Butler, from Bangkok. I had had difficulty getting the approval of the Assistant Secretary of State for my posting there. He had a candidate that he wanted, but I guess that the fact that I got the job is some recognition that merit is of some value in the postings of the Foreign Service in the United States.

Q: Or was in 1983.

CARNEY: Because I had won the Director General's Award for Reporting. I had had a previous tour in Southern Africa. I was a Political Officer. I was at grade, which is to say I was just at the grade before promotion would make me a Senior Officer. And the logic seemed to be fairly clear that the person whom the Assistant Secretary, the redoubtable Chet Crocker favored, wasn't going to get the job.

Q: Wow. That's bureaucratically very interesting. I mean Chet Crocker, the author of Constructive Engagement and --

CARNEY: Could not -- could not sell his candidate for Political Counselor. Now, if it had been number two, that is to say, Deputy Chief of Mission, my guess is it would have been no problem. But Political Counselor is going down pretty far down in the weeds.

Q: You mean -- well, Political Counselor is a quite senior position.

CARNEY: Not if he's not a senior officer. And that position was not designated --

Q: I see, I see.

CARNEY: -- as a senior officer.

Q: So in that sense the Assistant Secretary was going down, pretty far down.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: Because if it was not a senior position, normally an Assistant Secretary would not meddle in that level of assignment.

CARNEY: Correct, correct.

Q: Yeah. Well, that's --

CARNEY: And I believe the assignments people were not willing to let him meddle that far down.

Q: OK, and you know --

CARNEY: Especially as they found someone who was -- or at least on paper better qualified than his candidate.

Q: Now, we know that Crocker had a special interest in South Africa. It he was told to by his --

CARNEY: Well, Crocker is married to a woman from Zimbabwe and he has a personal and direct interest in Southern Africa, and a particularly knowledge and recognition of the need to do everything possible to bring South Africa itself out of apartheid with as little violence as possible. I think there's no question that Chet Crocker's motives in Southern Africa were absolutely the highest.

Q: My sense also is that no one questions the motives. Plenty of people question the policy.

CARNEY: Exactly.

Q: And did then even more so.

CARNEY: Yes. The metaphor extends to this very day when you have entirely too many people who are willing to fight to the last South African and who don't understand that the way you get things done is by compromise and catching flies with, with --

Q: Honey.

CARNEY: -- sugar and honey rather than vinegar.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

CARNEY: And that it makes one feel good to put sanctions on and talk big, but it does not get the job done. And anyone in the United States, in my view, who thinks it was we who were instrumental in getting the change from apartheid into modern South Africa is a God damned fool.

Q: Good quote. And yet --

CARNEY: Instrumental is the operative word.

Q: -- President Reagan took credit for imposing an arms embargo. He -- Terence Todman once said at a press conference that this was effective in bringing change. I --

CARNEY: Complete and utter nonsense.

Q: (laughs)

CARNEY: The notion that a U.S. arms embargo had any impact at all is someone smoking the office drapes.

Q: (laughs)

CARNEY: What it effectively did was create an indigenous arms industry in South Africa that ultimately included a capability, the actual making of a nuclear bomb! It's -- and that is a classic unintended consequences of the foolish American congressional and civil society desires to feel good by babbling where there's no purpose served.

Q: Thank you for expressing yourself, Ambassador, in such a non-oblique manner. And now, but curiously, although I guess there was a moment of friction, I think you're saying that you quite honor what Crocker did.

CARNEY: Absolutely. Oh, I was part of constructive engagement and believe that you also needed it calibrated with the sticks, you must have sticks. Let me not leave you in any doubt about that. You must have sticks as part of the policy, because the Afrikaner politicians had to see sticks as well as carats.

Q: You've said though that the sticks, we take credit for poking them, we're not decisive in changing the system.

CARNEY: They were I think in many ways -- the biggest stick -- the stick that worked was when the International Banking Community decided in, I think it was 1984, not to roll over South Africa's loans, because it was becoming too great a credit risk due to the policies of the government and the reaction to those policies by black South Africa.

Q: Do you think that the United States intended to have that affect, or can take any credit for that?

CARNEY: It wasn't the United States that did it. It was the banks.

Q: Well, the banks in the United --

CARNEY: There is no bank of the United States.

Q: I see. Oh, so you mean national banks.

CARNEY: The various banks in the rest of the world.

Q: Ah, OK. Because the U.S. --

CARNEY: Which have South Africa's debt.

Q: Right, right. I mean U.S. banks have some connections with other countries' banks, but I see the separation that you're making.

CARNEY: Yes. I mean we're talking, you know, the French and the British and people like that, or Germans, Swiss.

Q: Well again, this may seem like a tangent, but it's too interesting. Do you think that the banks did this -- I don't suppose that banks act on morals. Not that they're immoral. But they act on what they --

CARNEY: On the interest of the depositors and their shareholders --

Q: -- think would be the interest of the depositors. And you say the tipping point then in 1984 was that they believed, the banks from other countries believed that the system was --

CARNEY: was unraveling.

Q: The future --

CARNEY: Was unraveling.

Q: -- was unraveling. Most interesting.

CARNEY: And the -- and the evidence was very clear. P.W. Botha in 1983 --

Q: Mm-hmm.

CARNEY: -- decided to add Indian and colored, and I'm using the South African terms --

Q: Right, right.

CARNEY: -- that are defined in your, in your treatise --

Q: Yeah.

CARNEY: -- Chambers of Parliament, but not a chamber for black South Africans. He just, in my view, was simply not able to overcome his own background and family history. And that sparked a grievous uprising -- uprising's too strong. Let's say grievous consequences from black South Africa. It included necklacing, it included events that at

one point caused then Bishop Desmond Tutu himself to go to a funeral in Duduza, I believe it was, and say that if this sort of thing and he was talking about the necklacing of a young woman, continues then he would, as much as he regretted it, he would have to take his family and leave South Africa. That sort of thing I think caused the banks --

Q: Mm-hmm.

CARNEY: -- to stop South Africa's credit when it was becoming impossible.

Q: So interestingly, this is 10 years before the change, 1984. So in a sense the banks may have had more insight to the future, the social and political future, than the social and political observers.

CARNEY: I could entertain that as a hypothesis. In any case, one of the significant things that the United States had been doing, as I understood when I arrived, because one of the roles of the Political Section was to help vet candidates for the International Visitor Program --

Q: Mm-hmm.

CARNEY: -- was to send mainly white South Africans overseas to the United States so they could see what a multiracial society was like and learn that it wasn't the end of the world as they saw it. There were a huge number of people who went. They included, as we all know, F.W. de Klerk in 1976, the two of the young men in the, in the then National Party who helped negotiate the elections, Leon Wessels, who at one point was Deputy Foreign Minister, Roelf Meyer, whom one Afrikaner journalist interestingly enough described to me in 1986 as a "sissy-boy" when the effort to deal with the ANC (African National Congress) in Zambia by the South African press started. Roelf was not out front as a Member of Parliament in approving that.

You had, for another example, a fellow in the very first South African family that my wife and I met in Pretoria in 1983, the late -- alas, he died in August of last year -- Deon du Plessis -- who was Deputy Editor of the Pretoria News then. He had gone to the United States under that program. And in fact, he dined out on one of the stories from the program. He and some two dozen from various countries who had opted for American power as their primary interest, were taken down to Norfolk and they were given a tour of the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Constellation, I think it was, which was in port. And they toured the carrier from stem to stern. And this was, this was at the -- just after the Falklands War ended, so we can probably date, date that.

Q: '82 or something.

CARNEY: Exactly.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

CARNEY: Having toured the ship, they went up to the bridge, and the captain came out with scrambled eggs all over his baseball cap to explain the role of the carrier battle group, the projection of power, the use of frigates and submarines as the screen. And, when he concluded he asked if there were any questions. And Deon was the first hand up. The captain said, *(in gruff voice)* “What’s that question, boy?”

Deon said, “Captain, given the experience of the British Navy in the recent Falklands conflict, don’t you believe that the day of the capital ship is pretty much over?”

Captain of the Enterprise said, “Son, this ain’t the British Navy. It’s the real fuckin’ thang.”

Q: (laughs) So much for the 18th and 19th centuries.

CARNEY: And Deon dined out on that regularly and --

Q: Excellent.

CARNEY: -- in South Africa. Those four people -- oh, there’s one other person that my wife ran into. She actually had her visa, a work permit as a journalist in South Africa due to the era of good feeling with the beginning of constructive engagement in 1983. And she was at the Stellenbosch Wine Auction in I think 1984 and met the owner of numerous shebeens (speakeasies) in Soweto and Johannesburg named Lucky Michaels. And he had been in the States. Now, I don’t know if he was there under the program.

Q: Doesn’t matter.

CARNEY: I guess he was.

Q: Doesn’t matter.

CARNEY: But he had such a good time. And his joke, and this is how the South Africans are so similar, his joke was they were driving through Oklahoma or Texas and stopped for a meal. And they were in the restaurant, which was attached to a gas station or something and the owner came up to him and said, “Boy, we don’t serve no niggas here.”

Lucky Michael said, “It’s OK, I don’t eat ‘em.”

Q: (laughs)

CARNEY: *That’s* what makes South Africa the place that it is.

Q: Yeah, absolutely.

CARNEY: It’s that combination of to the point humor and let’s get something done.

Q: A Boer makes a plan...

CARNEY: Exactly, exactly.

Q: *Yes, this is marvelous. And their humor, which through the worst times was maintained.*

CARNEY: Lucky Michaels of course is, I think, Zulu.

Q: *Fantastic, I mean and --*

CARNEY: South African.

Q: *And the name of the filmmaker is evading me, "The Gods Must Be Crazy," and all the other -- Dion -- Leon -- or something. Throughout the worst -- of all races, I think, were willing and eager to have a marvelous time joking about their ridiculous plight. They were quite --*

CARNEY: Yes. And this is not to deny the anger and --

Q: *Understood. Understood.*

CARNEY: -- the hurt and, and some people, and I think I can name Winnie Mandela, most prominently, could not deal with the combination of adulation that she got as being the wife of the imprisoned figure, and oppression, which she was under from the authorities.

Q: *Right.*

CARNEY: House arrest, Brandfort of all places, and the (Orange) Free State as, as where she had to live. Pity, but it makes her no less bad a person to understand why she became that way.

Q: *Now, from my years in the late '90s there, I remember her as having been a bit acidic, a bit toxic. It was alleged that she may have murdered a young man --*

CARNEY: Well, there was a trial. Wasn't she found guilty?

Q: *I don't remember. But when you say it's not -- she wasn't -- in other words, she was under such enormous pressure that it was understandable that she would have peculiar behavior.*

CARNEY: Very few personalities are strong enough to handle that combination in my own view.

Q: *Mm-hmm.*

CARNEY: I mean look at all the ambassadors we've got who, who think that the title "Excellency" actually describes them.

Q: (laughs) Another coffee mug slogan. Definitely to be --

CARNEY: No, it's power corrupting. And it does.

Q: Yeah. With degrees. Sometimes ignorance is the worst thing that happens to a person, and arrogance -- murder is another matter.

CARNEY: Exactly.

Q: If that's what she did.

CARNEY: If all was accomplice --

Q: (coughs)

CARNEY: -- retrospect.

Q: I think it may have been more direct than that, but -- well, fascinating. So you --

CARNEY: Now, all right, so let me continue the thought. My understanding of the program, while arriving and being introduced to it, Bob --

Q: Gosende?

CARNEY: Gosende and Marybeth were there was the quintessential USIS (United States Information Service) couple, was that it was heavily focused on getting white South Africans who needed to go to see what the U.S. was all about, with all of our warts and, and inability to move quickly in bringing about racial justice in the United States.

Q: Was there some consensus in the embassy that that was the proper thing to do?

CARNEY: Yes. I think it was complete -- Herman Nickel, who was ambassador then, certainly believed that. And remember, he had been there as Time Bureau Chief and expelled in the early mid-'60s. So he completely, and having been one of the early members of the -- it was the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in the late '40s. He was very much -- he had in the forefront in his mind this issue of, of, of racial justice. And --

Q: Well, just so I'm clear about my question. Later, in later years, PD (Public Diplomacy) and USIS Officers did voice the opinion that whites had run the course and it was more important to send the future black leaders. And now, you had to have the belief

that there was going to be a change in order for that approach to make any, any sense. But you're saying that in the early '80s --

CARNEY: Mid '80s, early to mid '80s.

Q: Mid '80s. That it was --

CARNEY: The belief was you had to send the whites --

Q: Send the whites because these are the --

CARNEY: No one at that time thought apartheid would be over.

Q: Right.

CARNEY: During that millennium.

Q: Right. That's a most important point to stress. And so if no one believed it would change, what was the idea in enlightening the people in possession of the power?

CARNEY: To move the change as, as we could. That was certainly how I saw it, and applauded it.

Q: OK. And you think your USIS colleagues thought the same way. I mean I don't know otherwise.

CARNEY: Yeah, I don't know otherwise.

Q: Yeah.

CARNEY: But I don't think I ever discussed it with -- it seemed so obvious that I don't -- I never questioned it or what have you.

Q: Sure, sure. It was during this period actually that Operation Crossroads Africa began and -- but that was -- that was kind of a tangent, I think. I mean it was a wonderful, enlightened tangent.

CARNEY: I know, but I didn't -- what did impinge on me were the Sullivan Principles.

Q: OK.

CARNEY: Which were vital, at least for the U.S. policy, because it would get the employers in South Africa providing appropriate treatment to the, to the workers and the factories.

Q: When you say impinged on you, what do you mean? Did it limit your choice and the range of IV (International Visitors) candidates that you could --

CARNEY: No, nothing like that. It just -- it, it was such a good idea, it was such -- you had, you had to foster the Sullivan Principles, which was easy to do. It was so clearly the right thing to do. And I might have even have met Leon Sullivan at one point, but.

Q: Probably did. I mean he used to have this yearly so-called summit. He called it a summit, but it was his associates. I mean and I know that you're aware that some people said that the Sullivan Principles, by improving the system slightly, were only perpetuating it.

CARNEY: More palliative, in other words.

Q: Yes, yes. There was that argument.

CARNEY: Now look, the arguments were very clearly drawn on the best way -- the most effective way even to, to deal with the injustice and the need to see apartheid abandoned and changed. And all those people, I put -- I lump all those people in the anti-Sullivan Principles camp, with the people who wanted to feel good by bashing.

Q: Mm-hmm.

CARNEY: Rather than by drawing white South Africans forward. The other thing is it did not take more than a month in 1983 to figure out that English speaking South Africans were the least valuable ally in the fight against apartheid.

Q: Please explain.

CARNEY: Well, as Helen Suzman put it one time, all these English-speaking South Africans tout the (opposition) Progressive Federal Party during the day and before they go to bed at night pray that the Afrikaners will keep power.

Q: Helen Suzman said that?

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: Oh, that's brilliant (laughs).

CARNEY: And because -- and the head of Sigma Motors, this is wonderful story. I think a week or 10 days of arriving in Pretoria in 1983, the Economic Section Chief, I think it was, Lloyd George, who was a contemporary, invited Vicki and me to join him and his wife with the head of Sigma Motors and his wife at the State Theater in Pretoria. And I mean this -- we weren't there 10 days, it couldn't have been two weeks even. And afterwards we had dinner together and, and Vicki was asking, as a journalist tends to, all those questions to find out who these people were. And she was astonished to discover

that they'd been in South Africa for more than 20 years and still held British passports. And, and she said, "Well, why would you come here for 20 years and not want to become," -- why have you stayed, in other words?

And he said, "Why, my dear, it's because this is the best possible place for a white man." And you know, that -- thank God he was candid because it helped us understand the dynamic in South Africa, the racial, political dynamic on the white side. And it was after that that Vicki and I focused by far the majority of our attention on Afrikaners.

Q: Now I understand better the comment that you made some weeks ago about highlighting the role of Afrikaners in this project.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: They were there to stay. They were --

CARNEY: Exactly.

Q: -- South Africans.

CARNEY: Exactly. They *are* South Africans.

Q: And to this day they say we have nowhere else to be.

CARNEY: It isn't even that. It's we are here, this is we. It isn't we won't -- they don't think of going anywhere else, except of course if they've got small children, and then they're looking maybe at more opportunity by going to Oz (Australia) or someplace like that.

Q: OK, section three. We're looking at what motivates Afrikaners. You've said -- and this is my experience too -- they're strikingly candid. Their humor goes to the solar plexus.

CARNEY: We need to go back to part two.

Q: There's --

CARNEY: There's one very telling decision that was made in I believe it was 1985 by State President P.W. Botha. One of his staff was sent on the IV to the States, and he was very interested in genealogy and spent a lot of time out on Salt Lake City. He got back and by then more and more sanctions were being put on South Africa. And P.W. declared that henceforth no senior civil servants would accept any IV --

Q: Ooh. Ooh, ooh.

CARNEY: -- grants.

Q: A nerve, you hit a nerve here.

CARNEY: Exactly. A clear -- in my understanding, it's -- now this was '86 maybe, early '86, that my analysis of it was -- my instant analysis -- they figured it out, and they don't want any more people being influenced by America.

Q: Then became the cat and mouse game of the American embassy I think doing -- very cleverly --

CARNEY: '86 we're talking about.

Q: 86, but I think this was true before and after as well.

CARNEY: Mm-hmm.

Q: In brinkman -- I would call it brinkmanship, actually. Blacks, whites, coloreds, Indians, in many cases the government really didn't want them to go. But in some cases, USIS managed to outsmart them. But not to tease out anecdotes that may be from a different period, but I think that's one of the things that the U.S. embassy was able to do, and that's sort of one reason we're doing this project. So we're getting into the mind of the Afrikaner.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: He's there to stay, he's perhaps a racist according to many definitions of that, and yet, we're both met Afrikaners who say, "I played barefoot with my black neighbors."

CARNEY: Yes, exactly. Or I even have suckled at a black nursemaid's breast.

Q: What's truth of that?

CARNEY: The truth of that is that racism in South Africa is different from racism in America. And I, I haven't -- I haven't figured it all out by any stretch, but some of the elements of it are that blacks were regarded in South Africa as not only culturally different, but economically different, and you didn't want to be at that level if you could help it. There was less of the American view, that blackness is ugly in South Africa. And I had this discussion many times with, with black and white South Africans. Trying to get at where the difference is. Because it's so easy to use the word racism without understanding all that's implied from a given cultural perspective.

Q: And I think we both heard -- I guess we've both heard stories of Afrikaners, which I played barefoot with these nice neighbors, they were black, I know them better than my English speaking counterparts do. Was this a fantasy?

CARNEY: Not entirely. There was a certain idealized and maybe even patronizing aspect to that sort of argument. And the best way I can illustrate it is all of those white South Africans in the Cape, who would talk about “onze kleur,” **our** coloreds.

Q: Ah yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I mean it's not the role of the interviewer to tell a relevant joke, but I think we've both heard the one about the black South African in the home of a white. If it's an English speaking white person they will say, "Perhaps you would be more comfortable in the other chair."

The Afrikaner will say, "Get your ass out of this chair and go to the other one." It's a more direct --

CARNEY: Well, the follow up on that is -- let's see if I can remember the story. Is, is the workman comes to the door and says, “Baas, can I have some tea?” And the Afrikaner pulls the mug out, gives the guy some tea, rinses it, puts it back on the shelf. Whereas the English speaking South African takes the cup and tosses it in the trash.

Q: (laughs) Delicious stereotypes.

CARNEY: Yes, exactly. Of course they all have some reality in --

Q: Stereotypes come from somewhere, yes.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: So it's an ambivalence that I know I have, and maybe you do too, towards the whole Afrikaner experience. I greatly admire them --

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: -- in their boldness and their willingness to fight the British and the stolid ability to be brave. And then on the other hand, their abuse of their countrymen.

CARNEY: And of themselves. Because they're classless people for the most part. I mean this is rolling in the street, bare knuckle kind of culture.

Q: Yes, yes. With tons of domestic violence.

CARNEY: And all those suicides.

Q: Yes.

CARNEY: The whole family. And then the breadwinner.

Q: Something most fascinating about this. What was it? The pressure, the pressure -- well, we don't know. But it's just a fascinating thing to observe. And the British came

later and looked pretty good, nice prosperous country; it was part of the empire until they were banished from the Commonwealth. When was that, the '70s or the '80s?

CARNEY: I think they took themselves out.

Q: Oh, OK. I don't know.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: But there was a falling out. As you say, there were Brits that stayed --

CARNEY: Well --

Q: -- because there was sunshine and wealth and privilege.

CARNEY: The British Embassy was terrified that all the white South Africans who could potentially claim to be British subjects would decide to go home. We're talking millions of white South Africans.

Q: Talking about the loans coming due.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: Remarkable. And by the way, again, the stream of consciousness, in the '80s did the embassies still go back and forth?

CARNEY: Oh yes, of course.

Q: And keep on to Pretoria?

CARNEY: Sure does.

Q: Because later -- yeah. Well, the ambassador does. The --

CARNEY: The DCM --

Q: -- capital of South Africa I guess is Pretoria now. But this, this is a different -- this was pre-elections, pre-ANC.

CARNEY: Oh yes, goodness.

Q: Of course.

CARNEY: I was back for that, in fact. That was my third --

Q: For the inauguration.

CARNEY: I was back for the -- attached to the UN (United Nations) for Mandela's election. It was my third --

Q: Fantastic.

CARNEY: -- South African posting.

Q: Gosende was there also in a different capacity. I don't know if you ran into each other. There were a lot of people at that time, yeah.

CARNEY: Yeah, I didn't remember that.

Q: Well, we're still on what ticks in the mind of an Afrikaner. And the fact that you saw a logic in bringing I think Afrikaners and English speakers to the U.S. to see an alternative to their system and that --

CARNEY: The other thing is I could see so many Afrikaners who had either figured it out or were beginning to figure it out. Pete Muller of daily Die Beeld went to Lusaka to interview the ANC in '86, I think it was, early '86. And the whole thing was unraveling. Vicki was interviewing the Minister of Justice, the late Kobie Coetsee. And she almost mouse trapped him into admitting he was seeing Mandela.

Q: Wow. That early.

CARNEY: Yeah, this is '86. And of course they were talking to Mandela.

Q: Yeah. That's eight years before -- four years before his release.

CARNEY: Yeah, '90.

Q: Release was '90.

CARNEY: Yeah, when F.W. De Klerk released him. '92 maybe?

Q: '92, yeah, maybe -- February '92, yeah.

CARNEY: You know, but he had been moved to Pollsmoor by then.

Q: Mm-hmm, in _____.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: Which is now a hotel, I think.

CARNEY: Is it?

Q: Yeah.

CARNEY: Wonderful.

Q: I stayed there.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: Is it your impression -- I mean can we -- I'll talk to Bob Heath about this, who gave the ticket to F.W. The famous anecdote about F.W. going -- did you say '76?

CARNEY: '76. I googled it today. That's how I know the date.

Q: Really? And did you -- what's your impression or knowledge about his change?

CARNEY: OK. First of all, I did not meet F.W. de Klerk when I was Political Counselor. His wife was a notorious "Kappe Commando". Kappe being the bonnet, you know. So she was just absolutely, you know, 110% total apartheid Afrikaner. The late Marika. As you know, they divorced and then she was murdered a few years later.

Q: Oh yes.

CARNEY: By someone who was working around her flat, I think it was. Now, I also had an interesting story from one of the journalists who was talking with De Klerk at an interview with a number of other journalists. And this would have been '85 I think it was. He had become head of the Transvaal wing of the National Party. Very powerful position. And that's what he used as a springboard to become head of the National Party when P.W.'s health caused him foolishly to think he could drop the party leadership and still remain state president. And my source basically asked, "OK, this is all very well and good, what you're saying, but does not survival of the Afrikaner require domination?" Because that was the mantra of the strong apartheid wing of the, of the National Party. And apparently, de Klerk as I recall waffled in his answer on that.

Q: Wow.

CARNEY: And of course now we know that he waffled because he couldn't publicly --

Q: Say what he was doing, because he was negotiating.

CARNEY: Well, he wasn't negotiating then, because remember, we're talking 1986.

Q: Ah yeah, yeah, yeah.

CARNEY: He had no -- or '85 -- he had no thought that he might be state president, much less leader of the, of the National Party at that point.

Q: Right. You don't say these things and survive an Afrikaner --

CARNEY: Correct, yeah. P.W. Botha would have had his guts for garters literally if he'd gone off the reservation there.

Q: Yeah. But you're saying then that this was what, six years after he went to the U.S.

CARNEY: Ten.

Q: Ten.

CARNEY: Right.

Q: And there were implicit signs that he had changed.

CARNEY: Yes, but because I didn't know him I can't point to any.

Q: Sure, sure.

CARNEY: Yeah.

Q: What about some of the others that you've mentioned.

CARNEY: I knew Leon Wessels had changed because he was the last person whom I saw in my role as Political Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria. He took Vicki and me out to dinner in Cape Town, and it would have been June of 1986. And we sat there and he said, "You know, basically we put apartheid together and we will dismantle it as completely as we put it together."

Q: Now, we can't take complete credit for that, but I guess is it your impression that his trip to the U.S. accelerated that type of thinking?

CARNEY: Yes. His and Roelf Meyer's and all of those white South Africans who went to the States. Because the biggest thing that I can recall anybody ever saying, and again, I can't remember who said it is, "You all didn't try to hide what's wrong in America from us. You just let us see what was going on. And that was the powerful message."

Q: One gets emotional because I'm not sure we have such a program anymore. Exact -- we do, of course, but not quite --

CARNEY: Not focused like that.

Q: Well, not completely free of political content.

CARNEY: Well, now let me suggest that the political content in our program in South Africa was infinitely greater than it was anywhere else in the world.

Q: I don't dispute that. And I was --

CARNEY: Yeah, right.

Q: -- I inherited that. Maybe Eastern Europe.

CARNEY: Maybe Eastern Europe. Maybe Soviet Union. Did we ever have anybody from the Soviet Union? I suppose we did. China maybe?

Q: Well, until KAL, we did, yes. KAL is halted at -- that was '83 or something.

CARNEY: Yeah.

Q: But I mean there's no doubt that our cultural diplomacy had enormous, enormous influence in Eastern Europe.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: And Bob Gosende feels that way.

CARNEY: Well, look at Eastern Europe. I mean just jazz alone.

Q: Right, right.

CARNEY: Which is why those programs must continue I certainly believe.

Q: Well, thanks for saying that.

CARNEY: Well, no --

Q: It's nice to have allies.

CARNEY: Although frankly, we probably don't need to do it anymore.

Q: It kind of happens by itself, eh?

CARNEY: Yes, it's --

Q: Now that the system has changed and --

CARNEY: Yeah, it's -- what's the term? It's reached critical mass. It's self-sustaining.

Q: That would put a lot of people out of work. I'm saying this tongue and cheek.

CARNEY: Judging by the budgetary tendencies.

Q: Well, we're looking at a 9% cut if the House mark-up succeeds.

CARNEY: Yeah.

Q: It'll be a compromise.

CARNEY: As long as it's programs and not people.

Q: Right. And apparently, somebody has to -- the DG (Director General of the Foreign Service) apparently has decided to keep people coming in. Apparently the levels of intake are steady.

CARNEY: Yeah, I'm involved in that, but not --

Q: So never mind.

CARNEY: -- for this discussion.

Q: Yeah, yeah, OK.

CARNEY: That's part of being on the Board of the American Academy of Diplomacy.

Q: Again, to get all of the potential insights. So without a change in the mindset of Afrikaners -- they were a minority, a minority within a minority actually. Without a change in that mindset, South Africa could not have changed.

CARNEY: Correct.

Q: Do you feel that without the intellectual basis for change there would have been a blood bath? I mean things were getting tough. The MK (Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation)) was actually on the move and they were bombing things.

CARNEY: That was never (*phone rings*) --

Q: I mean the MK was -- we now know their strategy.

CARNEY: There -- as I read Afrikaner South Africa, and especially the military, which I knew rather better because I was also the U.S. government referent for the independence of Namibia -- I was the working level person in the four-nation Contact Group for Namibia -- they had total confidence they could deal with anything MK tried to perpetrate. Now, we now know that there were other units involved and provocations and assassinations and bombings and that sort of thing. But my impression is at the time was

that they really felt they had no, nothing to worry about that time from MK, and could deal with it.

Q: Right. They were going to --

CARNEY: Now, the political leadership --

Q: -- casualties and go on with it.

CARNEY: Exactly, exactly. Now, the political leadership, on the other hand, they were in a debate on if you want South Africa to continue to be prosperous, you had to bring black South Africans in to have a stake in the prosperity. And the only way to do that was to provide political rights.

Q: Was this a prevailing idea or was this --

CARNEY: Oh, it was certainly prominent in this group of white Afrikaners --

Q: The ones you dealt with.

CARNEY: The ones that I knew and dealt with. And the white Afrikaner press members whom I dealt with. Now, there were obviously people, and they ultimately emerged as the conservative party, Andries Treurnicht, who broke while I was there with his colleagues in the National Party, but they were very much a minority. I mean, a minority in --

Q: About what you're saying, we didn't hear the Nationalists in the parliament saying these things. I guess these things were implicit, but not expressed --

CARNEY: A lot of -- very little of this was public until the '90s and in the referendum that F.W. (De Klerk) promised and then delivered and that produced an acceptance in the way forward.

Q: The Rubicon.

CARNEY: No, that was P.W. Botha.

Q: Sorry, yeah.

CARNEY: And that would have been in 1985 or six, five I think it was.

Q: Mm-hmm.

CARNEY: He just couldn't do it. Could not do it.

Q: Yeah.

CARNEY: What a mess.

Q: It's too tempting to ask you big questions because you have great answers for them. Do individuals drive history?

CARNEY: Mm-hmm, yes, of course. There isn't any doubt about it. I mean look, if South Africa hadn't had both Mandela and De Klerk, who knows what would have happened.

Q: Dumb luck or was this the product, the inevitable product of an evolution?

CARNEY: I am tempted to say it was to a degree Darwinistic. In the same way that you wound up with that incredible group of people in what became the United States at the crucial --

Q: The founders.

CARNEY: Right.

Q: Why did we deserve such insight?

CARNEY: Exactly. Or if you look at -- I'm less familiar with this, so I won't even use it as an example. But it, you know, Second World War, you got Hitler coming out of Germany on the one hand, for good or ill, mainly ill, a remarkable figure. And you -- Churchill came into his own.

Q: Eisenhower.

CARNEY: A brief period until he turfed him out.

Q: Yep.

CARNEY: Eisenhower, an indifferent field commander, was nevertheless a brilliant organizer and a supreme commander. Roosevelt. With his many talents. I, I don't know.

Q: These are the what if questions that are fun to --

CARNEY: Look at the dubious leadership we've had really since Eisenhower. Well, Johnson. Johnson, he, he deserves more respect. But certainly, I mean Kennedy wasn't there. He was attractive, but who knows what he would have become?

Q: Right.

CARNEY: Nixon, he did China. Reagan, a man who knew how to use his staff, but did he really have -- well, eh had a vision of how to deal with the Soviet Union that succeeded.

Q: He did. He did.

CARNEY: I don't know.

Q: P.W. either carried it further or actually did it, we don't --

CARNEY: We're not --

Q: Reagan got him --

CARNEY: To there, yeah.

Q: That's another fascinating discussion. Who really did it?

CARNEY: Yeah, exactly.

Q: Reagan gets credit. Maybe it was Bush Senior actually.

CARNEY: Yeah, who actually followed through? And the lack of talent in the Soviet Union.

Q: At the time, yes.

CARNEY: Too. And why didn't they have the talent? What were the factors there?

Q: Yeah.

CARNEY: And I don't have the answer to that.

Q: That's a little spooky. Maybe there's a divine hand here. We won't get into that (laughs). So I think, you know, we were maybe ready to look at some conclusions and some backward views.

CARNEY: OK. If you've got the questions. I'm not sure I've got any conclusions. Hard to do.

Q: Eh, you've actually given many. I, I want to just provide a chance to -- we've talked about two tours, one in Lesotho, one as Pol-Con (Political Counselor) in Pretoria.

CARNEY: In South Africa. And then back as --

Q: Oh, during the, during the --

CARNEY: Election, yes.

Q: -- actual inauguration. Was that --

CARNEY: No, it was Special Political Advisor to Lakhdar Brahimi, who was the Special Representative, the Secretary General. I was there for, oh, let's say March through June of 1994.

Q: Well, let's -- actually, let's hear about that, because that's too interesting not to discuss. That was --

CARNEY: Well, that was an interesting period in that Brahimi was looking for people who had ins in South Africa. And he saw me as having an in in aspects of white South Africa that none of the usual UN people would have, because they hadn't been in South Africa before and would have been regarded by South Africans as having horns and a tail. His effective predecessor, (the late) Angela King from Jamaica, Head of the UN Observer Mission, was black and regarded as a friend of black South Africa, notably of the ANC. And many, many of the other UN people just simply didn't -- couldn't go and talk to senior figures in the National Party.

Q: So you were seconded obviously. I mean you were in the State Department, yeah.

CARNEY: I was seconded. That's because I was still on active service. I had come out of Cambodia as the Senior American on the UN Mission for the elections, so it seemed to make good sense to put me into another electoral environment.

Q: Mm-hmm. So that was the election.

CARNEY: It was indeed.

Q: My gosh, the long lines, the unforgettable pictures.

CARNEY: I was there, I was there in Sharpeville, and there was another incredible massacre much later than Sharpeville, one of those towns.

Q: Sharpeville is the famous one. Did anybody imagine that that election would be so peaceful and --

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: And have a clear result?

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: Did you know that before?

CARNEY: There wasn't any doubt in my mind. I thought there would be more incidents than there were. But I mean we were out in Soweto and the first -- because I of course went out as an observer on Election Day as well. And we found the crowd was getting a little ugly, so we went and actually got one of the peace committee, who basically came in and shaped 'em up, got everybody waiting. Because ballot papers were slow being delivered and that sort of thing. Made sure everybody queued up.

Q: I saw it from this side before I'd ever been to the country, and American media were saying there's going to be a blood bath.

CARNEY: Vicki was there as a producer from NBC News. And that fool Brokaw decided that Nixon's funeral was more important than Mandela's election. So Brian Williams went and anchored the NBC effort out of Johannesburg. I had never questioned Brokaw's judgment before, but that was clearly a very bad judgment.

Q: Well, later I'll tell you my Brokaw anecdote, which is not personal. It's a --

CARNEY: He had been at our house in Cape Town, because he visited South Africa earlier and we had a reception for him. Vicki was his handler, because she was a stringer for NBC TV.

Q: NBC, wow. Let's see. But I -- yeah, I was going -- what I wanted to ask was so the team, the UN team, and there must have been many other observer teams --

CARNEY: Oh yes.

Q: -- you feel that those who were there, was that the consensus, that we -- did you all believe that this was going to work?

CARNEY: Yes. Yes.

Q: Because in the rest of the world there was much doubt. And I don't know if this was something that the media created.

CARNEY: The Afrikaners had decided to do it, except for the Conservative Party people, and they set a bomb. There was a big bomb days before, two days or three days before. And there was a bomb at Jan Smuts Airport as it was then styled. You expected that. I got there just as these Afrikaner Resistance Movement (Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging – **AWB**) fellows were shot to death in Bophuthatswana.

Q: In front of their 4x4, the famous film, yes.

CARNEY: And they, they abundantly merited being shot to death. They thought they could --

Q: They thought they were immune to bullets, I think.

CARNEY: Well, they thought they were white South Africans and they were in charge.

Q: The interesting part of that unforgettable video is how they begged for their lives, they begged, they're on their knees in that footage, which I -- must have had a deep affect on anybody else who was planning on making trouble that day.

CARNEY: Well, wasn't that --

Q: Seeing that people can be --

CARNEY: -- that was months before the election.

Q: Yeah.

CARNEY: Yeah.

Q: I think it was a turning point, maybe. I --

CARNEY: Might have been, might have been, yeah. Because of course Bophuthatswana was not quite as independent as the white South Africans hoped. The South African police went in and they did the necessary there and these guys were regarded as having earned what they got.

Q: Yeah.

CARNEY: Armed uprising and shot to death.

Q: Yep. It's an unforgettable vid -- so can we take 10% of the credit or 15%?

CARNEY: I wouldn't --

Q: Is that a fair question?

CARNEY: No, it isn't a fair question because there were so many elements in it. I think we can, we can say we were -- I don't think, as I said earlier, that we were instrumental. But I think we were enormously valuable as part of the effort that brought it about.

Q: Were other countries similarly -- was UK (United Kingdom) ever doing anything like this or any European --

CARNEY: You know, I don't know that well enough.

Q: Yeah, yeah, I don't know myself, yeah.

CARNEY: Yeah, I just don't know. I do --

Q: But this was a pretty, pretty aggressive or practice on the part of the U.S. embassy over a period of three decades.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: Really, really pushy --

CARNEY: Well -- but in parallel with that, we also evolved the practice of inviting all South Africans into our homes. We didn't do that in the '60s.

Q: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

CARNEY: And Vicki and I, for example, we'd have Thanksgiving dinners. We'd have a smorgasbord of Afrikaners, Department of Military Intelligence, Press, Parliament, Foreign Affairs people, my gunsmith, a racist or two, the Standard Bank group economist, the guy from Barclays Bank who's a black South African. And indeed, one of the classic anecdotes is the black Barclays Bank guy was talking. He asked the wife of one of the other guys where she lived. She said, "Well, we're in Houghton, Johannesburg."

He said, "Ah, you know, I've tried to get a house there. Nobody will give me a permit to do that."

And she said, "Well, you know, how -- it -- the wind comes up, and the sand blows into your swimming pool. It's just awful."

Q: (laughs)

CARNEY: That's a direct quote.

Q: That's good. That's very good.

CARNEY: You know, it --

Q: That's very good.

CARNEY: It's South Africa, you know. It's that sometimes things crossed and didn't meet.

Q: Yeah, but in a state of candor that you can't fight in places.

CARNEY: Exactly. Exactly.

Q: Yeah. The sand blows into your swimming pool. That, that's a good one.

CARNEY: Yes, right. Anyway, what, what -- and then for official functions, I mean like at the residence and what have you? No problem, everybody was there.

Q: OK, now any sense of the authorities being a little bit out of joint about this?

CARNEY: No, not when I was there, '83 to '86.

Q: Did they kind of enjoy it?

CARNEY: Well, nobody had any problem seeming to enjoy the evening.

Q: So I guess --

CARNEY: I can remember two prominent black South Africans were regular visitors at both the Ambassador's table and at various political officers' tables. One was the late Enos Mabuza, who was the Chief Executive Officer of one of those small areas towards Swaziland.

Q: Homeland you mean?

CARNEY: Yeah -- yes -- oh --

Q: Sure, OK.

CARNEY: I just can't --

Q: Yeah, yeah, there were what, seven or eight of them, yeah.

CARNEY: And the other was Ernest Moseneke, who had gotten his law degree from UNISA (University of South Africa) when he was on Robben Island. And he was on Robben Island because he was black consciousness.

Q: As Mandela did.

CARNEY: PAC (Pan Africanist Congress).

Q: He got his law degree from UNISA.

CARNEY: Yeah, UNISA. UNISA's a huge -- I mean UNISA would be something to look at as an element that --

Q: Absolutely. No, absolutely.

CARNEY: -- in this, in this constellation. And he, he was working in the law and he earned a very good reputation. As one of the leading barristers in Johannesburg said, "You know, he is a lawyer I've got a lot of time for."

Q: So it was expected, may -- is it possible that everybody just wanted to mix it up? But only in an American residence was it really expected?

CARNEY: Well, or -- well, or British frankly --

Q: OK, OK.

CARNEY: -- because the Brits were doing the same thing and the other embassies as well, Italians and what have you.

Q: Must have been a relief for people who were there.

CARNEY: You know, I'm not going to go that far because I think it was in some ways it had become matter of fact by the time we were there. And in some ways, it was -- I mean we had people at the house who'd never been to a function with black or coloreds or --

Q: Me too actually, as late as '97.

CARNEY: Right.

Q: It was still happening.

CARNEY: At the same time, we would introduce white South Africans who had never met each other of considerable prominence. The most notable of which was at our farewell party, we must have had 150 people at it. And parliament had just risen and we didn't know how many parliamentarians we'd get because sometimes they'd just immediately flee for the Transvaal or what have you, but Helen Suzman came and she came in the door and the author Wilbur Smith was right there. And Vicki said, "Oh, I'm sure you know each other. Helen Suzman this is Wilbur Smith."

And she said, "No, we haven't actually meet -- met."

And Wilbur said, "But you're so short!"

Q: (laughs)

CARNEY: And then he recovered and --

Q: This is what _____ said about Nadine Gordimer said, by the way. Yeah.

CARNEY: And then he said, "But you cast a giant shadow."

Q: Oh. My gosh. That's -- well then, let's actually articulate the importance of diplomacy.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: Diplomacy is taught by many as elites mingling and a bit, a part from the run of the mill, the daily lives of people, how does this type of experience change a nation? In a way that we want it to.

CARNEY: Yes. Well, it may be a triumph of hope over experience --

Q: (chuckles)

CARNEY: -- because what you hope is that people will understand that it is dealing -- it's just other people, when you're in the apartheid situation. And harkening back to our earlier comments, adult white South Africans already really had experienced that as children. So I'm speculating here that the experience with the contact afforded by both the International Visitor program and the regular exposure to prescribed prohibited groups at international residences, I won't say just American because others were doing it, might have helped unlock that, that realization. I'm just -- it's very speculative.

Q: I think it's, it's well within --

CARNEY: The realm of possibility, yes *(laughs)*.

Q: Yes, me too. I think so.

CARNEY: As I look at it -- if there had been no contact whatsoever, and that's why I think maybe the Brits were so immune to it -- the British English-speaking South Africans -- because they didn't have any of that in their generation in the UK. Wasn't until the '60s that you got a significant, to the best of my knowledge, Caribbean and black population --

Q: Yep. That's right.

CARNEY: -- in London and the other major cities. Speculation, that's all I can do.

Q: Well, as my final comment, I'll just say please take a little credit.

CARNEY: *(laughs)* Ah yes. Well, I would like to take some credit, but look, it's so often that your hopes outride your analysis that I'm very reluctant to, to say anything more than valuable contribution and never instrumental.

Q: I don't have the authority to override that comment, Ambassador, but I -- if I did, I would.

CARNEY: *(laughs)* Yes, we'd like to think we were more relevant and more important than maybe I'm willing to give us credit for.

Q: History will give credit.

CARNEY: Yes, exactly, but we're not going to be able to make the judgment. History's going to have to do it.

Q: It will do so pretty soon I'm sure.

CARNEY: Well, you may be right. Sooner maybe that we think.

Q: Yep. Ambassador Carney, thank you enormously. We got some great coffee mug, some coffee mug slogans here.

CARNEY: *(laughs)*

Q: We're rich in that. And this has been, this has been a great light that shines on what happened during your two and a half tours.

CARNEY: Well, I hope -- I hope you find it useful. I must say that Mandela election -- you know, I didn't go to the inauguration. I watched it on TV because I knew I'd see it better, frankly.

Q: Yes.

CARNEY: Although I was offered a place in the union buildings --

Q: Wow.

CARNEY: -- that would have had a view of it.

Q: Planes, planes coming over.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: Yeah.

CARNEY: Well, from one of my South African Foreign Affairs friends who stayed and became an ambassador under Mandela.

Q: Fantastic.

CARNEY: Yeah, it was. It was something. It was something. Of the things I've done in the Foreign Service, closing that circle was perhaps the most profound. Almost as profound as going back to Cambodia for the UN-run elections.

Q: Well, I've seen you do a thing or two in addition, but if you want to give this one the prominence, you're, you're -- I'll allow you to do that.

CARNEY: Yes, we're talking Haiti now.

Q: Yes. Well, Haiti and your subsequent work in crazy places in Africa.

CARNEY: Yes, right, yeah, quite apart from Baghdad and Kabul.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

CARNEY: Here here.

Q: Yes.

CARNEY: All right, well --

Q: Thank you. Thank you, thank you. Thank you, thank you.

CARNEY: You're very welcome.

End of interview