

Interview

with

GERALD WHITLEY

February 17, 1991

By Goldie F. Wells

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By Goldie F. Wells

Goldie: I am in the home of Mr. Gerald Whitley who is the principal of Goldsboro High School in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Today's date is February 17, 1991. Mr. Whitley is one of our 1989 principals. Mr. Whitley would you introduce yourself and say that you know that this is being recorded.

Mr. Whitley: I am Gerald Whitley, principal of Goldsboro High School, and I am aware of the fact that this interview is being recorded.

Goldie: Mr. Whitley, I want to thank you for sending the questionnaire back to me. I am doing research comparing the role perceptions of Black high school principals. In 1964, there were over 200 Black high school principals in North Carolina. When I wrote to the State Department last year they sent me a listing of 41 Black high school principals and of those 41 some of them were principals of alternative schools so we have less than 40 for the year of 1989, and what I am doing is I am interviewing principals from both groups and then I am going to do an analysis. This is for a study that I am doing toward my doctoral requirements. I would like for you to just relax and tell me a little about yourself and how you became a high school principal.

Mr. Whitley: I am originally from Goldsboro, graduated from Dillard High School in 1966, left Dillard and went to St Augustine College in Raleigh where I majored in elementary education and returned to Goldsboro and taught in the middle schools for four years. In 1974, I went to the State Department as a consultant. I worked with the Division of Human Relations. While I was there I started the Master's program at East Carolina. In 1975, I returned to Goldsboro City Schools and served as the Human Relations Coordinator for the Goldsboro City Schools. I also had a chance to finish my Master's work at East Carolina. I did that for about three years. That was with the Federal program. That program was phased out so I was then assigned to the high school as a guidance counselor. I served as a guidance counselor for a year and at the same time I did some coaching. Following that year I was asked to serve as assistant principal at one of the middle schools so I went to the middle school and stayed there for three years and at the same time I continued to coach at the high school but I had moved over to coaching girls rather than junior varsity so I coached girls' basketball and girls' track for three years. At the same time I served as assistant principal of one of the middle schools. In 1981, one of the principals at the middle school resigned and I think it was like November of 1981, or something like that so they asked me to assume that principalship and I did. So effective November 1, 1981, I

was made principal of a middle school. I did that for two years and then I was transferred to the junior high school. I stayed at the junior high school for two years. I took a year off and went back to the State Department and worked as an executive assistant where I went around the state and trained administrators and helped hold seminars and workshops. When that year was up I returned to Goldsboro Junior High School again. I stayed there for about eight months and the State asked me to take another position so I did. That was the time when it was getting into evaluating principals so they set up a special project using outside evaluators and I served as a site director for one of those projects. I did that in Kinston City and Lenoir County for about seven months and believe it or not, Goldsboro asked me to return. They recruited me to come back. I was able to negotiate some things that I wanted so I came back as the principal again of the junior high school. I thought I was settled in for a while and had small plans of being there. At that time the principal of the high school had a heart attack. He recovered from the first one and went back to work. He worked six months and then had another heart attack and this one happened to be fatal. So then they asked me if I would assume the principalship of the high school and this was in October 1988. So I started October 15, 1988, at Goldsboro High School as principal and I have been there until this date. So that is kind of how it came around. I was in and out and back and forth. During that time I did consultant work, workshops and all that kind of stuff with the state and it just kind of fell right into place for me. So I have been here about three years now.

Goldie: Are you still doing consultant work?

Mr. Whitley: Yes, as a matter of fact there is a workshop coming up sponsored by the Student Services Division of the State Department in Winston-Salem and I will be doing a session there. On Tuesday, I am going to speak to the student body at Smithfield Senior High School. This is Black History Month and they asked me to come and speak to their student body so yes, I still do some of it. I did some work with the Pep Program at Chapel Hill. I served as one of their first Black consultants. I did a seminar on Time Management.

Goldie: That is where I first met you. I wasn't with Pep but there was one of the conferences I went to and you did the Time Management. You were at the junior high school then.

Mr. Whitley: Yes, I was with the junior high then.

Goldie: Now I want you to tell me something about--are there any educators in your family or are you the first?

Mr. Whitley: No, my aunt was one of the first really. She

went to school at Elizabeth City and left Elizabeth City and worked in North Carolina for about two years and then she went to Philadelphia and she has been there ever since. She has since retired from that system and she is working now with the local government in Philadelphia but she was the first.

Goldie: I want you to tell me something about your high school--something about the history, the students, the faculty members and the racial composition.

Mr. Whitley: At Goldsboro High School we have approximately--we fluctuate anywhere from 1250 to 1300 kids depending on the time that you ask. We run what we call an extended day school as well and we count those students in our regular population. We house grades 9-12. We offer approximately 138 different courses at the high school. We have advanced placement courses in English, history, math and science. We are unfortunately--I say unfortunately because of what it does to our students. We have five track curriculum which we have--the exceptional children's program, then we have the basic program for those students who really need some help, we have the general program, and then we have a college prep and then we have what we call advanced placement. We kind of place our students according to ability. Although in one sense they are able to move from one track to the next. I say it is unfortunate because in most cases although you can move from one track to the next one once you enter a certain track you are pretty much locked into that and that causes some problems for some of my students. In terms of faculty we have 85 classroom teachers and then we have about 15 additional support persons for a total of 100 professional folks on my staff. I have three assistant principals, three regular guidance counselors plus I have what we call a teenage pregnancy prevention coordinator. We have some vocational counselors and I have a total of about 7 counselors in different areas. We run a standard six period day, 55 minutes per period operated on with two lunch periods. We have--in terms of composition of students--we have from the finest families in Goldsboro to the very poorest. It has traditionally been a Goldsboro situation in terms of educating some of the finest students in families that we have and that is because of the curriculum that we offer. Again, we offer foreign languages--four years of Latin, Spanish, French, advanced chemistry, advanced biology, computer programming so our very best students are attracted to Goldsboro. Well, on the other end we also serve students from seven different housing projects. So you can see how that mixture is and we then we serve everything in between. Composition-wise in terms of race, we are about 83% Black and 17% White. My staff is about 55% White and 45% Black so it is a pretty nice mixture there too. We are fairly close in terms of balancing that. I feel good about 55-45.

Goldie: Now I am going to ask you about some areas and I want you to address those that deal with your responsibilities.

Goldie: Supervision of personnel and teacher selection.

Mr. Whitley: We are very active in terms of teacher selection. We have a pretty good system in the Goldsboro City Schools in that we, the principals, are actually allowed to interview and pretty much make the selection of the person that we want. What happens is that the people or the perspective employee will put an application in with the Goldsboro City Schools. The associate superintendent in charge of personnel will then interview those persons and will give us probably what he feels are the top five or six. Then we in turn interview those persons and we say to him that we would like to talk with this person or we think this person is the person for the job and 95% of the time we get the person we ask for. So we feel real good about that. What that does to me then is it makes me more responsible for that person in terms of career growth and what that person does because I had a lot to do with the actual selection. So that works fairly well for us and I don't have a lot of problems in that area. In terms of supervision, yes, we are responsible for supervising all of them. Now having three assistant principals that sometimes causes some problems--more the problem of coordinating than anything else. What we do is we actually divide up the evaluations and we rotate those persons who are responsible for three observations. Each one of us will observe that person or three of the four of us will do that. Then we have people who only get one observation and then I usually will observe those folks. All new people coming on staff, I give all three of those observations and I am responsible for the final say in terms of whether or not they receive tenure or if they are recommended for the next year. The assistant principals may observe that person but not in a formal capacity. They really don't start doing that until that person has been tenured or that person has at least been on staff for at least a year. I pretty much assume that responsibility for the first year.

Goldie: Curriculum and instruction.

Mr. Whitley: I get a chance to do some of that. Quite honestly it is very, very difficult to get in all aspects of education as you would like to. I am very fortunate I have department heads and my department heads are very good people. I was fortunate in that I had been able to replace three of them from the time I started. They are very supportive and they have a handle on what a curriculum is and where we are going and what we are trying to do. Sometimes a curriculum design or changes come from the wrong source unfortunately. Sometimes the Board of Education or members of

the Board of Education have their own agendas and there are a few things that they like to see in the high school and in my opinion they are not always good. They have a tendency sometimes not to see the ramifications of some of those things that they implement but for the most part I do have pretty much leadway in terms of what is implemented and how it is designed, we need to do a research on it. We get all of our information together and then I make recommendations to the superintendent and he in turn makes recommendations to the Board of Education. So we have a lot of input but it is just so time consuming and sometimes you have to weigh the priorities in terms of when you want to do what and that kind of thing.

Goldie: Discipline.

Mr. Whitley: I play a major role in discipline in the high school. A major role. We have been able to put in some discipline policies that the majority of the staff and students are bought into and that has helped us tremendously. I am probably the head disciplinarian in the school and I know that and I don't back off from that. I seem to have a lot of respect for the students and faculty. They seem to know what I expect. We will not put up with a lot of foolishness and they understand that. At the same time I try to understand that these are kids and they are going to make some mistakes and they need to have the guidelines and things like that and so I try to understand that and help them to grow from their mistakes. But to answer your question, basically we divide the discipline up by classes and then I cover the spectrum. I have one person who is basically responsible for freshmen, one for sophomores and one for juniors and one for seniors and then anytime there is any problem and they can't get to one of those then they can send the kids to me. I always take the freshmen. The freshmen are mine. I do that because it gives me an opportunity to get to know the kids from the very beginning and it gives me a chance to work with them from the beginning because we have assemblies when we start and I work with the freshmen and try to acclimate them in terms of where we are and what we want. So it gives me a good start with the freshmen because I always take them. Once they become sophomores I pass them on to somebody else. I deal with the ones I need to deal with as we go through it.

Goldie: Transportation.

Mr. Whitley: I have very little to do with transportation fortunately. We are very thankful. That is not just me though. That is our school district. I think that we do something very unique in that we have a person who is totally responsible for transportation from the central office level. They do all of the routing, this person, or this office does all of the routing of the buses, they hire all of the bus

drivers, they train the bus drivers, and they are responsible for any accidents or anything that happens. The only thing that we deal with where buses are concerned will be the discipline on the buses. A lot of that he even handles. If it is a major stuff and he gets a call then he deals with it. But transportation, fortunately we don't have to deal with it. I do know that I am still responsible for it to some degree but this man really handles all of it in terms of routing buses, etc.

Goldie: Utilization of funds.

Mr. Whitley: Well, we have a pretty good budget at Goldsboro High School. We get a decent amount of state funds and a decent amount of local funds. We get some federal monies but not a lot and then we have a lot of in-house monies like clothes and organizations and things like that. If I looked at my in-house budget right now, I'd probably be looking at \$60,000 just in-house monies that we deal with. A large part of that however is athletics. It will take a large part of your budget. Then there are those non-discretionary funds that you really can't deal with--you have them but you can't do a lot with them. But we do set up our own budget. Every year we are asked from the central office to submit a budget from Goldsboro High School. I in turn ask every employee in that school to be involved in that process through department heads. So through the department meetings they submit to me their budget for the coming year. We then look at that and I call them in and ask them to justify why this and why that and then we set some priorities and then we submit a budget to the central office from Goldsboro High School. Then they take it from there and do whatever they can with that. But no monies are spent at our school unless I sign for it. None. I don't care what it is for and I don't care how it was generated, I don't care how it was assigned. I have people say well, we raised our money--can't we spend it the way we want to? Yes, but I will sign off before you spend it. You must submit to me a purchase order, a request for that money. I then will check with the secretary to make sure that that money is intact. Then I will sign the purchase order and then they can do what they want to with it. But we sign off on every dime and my teachers understand that if you go out to one of the stores out here and you see something that you like and you buy it and I've not signed off on it, you may very well pay for that. It may very well be yours. So we have cut down on that and we have a pretty good handle on spending. When I first started there I used to get receipts from places and I didn't know what in the world it was for. So we tightened up on that and it is working fairly well. Again, they know that if they spend it without following proper channels, it may very well be theirs. So they understand that.

Goldie: Cafeteria management.

Mr. Whitley: Here again, we are fortunate that we don't do a lot with that. I don't have to go in and count monies and the cafeteria managers do not have to send receipts to me or anything. We have a person at the central office who is the food service director and then at each school we have a cafeteria manager. Those persons run the cafeteria; they run the program at all of our schools. I do at times interview the workers but other than that I don't do anything with it. I don't have to plan the menu or any of that. All I do is occasionally. Now we do have supervisors. We have staff members, male staff members, we have two lunches and we have staff members who go in at certain times every day to provide supervision in the cafeteria. Now we have what we call a junk line too. That is part of our cafeteria operation. It is not in the cafeteria but all the proceeds go directly to the cafeteria. They operate that and everything. So I really don't do anything except supervise.

Goldie: Buildings and grounds.

Mr. Whitley: I don't do much with that. What I have done is each one of my assistant principals, and I have three, have certain responsibilities that are totally theirs. I have one man who is in charge of buildings and grounds along with something else. Anything in terms of maintenance, campus, furniture and that stuff goes directly to him. Now he in turn submits that to me for my signature to go on to the central office. I pretty much rely on him to take care of that for me. In my walking around, if I see some things that concern me, I let him know that I am concerned about those things and he gets them taken care of. He is also in charge of the custodial staff in terms of making their assignments and all of that so I have pretty much played hands-off with that and let him handle it.

Goldie: Community relations.

Mr. Whitley: That is mine. In that respect we do a couple of things. We have just like everybody else--PTA open house and we invite people out to be a part of whatever it is we are having. My greatest community relationship however deals with events that we have at the school. I try to make it my business to be at most. Now I don't travel a lot with the team because I had to give something up but all of my athletic events or concerts I try to be at those things because it is there that the community gets the impression of the kind of school that you have. A lot of folks will only see Goldsboro High School in relationship to what they saw at the football game or what they saw at a basketball game or what concert. So we try to do a lot of that. Now, being that I am the only Black high school principal within a certain radius of Wayne County, I am invited to do a lot of things community-wise and I understand that. If people want

some feedback or input from Goldsboro High School then I am the one to do it. And that sort of puts me out in the limelight quite a bit for that reason. But we sent out newsletters, we have a school paper, we have a school yearbook and all this stuff that helps us with the community relations. Again, I attend a lot of functions and as part of that I represent Goldsboro High School.

Goldie Do you think the community has a good feeling about Goldsboro High School?

Mr. Whitley: Yes, Goldsboro High School is sometimes in terms as to how they feel because at one point you can hear them saying good things and then other times you can hear them saying negative things. But you have to understand how that works. You take a school that is predominantly Black and you've got to work extra hard to have a good positive image. Because when anything goes wrong at Goldsboro High School it is blown out of proportion. The same incident can happen at Goldsboro High School that happened at Eastern Wayne. At Eastern Wayne High School you may never hear of it. It just may never hit the paper. If it happened at Goldsboro High School, then it is big news. A fight can occur in Goldsboro High and a fight can occur at Eastern Wayne. The community will know about the fight at Goldsboro and not know anything about the one at Eastern Wayne. And we deal with that quite a bit so the support I think is there and is beginning to turn around because some things that are probably unique in terms of how we handle things so I think that we are getting quite a bit of support from the community.

Goldie: How many high schools in the county?

Mr. Whitley: In the county they have five but we are only one in the city district. We are very similar to Kinston City in Lenoir County. We are not merged so we only have one high school.

Goldie: One high school and how many elementary and junior high schools?

Mr. Whitley: There is one junior high and then the elementary schools serve different grades. For example, we have a school that serves K-1, then 2-3, then 4, then 5-6, then 7-8, and then 9-12. So there are actually 7 schools.

Goldie: How much administrative power and control do you have over your school site and your responsibilities?

Mr. Whitley: Quite a bit. I think I am unique. When I go places I talk to other guys and I am almost appalled at their situation because they always have the Board of Education breathing down their back or the superintendent is always at

their building or this community group is giving them pressure about this. I feel that I have almost complete rein to run Goldsboro High School. Yes, there is the superintendent and there is the Board of Education but if I go through the proper channels and do things the way they should be done I am rarely denied whatever I need. That is a fact. That sounds funny when you say it because I can say it when you have listened to other people in other situations it just doesn't work out that way. My superintendent is a great guy to work with. The Board of Education is great to work with and I am able to run the school. Now what I like about it is when it is going good they give me credit. When it is going bad they tell me. It is not a situation like it's everybody's school when it is going good but it is Gerald Whitley's school when it is not going well. I get credit for it both ways and I respect that.

Goldie: How did the desegregation of schools affect your role as a principal?

Mr. Whitley: I don't know if I can answer that one because I wasn't a principal in the other situation and it is kind of hard to make that comparison. I do know from conversation with people who were principals prior to that that they were in total control of their situation. They did all the hiring or the firing and everything. They just ruled it so to speak and many times with an iron-clad hand. But that is about all I know about it. I guess I was a student in that situation and I wasn't in administration during that time so I really don't know.

Goldie: Do you find any difference in supervising Blacks and Whites.

Mr. Whitley: No, in terms of supervising no, but in terms of communicating with them, yes. But it doesn't mean that I change anything that I do.

Goldie: Explain that communication.

Mr. Whitley: Well, some of the Black teachers you have this special relationship with them because you have grown up with them and you have worked with them and you might walk up to them and say, listen you need to get on the ball and they say okay, I understand that. In the other situation it is totally professional. Always. I lay it down and say, listen, these are my concerns and here are some ways that we need to address this and very rarely will I ever come up to a White teacher and say, you need to get your butt on the ball. It's always professional and laid out to the point and if you have any questions, here are the facts. Now in must cases it is that way with Black teachers but there some Black teachers whom I have grown up with and I've known them and I say, listen man, you are slipping. Let's get on the stick.

That is it and that takes care of it. But in terms of turning my head versus one, no, because it causes problems. If one is doing it, I will make that correction and I don't care how the communication is, the correction is made and they always understand that. They know and they can pretty much tell if I'm coming their way right now. Now that has taken some time because I've been here three years and they had to get to know me but they know what I expect and if I'm not getting that I will let them know and they know it.

Goldie: Do you enjoy your job?

Mr. Whitley: Very much. There is still a challenge. I enjoy what I am doing. I enjoy the kids, I enjoy taking Goldsboro High School as a challenge. When I went there the reputation wasn't good. Poor and simple--it just was not good. The discipline was beginning to slip. That is not to say anything about the person who was there prior to my coming. Those things were just facts and now we are beginning to change that around. Students are beginning to feel about themselves and the staff is beginning to feel good. We are talking about new and greater things in terms of year-round-schools; we are talking about new programs for the kids; we are talking about joining the extended day school and the regular-based school; we are talking about joining the junior high campus and the high school campus; so it is really exciting and a real challenge. I thoroughly enjoy going to work every day. Now there are some bad moments but to see a child who we thought would not make it begin to turn around and make it, it makes a difference. You know I went to school on Saturday with my kids. I was out there yesterday for the tutorial program. We have it from 7:30 until 8:30 every morning; we have it from 3:30 to 4:30 every afternoon and from 9:00 to 12:00 on Saturdays.

Goldie: Who are the tutors?

Mr. Whitley: Teachers--volunteer teachers. What we have done is we have flexed our schedule. For example, I have a teacher who does not have a homeroom. And that teacher volunteers to come in and work the tutorial program. Then rather than getting to work at 8:30 the other days this teacher will come to work at 8:00 and this teacher at 8:30 and 8:45 and then she doesn't have to rush. I have some teachers who have planning periods at 6th period. The last period of the day. If they come in and volunteer in the mornings or the afternoon to do some tutoring, then they can leave at 2:30 rather than staying until 3:30. Those teachers who come to work on Saturdays from 9-12, they can get out five hours earlier any way they want to get it. All they need to do is let me know in case somebody calls for them. I need to say they are not here but I know where they are. They are not here with my permission. It is working well. Yesterday we had 42 kids out there.

Goldie: 42--that is very good. What do you consider the major problem of your principalship?

Mr. Whitley: Trying to do everything at one time. The principalship is very, very demanding. It simply is. A high school principalship where you have a situation where you are predominantly Black, you have a mixture in terms of student's abilities, you have the mixture in terms of parental and community support. It just keeps you going all the time. If you are going to do a good job with it, you've got to put the time in. Now I pride myself in terms of being good in time management. So I feel real good about that so I am able to manage that but even with that it is very time consuming. A principal cannot go from 8-5. He just simply cannot do it. Some of the best things in my opinion is to be a hands-on principal and to try to keep your hands on everything. Not controlling because you can't do that but to let people know that you have an interest in every facet in that school because that is important. If they begin to see that you are favoring one part over the other, it comes back to haunt you because when you want support from them it is very difficult to get it. The second thing I think is very, very difficult is working with your personnel in terms of helping them to grow. Staff development is almost impossible. Teachers now have the workdays but they have vacation days that they have to get. Okay. They have to take them. And to try to get together to do some creative kinds of things is almost impossible. After school is not a viable time to do it. They are tired and want to go home so we try to do some things in the morning but then you don't get enough time to do that. You don't want to say to them, we will make it mandatory that you come at a certain time. So another big problem is staff development and trying to get everybody to understand where you are trying to go. For example, we are trying to go into year-round-schools now. We're trying to go into year-round-schools, I'm trying to do the effective schools training and I'm trying to do the team sharing. We can't find the time to do it. We want to sit down and take a good look at our discipline and where we are in terms of policies and what we need to do with that but it is just difficult. It causes you then to do a lot of writing and try to communicate through the written word and you know what happens with that. So what I have done is I go to a faculty meeting and we're trying to do something new and I'll explain the concept to the total faculty. I use transparencies, videos and anything I have to work with and then I will set up a day when I will say to them I will be available for you to come by the library and talk to me about any concerns you may have about what we are trying to implement and I will stay in there all day. All of my teachers have planning periods so during their planning period if they want to come in and share something with me, then they can.

Goldie: So you are using your skills from consulting. So

you're doing a big group. It is like individualized learning, you are doing the big group together. You do the major and first presentation and then you ask them to come in as individuals and discuss how they see it, what they see, if they have problems with it and then you can clarify it.

Mr. Whitley: And even with that--even if it is something that is real big then I will go and meet with each department again for about 20-30 minutes. We'll stagger that so there are three ways we do it; the big group, the departmental meetings, and then individual walk-in counselling.

Goldie: So that is what you are doing--working with staff development.

Mr. Whitley: See you have to understand--I guess there is some background to that. Some of our folks didn't want me over there. When Mr. Bess passed, there was a thing about whether or not they wanted to move in an assistant principal who was already there or to bring me in from the junior high school. Some of the staff wanted the assistant principal. No one was really against me per se, but they thought that since Mr. Bess died during the year that they would just finish out that year by moving in the assistant principal and following through and that would be fine. They said no, we don't want to do that. We want to make the move now and we are going to make it permanent. That is what the Board did.

Goldie: Did you keep that same assistant principal? Did he leave?

Mr. Whitley: No, he is still there. It was a matter of, if you want to stay here you do what you are supposed to do. Now his thing was, he wasn't disappointed at my situation. He felt like I would be named principal. He pretty much felt that. What disturbed him was, he was not named the principal of the school that I left. That is what bothered him. I don't think for a moment he thought he was going to be the principal of the high school. He never thought that. Even the people who were pushing for him weren't pushing for that. They were pushing for him to just finish out as interim for that year. They never really thought that he would be the principal of the high school. His big thing was if I came over to the high school as principal, why wasn't he made principal of where I was. So we had to deal with those things and that was tough for some folks. It was a matter of my saying to these folks, this is my agenda and this is what we are going to do and it is fair and everybody will be treated the same. I've not come here pretending I'm somebody else, it is easier for the 100 of you to adjust to me than for me to adjust to 100. I said, I cannot adjust to 100 individual people. So this is what we are going to do across the board. And they saw that that was pretty much what was to be and now the staff is really together but we work on

that. That one subject I just said we are going to do it and that is it. The negative folks I put some of them on my teams where they have actually gotten to know me. We established an administrative support group. Some of those folks are on that. Some of those folks are doing things now that they have never done before. They have input now where they have never had it before. It wasn't a matter of this is it, this is the way it is going to be. I went in with, "What do you think is best for the kids"? Now, my number one priority folks, and you are going to understand that, will be the kids. Now you are number two and the administration is number three. We will not change that. It will not ever be a lot of times what is good for you. What is good for kids is learning. That is going to be number one. If we can answer that question and it is favorable, that is pretty much what we will do.

Goldie: Do you think an elementary background helped you to have that philosophy?

Mr. Whitley: Yes, I think so. I think coaching helped me a lot too. Coaching showed me that if you are going to do something, then you have to pull together as a team. You can't win by having one superstar and four little people following. Okay. If you are going to win as a team, you must involve everybody and everybody must understand his or her role and they must accept that. It may not be what you want but if it is not what you want, you need to leave the team. But as long as you are a part of that team, you have to accept that role and I think my people have begun to understand that. I tell them, I will support you when you are right and support you one time when you are wrong. But no more. They understand that. Because I don't want you to feel bad or anything. I'll support you sometime when you are wrong but I'm not going to do it but one time and if you continuously do that, then you have to go someplace else.

Goldie: What do you consider the most rewarding thing about your principalship?

Mr. Whitley: Graduation day because I've had two graduations and every graduation day somebody has crossed that stage because I was there. That is where the reward comes in. Somebody walks that stage because of something that I did. It may have been a person who couldn't make it and I told them, listen son, you bring your butt out here at night or in the afternoons and we'll get this work together or maybe a situation where I turned someone on to somebody else who could help them. It may have been a situation where I just changed a schedule that made a difference in a kid's life but the most rewarding part is graduation because that's when you see somebody cross that stage who could not have made it had you not been there.

Goldie: If you knew of a young Black, male or female, that aspired to be a high school principal in North Carolina, what advice would you give?

Mr. Whitley: Don't do it unless you care. The first thing is you have got to care. Now people talk about the budding principalship. It is good, it really is. But it is not worth it if you don't care. There are entirely too many frustrations, too many aggravations, you can't get compensated for. You only do it because you care and that must be the key factor. You have to love children. Now you notice I didn't clarify that. I didn't specify--I said children--all children. You have to love the rich ones, the poor ones, the Black ones, the White ones, the ones who didn't take a bath this morning, you love them anyway. Now you try to get them to take a bath tomorrow but you still love them. You gotta love them because they are children. Even if a child does not turn out the way you want them to, you can't say you lost them. Because that child could have failed much earlier had you not been there. So you gotta find a way to feel that you are successful with every child that you work with. I guess that would be the second thing. Learn how to measure success. Okay. You gotta care but you gotta know how to measure success. If you kept a child in school two days longer than he would have stayed had you not been there, that is some success. And you have to look at it that way. You don't look at it as if to say well I failed that kid. No, you kept them there two days longer. You kept them there a year longer than they would have stayed had you not done something. He has learned to read one more word because he was there for those two nights and you have to look at it that way. If not, you won't get up in the mornings. You simply will not get up and go on in the mornings. I think that is important. You have got to care and they have to learn how to measure success.

Goldie: Are there certain skills that you think are necessary.

Mr. Whitley: Yes, if you start talking about administrative skills, yes. I think the person who has the ability to communicate. You have got to be able to do that because you have to communicate with so many different people from so many different walks of life. And you have to be able to do that. So you have to have some communication skills. That is very, very important. Too, you have to have the ability to see things from a global perspective. If not, you will begin to see just pieces of things and you began to react to those fragmented pieces. You have to react to the total situation and you have to understand that every decision that you make in one area is going to impact on something else in another area and you have got be able to analyze the ramifications of those decisions even before you make them. Because if not, you will find yourself making a whole lot of

little biddy decisions about little biddy things. What you want to do is when you make a broad kind of statement you want that to have a positive impact across the board. So now you have to run around and do something that deals with English, do something that deals with social studies, you have made a statement that covers all of them. In that way you have internalized what that is going to be so you minimize the number of decisions that you have to make. You minimize those little biddy things and it is called fire fighting. You run around all day putting out fires because of some stupid little decision that you made that had a snowball effect some place else. So you really have to take a look at that. When you start giving kids special consideration because they are on the football team that carries ramifications for everything else and you have got to understand that. So if you are going to be across the board with it, you have got to be across the board with it. So I think those are two things that I would say. You have got to care, learn to measure success, know how to communicate, how to analyze things and you have to look at things from a global perspective and you have to understand the reality of where you are. If you understand the reality and the realms in which you have got to work you will be all right. But you have got to understand that. I mean if you are not the boss, know that you are not the boss. Understand that and you can deal with it. It becomes very, very difficult for people to survive when they don't totally understand the situation that they are in and you have got to understand that. I think as an administrator you have got to be willing to accept responsibilities. If you can't accept responsibilities, this is not the job for you because the responsibilities are what everything that happens in that school will be placed on your shoulders. The final thing I say in terms of success you have got to find a love of out. You can't live your life totally in the education and totally in a principalship. There are some other things out there in that world and if you are going to be successful as a principal you have got to learn to enjoy those other things too. You have got to realize that there is a balance in your life and if you lean one way too much then you are going to walk around leaning and eventually you are going to lose it simply because you are going to put too much emphasis on that and too little emphasis on something else. So you have got to look at balancing the scale and if you can do that along with some of those other things I talked about, you will be quite successful.

Goldie: Do you have any words of wisdom. We have come to the end of the interview guide. Do you have any words of wisdom.

Mr. Whitley: Well, I would say that we talked about caring, we talked about reasoning and thinking and keeping a balance and all of that. I guess you just have to keep everything in perspective.

Goldie: Do you have any concerns about our Black children? Have you been dealing with that in any way?

Mr. Whitley: Oh yes, I am very concerned about Black children. One of my greatest concerns is the drop-out rate. I don't care how hard we try with that, it is very, very difficult. I am also concerned about the persons the Black children select as their role models. That is a grave concern. We look at athletes and they are fine but most of them are looking at the kids who are riding around here who are 14 and 15 years old and already driving cars and got a pocketful of money. That is a hard thing to combat because we say to kids you have got to have the ability to look on down the road to see what you can do. They say why? I can do it now. Yes, it is risky and I understand that but if I survive for a certain period of time, look what I can accumulate. That is tough. Teenage pregnancy is a real problem because in most cases teenage pregnancy not only disrupts the child's life in general it usually interrupts the educational process too because if we are not careful most of them become teenage mothers and they just quit. The next thing you know they are on welfare and everybody is trying to take care of them. I am real concerned about this social vicious cycle that our kids are caught up in. You have grandmothers who were teen mothers then their daughters were teen mothers and now here they are teen mothers. The cycle just keeps going on and on and they are coming from situations where they are having a real tough time breaking the cycle and I am trying to convince them that education is a way to break it. But you can't get the education if you have to stop to go home to take care of the kids. You have to make the sacrifice and I am telling them you have to delay some of that gratification, some of this good easy living. You have got to put off until you get yourself in a position where you can take care of those children and take care of yourself without having somebody to take care of both of you. And that is the difference. So I have a lot of concerns out there but I am still convinced that education is the way to address it.

Goldie: It is the way. I appreciate you taking this time on