

R E S O U R C E S

A Quarterly of the



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PROFESSOR MARK HANNA WATKINS

Richard D. Ralston

Mark Hanna Watkins, whose collection of recordings, published and unpublished writings, language slips, and graduate school papers have been deposited at the Archives, speaks to Richard Ralston in the Howard University Department of Anthropology on February 24, 1969. Watkins recounts his life as a black graduate student at the University of Chicago in the 1930's and his association with Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the Malawian who later became and continues to serve as head of state. Richard Ralston who now teaches on the Afro-American Studies faculty of the University of Wisconsin, was conducting research for his doctoral dissertation at the time of the interview.

Q. Dr. Watkins, could we begin with a word or two about how you came to know Hastings Banda and about the nature of your relationship with him?

A. I was under Dr. Sapir, that was Edward Sapir, famous linguist and anthropologist. They paid him [Banda] to work with me and I collected some ethnographic material as well as linguistic material, but primarily linguistic. I believe that was 1930. I'm not sure. I remember when he came there, I was the only Negro, you know, in the department. And after he worked with me some time he stopped and made a confession to me: how disappointed he was that he was going to work with me.

Q. Is that right?

A. That his [Banda's] experience had been that being around American Negroes they'd ask him, you know—I don't know, I couldn't ever get quite out of him what people would ask him. But he said that Negroes were worse than whites. I suppose "Were you a cannibal?" "Do you do this?" and all sorts of things that in those days particularly, Africans were very sensitive

about. So one day he said, "You know, I'm surprised, you don't ever ask me any of those questions." I think he said, "If I am cannibal" or something like that, so I said, "Wait. You know I am a student of anthropology, we know cultures differ. What is different with you is something different. So I don't ask you all that." And he told me all about these experiences you see. Then he said, "I was so sorry when I came there and I found out you were the one man I was to work with." But he said, "I found out you don't do that." So we got along very well. You see, sometimes if something came up in our discussion which he felt that I might regard him as being a savage for having—or whatever it was, or any of these names you want to put—for having discussed it, he might deny knowing about it. But I had read a book about the Bavenda by a South African whose name was H. A. Stayt. And the Bavenda are now in Southern Rhodesia or the Northern Transvaal or one, but their customs were very much like those of the Achews. And I would say "Banda, this surprises me that you don't know about that, the customs those people have. They have so many things in common with you." And I would just tell it to him, you see. But I would just tell him the way I'm talking to you. I wouldn't tell him this was bizarre. As a matter of fact, I don't feel that way. I am an anthropologist. If it's a custom it's a custom, what you do, you do. So I would tell him and he would look at me in great surprise and say, "I didn't know you knew that," and then he'd tell me about his. A number of times that would happen. When he finally discovered [this] he said, "You know, I find you don't think I'm this [or that]." I told him, "No, you're a man just like me." And we used to go around Chicago, that was in 1930. We would tell people we were brothers. You see people in those days saw very few Africans;

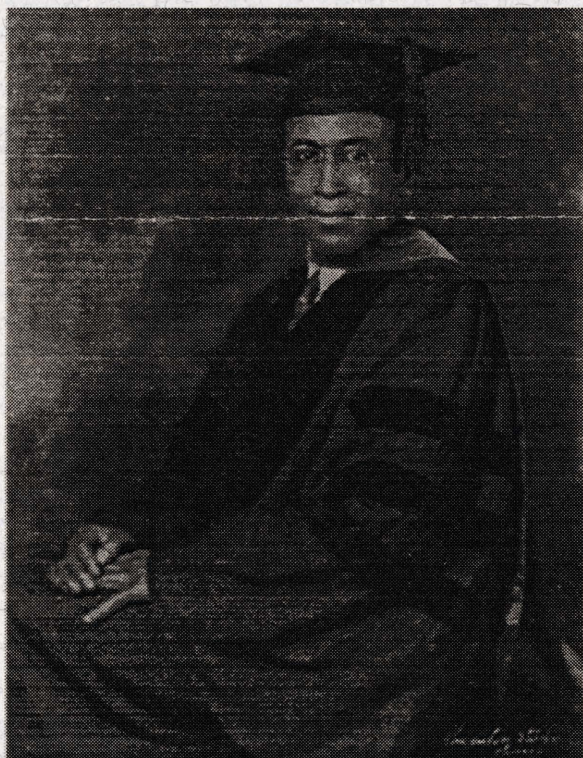


Mark Hanna Watkins in his office

Negroes saw very few Africans. I remember one day I roomed in a place and he roomed in the place and a woman used to come down and say she wanted to see this great African you know, and I would say I am the African, and she ran from me. I said I'm the African and I'm going to get you, and she ran. But he and I would go around there and we would say we were brothers. And then I would tell a person, "You see, you say Africans are so different, but you accepted him as my brother, and we are not brothers. This man is an African from Africa." That's the kind of experience we would have.

Q. How old would you say he was when you first met him?

A. He's as old as I am ... about as old as I am. I don't guess he's any older. And I'm 65, now that was '30 .. he's close. If he isn't 65 he is close to it. So that was in the ... I'm sure it was '30, that would be 35 years ago, wouldn't it? And that would mean I was about what, 30? So he was right in there too. He was right around 30, we were so close. We said we were brothers, he might have been younger than I, I don't know, but he isn't much, if any, younger than I am.



Mark Hanna Watkins

Q. Dr. Watkins, let me read you a description of Banda written by a missionary and ask you whether or not you would have so described him. This was written in South Africa. "This brown boy with his intelligent face and splendid learning, beaming with vigor and hardened for the race ahead of him...." And still another one written by a missionary in the United States: "Rarely has it been my privileged to converse with a young man who has shown more intelligence than young Banda." Are those...[descriptions you would agree with]?

From The Director

You will no doubt notice our slightly altered format as we adopt a new masthead that reflects our current brochure design. (Copies of our attractive brochure are available upon request.)

This winter, **Mary Russell Bucknum**, our Associate Director and Librarian is on sabbatical in Regensburg, Germany where she is conducting research on jazz performance and visiting a number of European archives. Her husband, **David Bucknum**, is a Fullbright Scholar in Regensburg also.

Our Listening Library is amply staffed with **Karen Jung**, jazz and blues Cataloger, and **Rick Torgerson**, Laura Boulton Librarian. **Terry Chasteen** serves as Receptionist and **Trina Gross** conducts research for the NEH jazz project. **Jackie Alvarez** and **Evangelia Costantakos** work as Library Assistants.

Our tape processing and documentation staff consists of **Cathy Brigham**, **Jerry McIlvain**, **Susan Oehler**, and **Daniel Reed**. **Nora Dial** serves as Technical Specialist and **Marilyn Graf** is our Archivist and supervisor of tape processing.

A new staff position of Computer Specialist has been developed and **Karen Atkins** serves us in the capacity. We find an ever increasing need for a computer expert to solve many problems in that area.

Communicating with the Archives

Many of you write us letters to inquire about collections or other issues. Remember that we can also be reached by facsimile (812-855-6673) or by e-mail. If you want to inquire about collections or tape copies, communicate with Marilyn Graf our Archivist.

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Resound

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A. I would agree with them completely. The man had a great mind, very intelligent, and a perfect gentleman as a matter of fact. But I enjoyed, you know, I really enjoyed working with him. He was very nice. Well, I used to trick him, I guess, he never caught me. But he would get tired, you know, it gets hot in Chicago, it gets hot there as it does anywhere else. And it would get summer-time and he'd get very tired, and he would say, "Well, I don't know any more stories and we can't work this evening. I don't know anything else." And I'd say "What about proverbs?" And he'd say, "No, I don't know any proverbs." Well, if he did that way and he was hot and he was miserable, well I was too, but I needed to get more work done you know. So I had a fixed—well, I don't know how many times I did it, but I know I did it several times and it worked every time—I would stop then and say, just drop the subject about work and collecting data, and just start and say that he was a pure African. I said, "You know you're a pure African and you know about your ancestors and all this, and you're pure. And here I am named Watkins and I don't know even where I got

"We would tell people we were brothers. You see people in those days saw very few Africans; Negroes saw very few Africans."

the name Watkins except I probably got it from the slave ancestors ... who owned my grandfather. And I'm mixed and I don't even know how mixed I am and what I'm mixed with, but I suppose I have some Indian, and I'd say all that sort of thing, which was true, but I wasn't regretting that, I didn't give a damn. But I would lament my mixture and all this business, you know, and praise his purity, and he knew that his name was Banda and here I didn't even know what my real name is, and so on and so forth....

Q. In order to coax him out?

A. And he would go right back to work. Yes, I did it more than once and he'd say, "Oh, I believe I know another story." He'd start the, dictating story, I'd take it down, and he would forget all about that he told me he didn't know anything else. (It wasn't much work at all.) It worked several times that way. And the other technique I had, ...when he would say he didn't know about something, some custom, would be, if I knew about it, to tell him. And I'd say "It's a bit odd to me you never heard of that," but we got along very well. As a matter of fact I didn't even know that he resented me at first. He had difficulty with my speech. He would use "hear" for "understand." He said, "...I've got to work with this man, I just said to myself work 'with this man' and he's going to ask me all these questions and I can't even 'hear' him," but he meant "understand." In his language the verb to hear means understand. So you see, I didn't know he had all this in his mind until he liked me so well, you know, working with it, he came out and told me all about it. That's when I discovered that he had this [resentment]. I'm glad I didn't know it because all I had to do was be myself and we got along fine. But I might have been go

ing out of my way to be nice and he might have caught that. It's much better that I could have won his confidence by just being myself with him.

Q. Certainly. About how long into your relationship was it before he [was comfortable with you]?

A. I don't remember how long we'd worked. I know it took me six months to learn how to translate one form of the verb. I did that by accident. I don't know how long we'd been working together before he told me that. I always assumed that I was, I was a graduate student, a professional anthropologist, but I assumed I'm an anthropologist now and if something goes wrong, in the culture, and he doesn't understand it and [or] he misunderstands me, it's my responsibility to make it clear. But I'd say the most dramatic thing to happen to me. ...I had lived with a family, I had a room and he had a room, so I would go to his place so many times a week and work with him, most of the work we did like that; I worked with him in the afternoon. And he was very much fond of sweets, candy, anything [like that]. So the lady where I lived bought or made a cake. Well she gave me a piece of that and I thanked her, so she said, after I'd eaten mine, she said, "Are you going to work with your African friend tonight?" I said, "Yes ma'm, I'm going to work with him tonight." So she said, "Do you think he'd like a piece of this cake?" Well, I knew Banda was fond of cake, candy, anything like that, just don't give him any milk. So I said, "Oh yes, he's very fond of cake." So she wrapped me up a piece and gave it to me and said, "When you go give it to him and tell him I sent that." I got there, I remember the lady's name was Brown, and I went up to his room to work and I passed him this cake. Well, you know I had eaten mine before she even suggested that she might send him a piece. So I said, "Here Banda, here's some cake Mrs. Brown sent you." He knew them because he came to my room too, we lived about two blocks apart. So he opened it up and said let's eat it. Well, what would you have done under those circumstances? What would you have done?

Q. I expect I would have had a piece with him.

A. Ah, but you—well, I didn't feel that way. She had given me a piece and he was very fond of cake. I ate mine. It didn't seem right for me then to turn and eat some of his, I'd seem greedy, so I said no. I didn't say it, you know, in a strong way. I said no, she gave me a piece which I ate before I came here and this is for you. You know I just wasn't going to take his because it didn't seem right. So he wrapped it right back up, and put it aside. And you see for Banda to do that with a piece of cake, I knew something was wrong and very wrong, but I didn't know what it was. But you see I always assumed it was something I did wrong, so I said, "What's wrong? That's nice cake Banda, why don't you eat that?" Well, he said he was going to eat it later. Well I knew that wasn't true. But I didn't know what it was and I assumed I must have done something wrong with it, because he was refusing cake. So I kept after him and what I used to do, I had a technique you know, it was a good method: I would ask about custom. I would say, well now, suppose we were

in Nyasaland—it was then Nyasaland you know—I'd say, suppose we were in Nyasaland and I were among your people, and I would create the situation, say, what is it I should do then, you see. So I said that to him, I said, "suppose we were in Nyasaland, I among your people, and I had food and I had eaten and then I brought you some. Would you expect me to eat what I had brought you even"—I said, I made it strong, I said—"Would you expect me to be so selfish as to eat some of the food I gave you even though I had eaten already?" He didn't crack a smile. He looked me straight in the face and said, "If you didn't how would I know you weren't poisoning me?" I knew that was what [he thought] was wrong with that cake. Well, I was just taken aback. Here was my friend, I had been working with him at least a half year or longer, and for him to say, to suggest, that I was there trying to poison him. You know, to us that sounds very bad. You know that, don't you? I mean that sounds very bad for somebody to say I'm trying to poison him.

Q. Right.

A. And he was serious! So I said, "Oh no, ...I wouldn't poison you." I explained to him—you know, at first I was hurt and I forgot about the difference in custom. I just began to say, you know, I felt hurt that a man would feel that I'd want to poison him. So I began to tell him, I said, "You know we're friends, we've been working together and I like you, and why should I want to poison you?" Well I forgot how we—he finally sort of came around and recognized that, well, you know, that was our custom, that we did this sort of bizarre thing. But then I shifted from that to say "No thank you, I have eaten." I went on to the language work. After we got that settled, I think I insisted that we—I knew he would throw that cake away, no matter what—so I insisted we were going to eat it and I ate some of it so it made him eat it, you see, with me. Well you see, with another American or another European, I suppose it never would have occurred, that, you know—it never would have occurred to me—that this was improper for me to offer him food which he didn't see me eat some of, you see. It would never have occurred to me.... Well, I went on to try to say "no thank you, I've eaten." Well, I had two forms ... of the past tense of eat, or at least having eaten was ... called past tense loosely. And what happened was that he would always translate it as I did eat or I did sleep, or whatever it was, I did look and the other one he would say: I looked. And I found out that the "did" thing—you see you'd say "Why didn't you look?" and I'd say, "I did look." That's emphatic.

Q. Yes.

A. And well, I discovered it wasn't that. I used to just write down this form of the verb and call it the "did" form.

Q. You didn't know it was a special form?

A. No, I didn't know what it was. I knew it was different in form, it had some difference in meaning, but I didn't know what it was or how to use it. So I tried to

say "No thank you, I have eaten." Now fortunately I used the wrong form. I should have used the "did" form and didn't. Because, one reason is that the "did" form bothered me. And I wouldn't try to use that because I didn't know what it meant. I did so and so.... And I didn't know what it meant so I used another form. Well he said, "No that's wrong." I said "What was wrong? Din't I say "No thank you?" He said "Yes." Then I said well didn't I say "eaten"? He said "yes." Well I said that's what I want to say, "No thank you, I've eaten." And I said it again. "No!" He said, "Well you said it, but if you say it to me that way it would make me know that you were hungry, and if you are hungry I'd feel that I ought to give you something." You see he would never put the "but." So what I was saying was, "I did eat but I'm now hungry," and if I'm hungry and you are my friend, to put it in terms of his culture, the tribal culture there, you don't let your friend or relative [if] he's at your place, you don't let him go hungry. So that solved my problem about the verb. I'd been working on that thing at least six months. And this custom, you see, then I found out that that's true, throughout Negro Africa, that you don't give a person food or drink, you let him see you take a little.

A. You know that don't you? Do you know that?

Q. I found that out, yes.

"Here was my friend, I had been working with him at least a half year or longer, and for him to say, to suggest, that I was there trying to poison him...."

A. Yes, yes. Well I found it out. That's how I learned it. And after I used to try it. I'd try it with African students now, and we have fun that way. But it took me something like six, seven months once to learn what one time, what he was doing. He was saying "Yes" but I didn't know it. As a matter of fact he was saying ...[throaty noise with sharp inhalation of breath]. I would ask him a question and he would say ...[breath intake]. Well, I thought that was an insult to him so I would drop the subject.

Q. But this was a response?

A. He was saying "Yes." I didn't know that was yes. So one day a missionary came there from the Congo, and Dr. Sapir told me "Take this missionary with you and let him see how you work," so we tried to teach him something about how to do a study of the language base. So I took him over there, and he asked Banda something and he said ...[breath intake], so the man said "Ah, you said 'yes' the same way the boys do where I came from!" [This was] the first time I found out he was saying "yes" and that I wasn't insulting him. You see I got—particularly after that poison business, you know—I was very careful [and] if I hurt his feelings I wanted him to know it was ignorance, that it wasn't malice, you see. So I would be very careful. If he said ...[breath intake] I'd

look at him and I didn't know what it meant so I'd drop the subject. That's when I found out he was saying yes all the time, then I didn't have to worry about it.

Q. This reminds me of something. He evidently acted as an interpreter for a while in South Africa. What were some of the other languages he spoke besides Chewa? Chinyanga?

A. Well, if you speak Chichewa, you speak Chinyanga. Chichewa is really just a dialect of Chinyanga. I mean that is—no, I don't think he could speak that. He said they put in the paper that he forgot his language. I asked him about that when he came out of jail from Rhodesia. He came here and I went out and had dinner with him and another man from Chicago. And I said all that was nonsense. Matter of fact I said "*muli bwino*," when I first [saw him], that's [the] greeting. "*Muli bwino*" you see, is really "Are you well." And he was so delighted. Before he said anything I said, "Oh, I forgot, I read in the paper you forgot your language. I should say 'How do you do' or something like that." He said "Oh no, no." Then he answered me in Chichewa, you see. And he went right back to his old, very pleasant personal personality, nothing rough about him whatever, and the whole evening. But we went to a meeting and he and Dr.

"But as soon as he got with a group and began to talk about political business he went right back and put on that lion's skin...."

Kaunda, were there. Well now, Kaunda sits with his hands folded—this way, isn't it? It's a particular pose he has—and he was very mild. And Banda got up, ... and he was shaking that little group out in Georgetown. I mean he was twisting every lion's tail around. Then we got in the car and I took him back to his hotel. Right back to the old, very pleasant, modest personality. "You know," I said, "Banda, I didn't even know whether I should come to see you. I'm just an ordinary man. I'm just a school teacher, I'm just an ordinary person. And here you are, a big politician." He said "Oh no, no. We're friends." And he would just treat me with the greatest, just the same sort of attitude he had back when we were students together in Chicago. But as soon as he got with a group and began to talk about political business he went right back and put on that lion's skin....

Q. Is this what you meant...

A. ...and I asked this man about it. [About Banda's dual personality]. The man said [it] was ... when they had the—what was that called, Central African ...?

Q. Federation.

A. Yes, Federation. That's right, wasn't it? Rhodesia, the two Rhodesias, and Nyasaland. I don't know what it was called. Anyway, as you know, the headquarters

were in Southern Rhodesia and they had Banda in jail. Do you remember, they kept him in jail a long time. And then he had come after that. Well, there was a white man, I should say: "European," that's African, and I asked him—well... I was very disappointed, really. You've seen the news on Banda. And I hated [to hear such news about] my good friend, and I just said I don't believe Banda can be that way, not the way I know him. And so I asked this man about him and he said, "Oh no, no, he is just the way you think he is. He feels that he is forced to be this way in order to be a political leader. He's got to [act] rough in order to do that. And so," he said, "he puts on that garment for that, but when he's with you he isn't dealing politically, he's just dealing with you as a friend, so he's just the kind, nice man that you know him as. He's the same man, same man." We never did [discuss political subjects], we used to discuss about when he went back how ...he would as a physician, find support from the government, where he could do work for his people. You see the people wouldn't be able to support him as a physician, certainly not back then, they don't get much now, you know. We used to discuss, well you know, the government hospital. If he were a doctor in a government hospital and supported by the government, how much he might do for his people. That's the sort of thing we used to discuss. We never discussed anything about politics at all.

Q. Did he ever talk about what brought him to the United States, why he desired to come?

A. I don't remember that at all. I know he did go to Wilberforce. There was another man who went to Wilberforce. Well... Wilberforce is with [the] Methodist Church and they had a mission, and they had contacts, so that's how Africans in that part of Africa heard about it. That's probably how he got there.

Q. Now I've seen something that says he wanted to go back and be a medical missionary.

A. When he left the United States?

Q. Yes.

A. Well, I don't know what he had in mind. See ... my notion was, my picture for him was: he would go back ... I don't know what he had in his mind, I even talked about it, and he would talk about it. He seemed to have the same picture, but I don't know what he really had [in mind]—but my notion was: go back after he got his medical degree. He said he had to go to England you know, to get the tropical medical certificate. You couldn't practice with a Meharry degree in Africa—or with an American degree—you had to have a British degree. So my notion was that he would go back—I didn't know whether they had a government hospital—but get a government hospital; he could be the doctor in the government hospital, supported by the colonial government, and do great work, medical work, for his people. That was my picture for him. Now, he would agree when I would talk about it, talk with him about that. Now, he might have had something else in his mind, or he might

have changed it, I don't know. But that was our notion about—now it might be that that's where he got the notion of being a medical missionary, maybe he thought about that too somewhat.

Q. So far as you know he always thought in terms of being a doctor?

A. Oh yes, I mean I was really surprised ... you see the picture I had of him, personally, he would be as big a political failure as I, and God knows I'd be a big one. You couldn't be worse than I. The picture I had when I began to read about him I thought "He's a politician?" You know, it just didn't make sense. And the rough one that he was, you see, I just couldn't believe it, when I first began to hear that. Now you know conditions have changed a great deal. When he got back, Ghana was independent, at any rate because he had spent two years in Ghana, hadn't he?

Q. Right. His first stop in Africa was Ghana.

A. Yes, but he practiced in Liverpool for some time, after he was at the University of Edinburgh.

Q. What sort of courses was he taking in Chicago, were they pre-med?

A. There's one course I remember him taking that had nothing to do with medicine.

Q. What was that?

A. It was English number so and so, but everyone who took a bachelor's degree from Chicago had to take it. I think he took chemistry—he must have taken chemistry and other things. In fact, he had some at Indiana while he was at Indiana. He probably had some there too. But this course he had to take. You couldn't take a bachelor's degree at Chicago. If you came up you had to take this course. If you transferred from another school as an undergraduate and if you wanted to take a bachelor's degree you had to take this course in English composition. He came to me, you know I was then just a graduate student, and complained about the professor. He hadn't been to class, but he had heard from some American Negro student that this professor was very much prejudiced. And the man had really done him a damage but it had poisoned him against him. So he came to me and complained. And I said, "Now look, Banda, I don't know the man, but I'm just a student, you know, myself, so the only thing I could advise you to do would be to go give the man a trial. If after you've been there, say about two weeks, and you find that this man is negative and all that sort of thing against you, then go to the Dean and complain." But, I said, I would give him a chance. He went. Well, about two weeks later, why, that was his favorite [course]. He was enjoying this man, he liked this man, he was his favorite teacher, and I said, "You see, you see what I told you. You have to give people a chance to see how they are, you can't just lump people together." Well I asked him then who told him that, and he said some Negro boy. Well I said, "You know he prob-

ably flunked the course, and this was his excuse." I used to tease my white fellow students, [saying] obviously if you flunk a course you're dumb and you've got to say so, but if I flunk all I've got to do is say the teacher's prejudiced and I've got a good excuse. I mean we used to have a lot of fun like that, you know. And so I don't know why the man told him that, you see, he had gotten that impression, but somebody had poisoned him about that teacher. I can't swear to it, if he took chemistry at Chicago. But he went down to Meharry to medical school.

Q. Was Meharry selected because the number of schools open to Negroes was so ...[limited]?

A. I'm trying to think, I don't know why. He was very fortunate, while he was there. You see Professor Sapir was not only a distinguished anthropologist and linguist, but he knew a lot of people. He got some rich woman interested in him, who must have been British because she would support people from the, I think if you were from England or a British subject otherwise. Of course I couldn't get anything. I didn't try. Dr. Sapir evidently, told me, I don't remember what; I know I wasn't eligible to try to even get some money from that woman. But she took care of him. She gave him money

"He rarely-anybody, as far as I know, who associated with Banda had to like him because he was such a, he was a really perfect little gentleman."

and everything and sent him to Meharry. So she might have picked Meharry herself. She was paying his fees. Mrs. somebody, I don't remember her name, but she was some rich woman, and she would do that, as I understood it, for a person who was a British subject of some form or other, had to be a British subject. And she probably sent him on to Edinburgh. I think she did, as a matter of fact.

Q. I see.

A. The department paid him when he was working with me, but then he got onto that and then he went on to Meharry, he wasn't working, he was being supported. Everything was paid for—clothing, food, everything. Schooling, everything.

Q. Did Banda have friends among the Negro community or not? ... I take it from what you've said that he didn't move easily among ...

A. Neither one of us moved. ... [laughter]. We were in school. I didn't either, I didn't know anybody. I went to school.

Q. But he must have spoken at churches and that sort of thing. Did he do that?

A. I guess he did around there sometime. I don't

know, I don't remember his doing that. I just don't remember that he did that, but he might have. See, at that time, this was in the '30's, the American Negro people were much less acquainted with Africans, knew much less. They had a stereotyped picture in general about Africans. So if he had any it must have been some white ones, with churches or something like that. But I don't remember him doing that. This was in Chicago. Now he may have done some of these things when he was down at Kokomo. But he was probably on a white mission or something like that. I don't remember that in Chicago at all. I remember he used to go to a little movie, a little moving-picture house on Michigan Avenue and 55th Street, somewhere around there. I took him there once, I think. And then I would find—I discovered he was going back. I knew the people were very fond of him. I don't remember their names. He rarely—anybody, as far as I know, who associated with Banda had to like him because he was such a, he was really a perfect little gentleman. Very nice, very intelligent. No question about it. Good record in school, everything. He was a good ... first class man.

Q. Did he ever tell you what he thought of his experiences at Wilberforce and Indiana and places before Chicago?

"He felt the oppression, or whatever you want to say of it, of colonialism...who wouldn't?"

A. No, I don't remember discussing that with him. We didn't discuss that. When I was with him I was discussing Chichewa, the language, the customs, I never discussed things like that. As a matter of fact this business of having been insulted—outraged, as a matter of fact he was—with the questions people would ask him, you know. And at that time I suppose African students were sensitive, but Banda was very sensitive. You had to be careful, you know... I happened to be a trained in anthropology, so, I mean it was perfectly normal that he might have a custom which was different from ours. I knew they had polygamy, so on, and the clans and so on, and you know, things which would be to a layman something very different and they might ask a lot of questions and ask the wrong question. ... It was normal to me you see, so that I never did fall in that trap. Now once in a while I might have said something to him; sometimes I would just say ...—OK see, I don't know whether you know what a clan is: a clan is a group of people which regard themselves as having a common ancestor. In his case it was matrilineal. And his mother's clan was Piri. *Banda* was his father's clan name. I don't know how he got to have that rather than Piri. But I do remember one time he looked at me with a dirty look, and I backed out. It was about a woman of your clan, whether you knew her as being real kin or not, in our sense, was the same as a sister.

I remember one time we were discussing—a subject would come up and I would collect the vocabulary

on it. I would collect the vocabulary. We got on insects. We were discussing termites. You know those termites they've got in Africa they call them ants but they're termites. And the larva of one type they ate. And he gave me the name for that and he ran back and said, "That's my favorite dish." Well you know, he might have said that to a layman, you know, and he would have said, "Oh my God, do you eat those things?" Well this would be the worst thing. It didn't occur to me [to be shocked]. He said it was his favorite dish, so it was his favorite dish. and I didn't even have to suppress anything. That's what he said. Of course it was very interesting to me that they ate the larva of those things. No, I took the name down and got the plural and so on. I remember one time though, he did show that sensitivity to me; I asked him "chiwuta" it's the Chichewa word for "God." What is the plural of chiwuta ... So he said, you can't say the plural of that word, and I said why not? Well he said, there's only one God, so you can't have a plural. Well you know, I've done that with American Indians' work where I could see that they were backing away from their custom or something or other where I would assure them that I have as much respect for that custom as I have for my own. So I said, now look here Banda, now we're speaking English. I said we may say god singular, gods plural, and the English speaking people are Christians and presumably they have one God, but we're saying God. And I don't know whether there's one God or many, and I really don't care. But I'm saying God in English and gods plural. So I don't see why, I'm sure you have a plural, and I was pretty sure he knew what it was. So he gave me the plural. But I mean with that sort of thing you had to be very careful, in those days, particularly, with them. Because they were very sensitive. I remember a man and woman from Liberia I taught at Fisk. ... [You had to] almost force her, [in] anything about customs, you know. You had to let her know you knew this was custom more or less to get it out of her, otherwise she wouldn't admit anything like this. So he figured if you have gods that's polygamy, I mean that's paganism or something like that, that makes him inferior, so he wasn't even going to give me the Chichewa word "achiwuta." "Achiwuta" is the plural, and I knew it was either "achiwuta" or "wachiwuta." But he gave it to me and we went right on, you see. And later on, it was right after that I know, that he told me he was surprised I didn't ask him a lot of stupid questions and all those things. I said, "I think you are just a man just like me and have a different culture from ours, some things are different from ours, that's perfectly normal." All people, everywhere you have cultural variation and so there's nothing wrong with that.

Q. Let me ask you one final question. What do you think Banda took away from his education in the States mostly? Would you have predicted ...?

A. Well, I guess he took two kinds: he took a liberal [education]—he was a good liberal arts student; he took that. Then he took his professional training from med school—Meharry. I mean, that's what I would think. I know he liked English, he wrote well, and he liked history. I don't know how many courses he took in history,

but I'm sure he must have taken one at least; he liked history.

Q. Philosophically though, what would he have taken away do you think? I mean in terms of his ...

A. You mean outlook on life?

Q. Right, this sort of thing.

A. I don't know. I couldn't speculate on that. I don't know whether he had in mind at the time—well, but he still felt, that wouldn't be from school, that's how he felt on life. He felt the oppression, or whatever you want to say of it, of colonialism ... who wouldn't? I mean however quiet it might have been, they felt it. I remember he told me, you know he went from what was then Nyasaland, to South Africa before he came to the States. Now he told me when he was in mission school in Nyasaland, he said when he went down to South Africa you know that all the people—he was talking about missionaries, well that was beautiful, love, brotherhood, all this business. And he said, "When I went on to South Africa I just couldn't believe [it], I said these people aren't Christians." Now whether he was reconstructing a thing how he felt at that time, he said he just couldn't believe it. And then I remember one time, sometime we would discuss something about native customs, you know, tribal customs, and I remember one time he said, "Oh sometimes I wish the white man had never come to my people." That these old ways were good and so on. Well I mean he felt all that, I'm sure every African did. And even those who were still in the tribe felt that way. I mean a lot of people did. I figure that among the Indians down in Central America—when suddenly, after I got to be a friend among them, made them forget about me, I suddenly would come up that showed how they really felt. I don't know whether the Indians in Guatemala were citizens and could vote or not, but when I was there, it was 1946, everybody who was a citizen had to vote or get an excuse not to. But ...Guatemala had two types [classes], you either had to be a Latino or an Indian. The Indians in Guatemala, contrary to Mexico, were regarded as inferior and mistreated and the government was highly oppressive. Well now, after I got to be friends in the village with the Indians, you see I would find out how they really felt. So I mean it must have been true that way too. But I wouldn't say. I don't see how, I don't think he felt he necessarily learned that here. I suppose his being here and having a different situation had something to do with it.

Q. How about political philosophy?

A. I don't know. As I said, my picture for him was "go back, be a good physician, get the government to set up a hospital, and then you don't have to depend upon you people for income, you know, the government will pay if you're going to be the physician in the hospital, and that way you can do a lot for your people. That was my picture for him and he never told me "no." And if he had something else in mind, I didn't get it.

Q. Well, thank you very much Dr. Watkins.

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