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Excerpts from Robert H. Randolph's book "Rich White Folks, Growing Up Black in America"

p. 101: Including Basil [North] and me, [in academic year 1955-1956] there were about 15 Blacks out of a student body of 2,400 on the KCU [Kansas City University] campus.

pp. 103-104: The first semester, … I also took another stab at math by taking a course in College Algebra. This was my last chance to resolve my long-standing ambivalence towards math…The second semester…one bright spot was an "A" I made in College Algebra. In fact, I was exempted from having to take the final exam because I did so well on tests during the semester. Given my previous struggles with Algebra, this result was exhilarating. Suddenly, all of my high school Algebra work came together. It all made perfect sense. Finding out at age eighteen that you are not mentally retarded is a truly rewarding experience.

p. 106: [In the 1956-1957 academic year, second semester] I looked around to see the courses in which I was doing well, and decided to major in Mathematics. Actually, my reasoning was that I would take math courses until I flunked out then I would change to another major. Later, in 1957, when the Russians launched the first spacecraft, Sputnik [Oct. 4, 1957], it seemed that I had made the right choice. Because, all the media were saying that the country had to stress science and science-related knowledge. So, with a degree in math, I thought I had a good chance of getting a decent job.

p. 114: By now [1957-1958 academic year, second semester], I was a full-blown math major, taking advanced math courses. The second semester improved and school became easier to handle. One day I started working on an Advanced Calculus proof involving partial differential equations. I was following the proof as outlined in the text until I got to a point where several steps had been left out. I worked on this for three or four days, off and on. Finally, one afternoon I closed myself in an empty phone booth in the dorm. I declared that I was not coming out of that phone booth until I had solved the problem. About three hours later, I arrived at the insight needed to complete the proof. This experience made me feel like a big time mathematician.

pp. 127-128: In addition to my track escapades, I did very well academically in my senior year [1958-1959] at KCU. I made "A's' and "B's" consistently, with the exception of an advanced math course called Vector Analysis. The Vector Analysis Professor was German and his accent was so thick that he was embarrassed himself by it. He was so embarrassed that he would go to the board and start working on an example problem the minute class started. Without explaining what he was doing, he would grunt his way through an hour or so of laborious problem solving on the board. After a while, I stopped going to class and got tutoring from a friend who would help me enough to barely pass the tests when they came up. The professor was kind and gave me a "D" rather than an "F". That turned out o the critical grade I needed to graduate.

Other than the fact that I had bought into the propaganda that any science or science-related degree would be a gold mine as far as a job was concerned, I had no clue what I would do with a math degree. Teaching seemed like a good place to start. So, I began taking course in the Education Department, because I thought it would be a good idea to have a teaching certificate as backup. I took all the education courses required to get a certificate, except the Practice Teaching course. I figured I could do that later. I was thrilled when the Professor of Educational Psychology asked to keep a copy of the final paper I wrote about my theory that maturity and struggle were critical to the successful learning of Mathematics.

p. 128: Graduation day was on Sunday, May 31, 1959. I received a bachelor's degree in Mathematics, with all the rights and privileges pursuant thereto.