Scope and Background Note
In this oral history interview, Durham Carter discusses his experiences attending Booker T. Washington and Howard Elementary schools (both located in Columbia, South Carolina), commenting specifically on the teachers, notable graduates, and classes and extracurricular activities that were available. Carter also discusses his experiences at Allen University, his masters degree work at Indiana University, his career as a high school teacher and counselor in Aiken, South Carolina, his participation in the integration of schools, and his civic work in the Martin Luther King, Jr. community of Columbia, where he founded the Waverly Valley Farm Neighborhood Association. Durham Immanuel Carter was born in 1928 to Laurence and Lillie Carter in Richland County, South Carolina. Tom Crosby interviewed Durham Immanuel Carter at his residence in Columbia, South Carolina, on May 22, 2007. Interview covers Carter's primary school education at Booker T. Washington and Howard Elementary Schools during the 1930s and secondary education at Booker T. Washington High School (grades 7-11) from 1941 to 1946.
**Tom Crosby Oral History Collection**

**Durham Carter Oral History Interview**

**Interviewee: Durham I. Carter**

**Interviewer: Tom Crosby**

**CROS# 009**

**May 22, 2007**

*Tom Crosby:* Today is May 22, 2007 and I’m at the residence of Mr. Durham Carter in Columbia, South Carolina. Do you have a middle name, sir?

*Durham I. Carter:* Immanuel.

*TC:* Immanuel, Durham Immanuel Carter. What’s your date of birth?

*DC:* July 13, 1928.

*TC:* Where were you born?

*DC:* Richland County.

*TC:* Richland County. What was the name of the town or the community?

*DC:* Columbia.

*TC:* Columbia. Now what was your elementary school?

*DC:* Elementary school? I started in the first grade at what was known as Booker T. Washington and that was because where we lived in Ward 1, right across from the Booker T. Washington School. In order to go to the elementary school we would have to cross Main Street, which was a name thorough pass, so the first and second grade at Booker T. Washington High School.

*TC:* Booker T. Washington High School?

*DC:* Right.

*TC:* On the basis of knowledge that I remember, you might say, Booker T. Washington had more than one site for that school?

*DC:* No, the only one that I know of was the site there on Marion Street, 400 block of Marion Street. That’s the original site that I know of for Booker T. Washington.

*TC:* I see.

*DC:* I think it might have been the 500 block and we lived in the 400 block of Marion. All that is University property now.

*TC:* University of South Carolina?

*DC:* University of South Carolina.
TC: I see. So when you started to school it was called Booker T.?

TC: School?
DC: High School.

TC: Booker T. Washington High School?
DC: Yes.

TC: And had elementary?

DC: They set aside two classrooms for first and second grade for children who lived on the east side of Main Street to keep them from crossing Main Street to go to Saxon School, which was the elementary school. That was the only elementary school in that area. So the first and second grade that lived from Wheeler Hill to Main Street went to Booker Washington for first and second grade.

TC: I see.

DC: After completing the first grade, promoted to the second grade, my parents moved to the Oscar Hills area of Columbia and I entered in the second grade Howard Elementary School on Williams Street.

TC: Now, that was a state supported school?
DC: Yes, state supported school in District 1.

TC: I see. And then eventually you went back to Booker T. Washington High School at a higher level?

DC: I completed the sixth grade at Howard Elementary School and was promoted to the seventh grade, which I went back to Booker T. Washington, and completed my high school education there, graduating from Booker T. Washington in 1946.

TC: I see. Now through the years I think there has been a Work choir concert?
DC: John Work Chorus.

TC: John Work Chorus?
DC: Yes, that was required of all students in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade.

TC: Oh, they had to participate in that chorus?
DC: It was a must: you participated in the John Work Chorus.

TC: I see. Now who was John Work—do you know anything about him?
DC: Very little. The only thing I know his name was John Work and he was a graduate of Fisk University in the field of music, and that Simmons, the principal, got his name. And he started the John Work Chorus.

TC: I see. So do you know whether he was a graduate of Booker or you’re not sure?
DC: I don’t know.

TC: Now I did my student teaching at Booker T. Washington in 1963 and I think it was still going. I guess they continued that every year until the school closed?
DC: Every year until the school closed, to the best of my knowledge.

TC: I see. Did you have any teachers that you recall that you might wish to make reference to them, anyone that might have made a big impact on your educational development, let’s say, at the high school level?

DC: To be frank with you, I think all of the teachers that taught me had an impact in my life because they taught the whole child. Whatever your academic ability was, they developed you morally, spiritually, civically as well, socially. We learned those things in the classes. We learned how to dress. We learned respect. We learned good manners. We learned Bible verses. At that time you could pray in the classroom. We learned the Twenty-Third Psalm. We learned the Lord’s Prayer. We learned songs. We learned the “Star Spangled Banner.” That is an example of what I meant when I said they educated the whole child. You don’t get it now.

TC: Right, and most likely in the English classes there were certain poems and Shakespeare.

DC: There was so much you had to learn. You had to learn about Macbeth, even if the teacher had to dramatize it. You learned about literature. You learned fractions. You learned how to vote in civics classes. You learned how to bank. Before you finished high school you had to take a mathematics exit exam. If you didn’t pass it, you had to take a refresher course in math. You know, in other words, in order to learn the basics in mathematics before going out into the world to work. They prepared you as well as educating you for the world of work as well as high school. We had to take some trades, carpentry or painting or brick masonry, as well as the academics, in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades.

TC: Now the trades, did females have to—they had to take something, I guess.

DC: Yes, some took home economics. Yes, that was a must and they need those things now in the schools. These kids now coming out of school don’t know anything about setting a table, fixing little a simple menu, following menus and things of that nature. We learned and boys took home economics as well as girls. Some of your beauticians in Columbia today, elderly who haven’t retired, got their cosmetology training and passed the cosmetology exam from Booker T. Washington—Alese Martin, who taught cosmetology.

TC: And you also probably had to take an exit exam in English, too, I suspect.

DC: Oh yes, you just didn’t come out of school because you made a passing grade in these areas. You had to show that you were prepared to go out into the world. Civics, I don’t think they teach civics anymore. We had to take civics.

TC: Were there any—most likely there were—any foreign language courses?

DC: Oh yes, but everybody didn’t go into a foreign language class. If you were in the upper and college bound you took French. I don’t remember any other foreign language being taught but I do remember French being taught.

TC: Do you know if Latin, maybe Greek, was taught years ago at Booker T., do you know?
DC: I believe Latin, yes.

TC: I think that was one, Latin. But if you were in the college prep you had to take foreign language?

DC: Yes.

TC: Okay, now the cultural things that Booker, we’ve already alluded to one and that was the John Work thing, but I’m sure that there probably were other clubs. DC: Art appreciation, dramatics.

TC: And the choir, the band, John Works.

DC: And the various choirs.

TC: Probably dance.

DC: Dance group, the band, oh yes, cultural things that you got involved in. The drama club, they had all the various clubs that you.

TC: That you could find, back then especially. Would you like to name some noted graduates from Booker other than yourself?

DC: Well, I don’t consider myself as being one of those, but Dr. Cooper.

TC: Noble Cooper?

DC: Noble Cooper. Dr. Edward Dargan, who was a noted surgeon who finished Booker Washington and went to med school after the tenth grade. Jackie Williams was one of those. Noble Cooper was one of those. Frank Washington, who entered the education department. William Cannon, who—principals [unclear] Adams, [unclear] my class. Thelma Rogers, who became a registrar over at Benedict. Several of them became teachers in District 1.

TC: Right, and throughout the state.

DC: And throughout the state.

TC: And how about the students? One student went on to medical school in the tenth grade.

DC: Dr. Dargan, Dr. Dargan of Booker T., a top surgeon at Einstein Hospital in New York. And there is a chair at the University for Dr. Dargan and also for Dr. Cooper.

TC: Do you know how this person went on to medical school after the tenth grade?

DC: Took an exit examination in the tenth grade, got a scholarship and went to Morehouse and then Meharry [Medical School].

TC: That was probably some of the recruiting?

DC: That’s right, became accelerated, your upper academic students in school.

TC: And after the tenth grade, that’s good. He’d already had certain courses ahead.

DC: Well, if he hadn’t had them—.

TC: He had done well in whatever the test required.

DC: That’s right.
TC: Okay, your school was also very noted in the athletic area.

DC: Yes, outstanding in football, track, basketball, tennis.

TC: Baseball?

DC: I can’t recall baseball as much as I do football, basketball, track.

TC: May I ask you about how a student became Miss Booker T. Washington High School? Do you recall the criteria that was required back then?

DC: You had to have an academic grade average—it was a C or better—voted on by the student body and personality, poise, character, those kinds of things. And then they become eligible if they applied to be a candidate for Booker Washington.

TC: Various criteria?

DC: Yes, they had to meet various criteria.

TC: You referred to the teachers earlier, but I suspect—I’m sure you could make comments as to the dedication of the teachers. I’m sure they were, right?

DC: Teachers were real dedicated to their task as far as educating boys and girls. And the teachers in our school were devoted to that task and what they were doing and taught the students well.

TC: And they had to perform.

DC: And you learned because they put it on your level that you could accomplish what they were trying to put over. The teacher was always available for you. You could always go back to the teacher if you were not able to grasp what was being taught. The teacher was always available.

TC: And I’m sure you would most likely give credit to the black colleges. At that time they all came from black colleges and the preparation that those colleges gave them, they were primarily teaching preparation for school.

DC: Of course, they were. Most of the teachers came from black colleges. I don’t recall ever having a teacher that came from—that did not graduate, let’s say, from a black college.

TC: At the undergraduate level, of course.

DC: At the undergraduate level. But I do know that I had many that went on to the University, many for a Master’s degree, Michigan State and different places. TC: Indiana.

DC: Indiana and Columbia University, I do know that. But most of the teachers had Master’s degrees at that particular time. But most of the teachers that taught me either came out of Howard University, Benedict College, Johnson C. Smith, Fisk University or Spelman. South Carolina State, of course.

TC: Morris? You don’t recall any right now?

DC: I can’t recall—think of—any of the teachers that came out of Morris.
TC: May I ask you another question at this time? Since you once taught in the public schools here, I think I’ve heard most of the teachers—anybody that that was employed in Richland County—mostly those teachers had no less than a B on the national teacher’s exam, or they tried to get persons; are you familiar with anything like that?

DC: Well, I think that was true. They had to have a B or above to teach in Richland District One, but I cannot say that all of them did have the B.

TC: I understand. But that was an objective I’ve heard.

DC: That was an objective, that was the goal and that was the aim. But I believe that I can truthfully say that I knew some didn’t have a B.

TC: I see. In other words, various ways to skin a cat, so they say?

DC: That’s right.

TC: Okay so after you graduated from Booker T. Washington High School you attended college?

DC: Yes.

TC: And that college was?

DC: Well, at first I had an older sister living in New York and I had gone to New York to visit after finishing high school and she was just telling me about the different colleges in the New York area that you could go free and all those things. So I went to the various colleges, City College and Brooklyn College, picked up applications and I filled some applications out. And from Brooklyn College I got [unclear] where my sister lived that I was accepted and so I started. And after getting in they got all of my transcripts and everything and found out I was not a resident of New York. So that’s when I had to depart New York and I came back in the middle of the semester. And first I went over to Benedict because the semester had started. And the dean, being a neighbor, I went to him and he told me the semester had started so I went to Allen. That’s what he told me to do, go over there and talk to the president. And I went and talked to Dr. Hill. He told me the same thing. But I’ll never forget: “If you feel that you can catch up and stay up and got thirty dollars we’ll let you register late.” And I did.

TC: And you caught up?

DC: I caught up. I went to summer school one summer in four years.

TC: Plus you caught up that semester and passed?

DC: Oh yes. I think my only failing grade at Allen was a science test.

TC: You prefer not to give that name right now?

DC: [unclear].

TC: Well, we all—you know, nobody’s perfect.

DC: And the lady that taught me English was from Charleston. I had an A in English and I had South Carolina History and Religion, science, and something else.
TC: That was that first semester at Allen? And so you had that science course and the grade wasn’t too great that first semester?

DC: That is correct.

TC: You had to learn what you really didn’t know about that first semester at that time?

DC: Knew nothing about him, knew nothing about any of the instructors.

TC: Now what are your thoughts and your comments about your experiences at Allen and the educational preparation that you got there?

DC: I got a thorough education my four years at Allen. I had no problem getting in grad school. I had no problems with maintaining my B average. I went to Indiana; I came out with a B average in 1962. And I truthfully say I owed all that to Allen for the base that I got at Allen University.

TC: Now were you in teacher preparation at that time? Your major was what?

DC: Education.

TC: Okay, so you were in it.

DC: With a minor in social studies.

TC: So you were in teacher preparation?

DC: Yes, so I went into the Army for two years. And I came out of the Army; Walter Solomon, who was the director of the Palmetto Teachers Association, got me a job teaching, starting sometime in January, I believe it was, complete a semester in a rural town called Varnville, South Carolina. I went there and taught the first year and then I—

TC: Excuse me. Do you know what county?

DC: Hampton County. A little one-room, a very small wood frame school and very rural.

TC: That was elementary?

DC: High School.

TC: Did you say it had one room?

DC: No, wooden frame building and they were in the midst of building a high school and was just about completed and I was at this little school here and I stayed that year and then I left and went to Aiken County. I stayed in Aiken County about five years and left teaching.

TC: What level?

DC: High school. High school and guidance counselor.

TC: The name of the school?

DC: Rich Hill.

TC: Rich Hill High School?

DC: Yes, in Ridge Spring, South Carolina but they were in Aiken County, educational
wise. In other words, county-wise it was Saluda County, but because of where we were located geographically, it was Aiken County for education. And Aiken County was a good paying county at that time. And so I stayed there about four or five years and then I left for reasons that I had gotten my Master’s at Indiana University and I had done some advanced writing to get my degree in implementing a guidance program in a rural setting.

TC: That was the paper that you wrote at Indiana University?

DC: Yes. And a county started token integration and there were twelve African American students at Ridge Hill High School that had signed up to go to the white school, Ridge Spring-Monetta High School. And they started in that county, that district, token integration with the staff but it was only with the guidance counselor. I went to the white school. A white counselor came to my school. So it all ended up that everything—. When the white counselor came to my school, my office was—everything was filed, and everything was open to her. When I went over there everything was locked.

So we had our in-service training program for the teachers the following year. I found out that my work that I did in Indiana had been copied in the county and distributed to be implemented, and I made an issue out of it. And then that’s when I came to Columbia and went to the state office for the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, applied for a job, was called to be tested in another week and was accepted after taking the examination. And in two weeks I was called to be a counselor in District 2 with a new program that they were implementing in school District 2 in Richland. At the same time they offered me a job as assistant principal at the then known as [unclear] Dill High School but I rather stayed with state government.

So I took on the job of being counselor and evaluator in this project, Andrew Jackson, dealing with special children where all of these children were under the auspices of vocational rehabilitation. They had IQ’s below 70, which made them eligible to be a client of vocational rehabilitation. And from there I stayed with state government and worked my way up to first the African American supervisor in the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and to the assistant commission for the department, when I retired in 1994.

TC: Congratulations.

DC: Thank you.

TC: So you’ve had a very interesting career.

DC: All that because of—.

TC: Various things.

DC: Yes.

TC: Now some time ago you mentioned to me about I think it was part of the integration period some students were at your school and were trying to (unintelligible)

DC: Well, that last school where I was the guidance counselor, audio (unintelligible) coordinator.

TC: You didn’t have (unintelligible)?
DC: No, there were twelve students who said that they wanted to go.
TC: To the white school?
DC: To the white school. The superintendent and the principal—.
TC: Excuse me. About what year was that, around ’69 or ’70 I guess, ’68?
DC: That might have been ’64, 1964 or ’65.
TC: I see. That’s kind of early.
DC: Yeah. I know that because I came to state government in ’66 or ’67.
TC: So it was like the middle ’60s?
DC: Yeah, let’s say the middle ’60s. And then the superintendent and the principal was doing everything to keep these students from going to the white school by holding meetings with them to discourage them for going. I was not a part of that, just the superintendent and the principal and the twelve students. My office was next to the principal’s office and I could see when the superintendent came and went to the principal’s office and then I had sense enough to know when the principal would get on the intercom and call for certain people to come to the office.
TC: Those twelve students?
DC: Yes. And I became furious. Why? So as these students left, I always had a connection, a relationship with my students that I could talk with them. So I would pull them to the side to find out what happened. And there was one young man in particular—now, I know all the teachers were supposed to be in their classrooms.
TC: You were out of your classroom?
DC: No, I was Guidance Counselor, but I knew this fellow.
TC: You knew what was going on?
DC: I knew what was going on. So I would pull this fellow—because the teacher’s bathroom was next to my office, and I would pull him in the teacher’s lounge into the bathroom, teacher’s bathroom, because I knew they wouldn’t be coming up there. So then he would tell me everything that was said. So in the afternoon after school I would visit those students’ homes and talk with those students and the parents, unbeknownst to the principal.
TC: So you were that diligent?
DC: Of course, I was. I wanted to know what was going on. If I’m going to be the guidance counselor I felt that I should be a part of guiding those children for going into a new environment. But I was left out of it and I felt that they were leaving me out of it for them to be a failure.
TC: And here you are the counselor?
DC: I’m the counselor, so that’s why I took action. And then when the issue came up about implementing papers that I had done at Indiana University, that’s when I decided I’d better leave.
TC: So you got out of the house?
DC: I got out of the school after I had some issues with the superintendent and the principal.
TC: I understand. Well, I congratulate you for your efforts to assist those students.
DC: I had to.
TC: Because all of that was part of the kind of things that went on—.
DC: I had to help those students because somebody helped me.
TC: Right, during that integration period.
DC: Yes, and I felt that as a counselor it was my duty and my obligation to let them know about the environment they were going into. Yes, they had worked with them. They had lived with them on their place and whatnot, but you’re going now into a setting where you’re going to be in the classroom with them, you’re going to be in the cafeteria with them, and I’ve got to tell you about your social graces. I’ve got to prepare you socially, academically, for going into that environment.
TC: So you did all those kinds of things?
DC: Yes, yes, with those twelve, and I’m proud of—every one of them was a success. Every one of them maintained a B average.
TC: Some of them—do you still have contact with them?
DC: I still have contact with them and proud of them, proud family people now. One is retired from the Navy and he was an officer in the Navy. One of the females also went into the Navy, the Waves. All these people went to college and did well. They have beautiful homes now in the Aiken area and doing quite well with a family.
TC: Any living here in Columbia?
DC: No.
TC: Most of them are in Aiken?
DC: Aiken County. I think one young lady is in Charlotte and two or three of them went north, but they have retired and moved back.
TC: I see. Okay, may we now move to some of your civic work, I guess we will say, that you’ve done through the years. You live in what is known as Waverly area, right? Now is this lower or upper?
DC: This is the lower Waverly area and it is also known as just Dr. Martin Luther King, as the Martin Luther King community.
TC: You’re saying that it has two names?
DC: We call the community Martin Luther King, Jr. community. If you look at the records it’s going to tell you the lower Waverly area.
TC: So you refer to it as being the Martin Luther King, Jr. area in respect and honor for him?
DC: Exactly.
TC: Was that, may I ask was that your idea or?
DC: Well, let’s say that it was the community idea.
TC: It was a multi decision?
DC: Yes. We went forward to change the name of Valley Park. When my parents moved here I couldn’t go in Valley Park.
TC: Oh, this was Valley Park?
DC: Valley Park, a predominately white park that blacks could not go into and the only way blacks went into it that you were with the white child.
TC: And it’s only about three blocks?
DC: It’s half block from me. That’s right down the street, the end of the street. But I couldn’t go down there when they had the beautiful May Day exercises for the city of Columbia. I couldn’t go through there to go to Booker Washington School. They had a policeman, full time, down there to keep blacks out of that park because blacks lived back down there on Heidt Street but all in here was once white and all around the park, all around Greene Street was white.
TC: And you couldn’t even walk near there, through it?
DC: On the sidewalk you could go through it, go past it. But a fair-skinned black woman from Barnwell County got a job teaching in District 2, name was Alberta Simon. And there was a vacant lot right across the street and they built. And when the neighbors started seeing the black man they thought maybe he was the yard man or a worker for the construction company that was building the house.
TC: (unintelligible) house?
DC: No, no, the brick house.
TC: It’s further up?
DC: It’s further up. And then in talking with the gentleman next door, she introduced him to her husband and that started the white-black.
TC: I see. Now you formed a neighborhood community organization?
DC: Founded.
TC: Founded?
DC: I founded Valley Farm, Waverly Valley Farm Neighborhood Association in 1960, as the result of a white insurance agent being shot down in the 800 block of the street.
TC: Where’s that?
DC: Right over there….. (unintelligible - large segment unclear).
TC: So how did this relate to your forming the neighborhood organization?
DC: We figured that the crime—somebody getting shot down in your neighborhood, we got to do something about it. So we’re going to organize, because it’s going to get worse—and it did.

TC: Now—and as we know, that this community has gone through some deterioration through the years.

DC: Quite a bit.

TC: Quite a bit, but now it’s on the upswing.

DC: We’ve done everything to revitalize this neighborhood.

TC: Yeah, I see the houses are being repaired.

DC: New homes are being built in under the auspices of the city of Columbia, the Columbia Housing Development Corporation. The city and through the efforts of the neighborhood association is putting forth more effort because at one time before we started with the birth of single member councils started in this area by yours truly.

TC: That’s good, very good.

DC: Under the auspices of Carolina Action out of Little Rock, Arkansas. We first shot for 621. We failed by a small margin with the (unintelligible). Then the city council, Mayor Adams, he appointed an interracial committee to map out a plan for the next direction to bring about single-member districts, and they proposed what is known as 421, your present form of government that came about.

TC: I see, very good. I see that at least one white family is across the street from you now. Are there some others on the street?

DC: A young Caucasian has purchased a house three doors from me. Three whites around the corner. A white has bought four homes around on Broome. There’s a white family that lives around the corner.

TC: So the community is becoming more integrated?

DC: More so. And there’s a lot of the former—whites here who lived here, never sold their property, that’s rented. And so you can expect it to come back any time.

TC: Right. Okay, Mr. Carter, do you have any, let’s say concluding or comments you’d like to make that we may not have touched on that you might like to make?

DC: I just appreciate whoever is making an effort to get the history of the black schools, the black community, so that whatever they implement it into, or put it into, would be a blessing because we need the history to continue to go on, to tell the story, because hopefully that the young people will start reading the history to know some of the people and the areas and the struggles that we got nothing by sitting down, waiting on someone to do something for us. We had to put forth an effort, even when we were in the elementary and in the high schools. We had to put forth an effort.

TC: And we had to prepare ourselves for today and tomorrow.
DC: We had to prepare ourselves. And that’s what the teachers tried, the black teachers tried to instill in us: the sky is the limit, and if you put forth an effort, set goals for yourself, and climb the ladder of success. I can remember in high school we had to have goals, we had to have high goals and we tried to reach those goals.

TC: Were these goals emphasized on each grade level?

DC: You set your own goals, what you want to be, and they helped you to accomplish that goal.

TC: Did they refer to your goals, let’s say each grade, or was there constant reminding of your goals?

DC: “What do you want to do with your life?”

TC: I’m saying the teachers constantly talked about those things, not only at one grade level.

DC: Exactly. You didn’t hear such things as, “You’ll never be anything.” Be the best you can.

TC: And if I may mention something else that, this is what they said to us and was important, and was not to cast a negative point for anyone in particular, but do you remember a teacher saying that we had to be twice as good and things like that?

DC: Oh yes, I can remember the time in the elementary school—we didn’t have automatic ringing of the bell. You had to have—be—an office boy, and I remember my third or second grade teacher giving me that shot in the arm when she made me an office boy. So I had to ring the bell in exchange for classes and to answer the telephone. That made me.

TC: When you said, “that made you”—?

DC: I felt that I was somebody, as a selected group. And I can remember the teacher telling me, “You’re going to be sitting here now; you’re going to have to be clean, you’re going to have to do this and that everyday. You’re going to be taking notices around for the teachers and all of these things.”

End of interview