



## **Oral History of Caretha Coleman**

Interviewed by:  
House, Charles

Recorded March 15, 2017  
Mountain View, CA

CHM Reference number: X8130.2017

© 2017 Computer History Museum

**House:** Well, Caretha, it's a pleasure to have you here, and my name is Chuck House and we're here on behalf of the Computer History Museum to talk about a fabulous career that you've had and in particular the impact you've had on the valley so--

**Coleman:** Well, I'm really happy to be here.

**House:** Why don't you say your name, kind of where you're from and let's get started?

**Coleman:** I'm Caretha Coleman and presently I'm from Los Altos Hills, California, but I didn't start there; I actually was born in Japan.

**House:** Were you?

**Coleman:** My mother is Japanese, yes, and my first language was Japanese because for six years it was basically my mom and me so I was born in Japan, came to this country when I was two years old. My father left immediately for Korea. In those days, it was a very long tour of duty, which is why Mom and I were alone, and we were in Massachusetts, and so I did grow up in Massachusetts. I was there until I graduated from high school and we had-- my parents had six children and so I was-- I'm half black, half Japanese, went to Catholic school, was baptized Catholic. My mother is Buddhist; my father is Southern Baptist.

**House:** Well, now there's--

**Coleman:** <laughs> And I lived on--

**House:** --diversity.

**Coleman:** Exactly, and I lived in the all-white side of town in Leominster, Massachusetts, so I was quite an anomaly in those days.

**House:** I should say.

**Coleman:** <laughs> And I felt like I was an anomaly for most of my life actually.

**House:** Did it have that feeling?

**Coleman:** It definitely had that feeling because seeing a mixed-- a child of mixed race back then was few and far between and sort of the whiter the area the more odd that was and people just didn't know what to do with me so they'd always lead with, "What are you?" and even as I grew up in the professional world still the same kind of thing, "What are you? What is your name? What are you?" and then "What do you do?"

**House:** Is that right?

**Coleman:** Oh, yeah. Yeah. Uh huh.

**House:** Have you reflected on that lately and--

**Coleman:** Yeah, I've reflected on it. I've actually written about it a little bit and it-- it's-- but it is-- it's me so it's not-- so for the rest of the world I was an anomaly but to me it's me so when people say, "What is it like growing up like that? How was it different?" Well, I don't know how it's different. I just know how it was for me and what the experience was and sometimes it was good. In fact, I would have to say a lot of times it was good but there were a lot of times where it was very negative as well, right, because people want to put you-- they want to pigeonhole you. So I was called things like a black Jap or a yellow nigger or-- I mean all kinds of things and partially because people were ignorant, partially because they had no idea what to do, partially because they thought it was funny in those days, which of course it isn't, and again I was an odd duck.

**House:** I wound up in a wheelchair one time and I was surprised that almost everybody that came up asked the person with me, "How is he feeling?"

**Coleman:** <laughs> That's what I mean. That's the unconscious bias thing that we hear so much about in the valley and across the country right now but it really is true. We have these biases that we form that we're not in touch with and we just sort of put them on other people without thinking about it or it's not in our conscious so I think the euphemism of unconscious bias is absolutely right. And I used to think that no, people are just bad people or they're prejudiced or they just don't like me or what have you, and as-- and I would have to say it's only been over the last ten or fifteen years that I've sort of internalized that for a lot of people it isn't personal, it really is that they don't know, so I and I've always led my life giving people the benefit of the doubt so I really try to do that even more so now as I've come to that realization.

**House:** Have you seen the movie "Hidden Figures"?

**Coleman:** Yes—

**House:** What was your--

**Coleman:** Powerful movie.

**House:** Describe what moved you so much.

**Coleman:** Well, the first thing is that these three wonderfully talented black women in the early-- in the late '50s I guess were in these positions of power; they had no idea the kind of power that they had nor were they necessarily able to demonstrate it in a way that they would if they were living today or if they were doing that work today. So that was number one and so it was a powerful story to be told in general and certainly to the black community that I had never heard of and most of the people and most of my compatriots that I talked to had never heard of these people and so that is wonderful. And then the other part is it's always hard for me to watch a part of history depicted where people are treated so badly. And so yes, this was not a slave movie so we didn't have to see people beaten but at the same time being forced to on the one hand-- being forced in some way because it is your job to do this wonderful work and mathematize everything and put a person in space and on the other hand to be so demeaned that you have to walk whatever it was, a mile-- I mean-- or a half a mile to go to the ladies' room, right, was-- that brought tears to my eyes and—

**House:** Had to.

**Coleman:** --and that people didn't even-- they didn't think anything of it; it was just that's the way it was. And again I think for some people sort of apartheid, right, is we learned more about that and its place in Africa, that it wasn't necessarily that white people were-- that these white people decided that black people were bad and they needed to be treated in a bad way but they did decide that black people had a place and their place was pretty much less than a second-class citizen and they were their slaves and-- but to them also it was what they had learned, right, and so it had been propagated all these years and so it was-- it became their normal and for black people there it also became their normal unfortunately. So I segued but it makes me think about all of those times in history where people have had to-- have had the opportunity and have taken the opportunity to stand up and be counted and do great things.

**House:** Well, thank you for sort of wonderful thoughts already. This isn't about HP or the software--

**Coleman:** Well—

**House:** --publishing company but it's about you and it's exactly what I was hopeful that we might be able to record.

**Coleman:** And as I've come to the valley-- Ken and I I mean-- so we're both transplants and so when I came here—

**House:** Well, back up. So out of high school you were in Massachusetts.

**Coleman:** Uh huh. So I was in Massachusetts.

**House:** Then you went to college?

**Coleman:** I went to college for a very brief moment. My father had always wanted me to be a doctor and so I had never gone to a school; I'd never visited a higher institution of learning and so I didn't know what to expect. So we had this little, tiny junior college called Mt. Wachusett Community College in Gardner, Massachusetts, and it was affordable and so my parents sent me there and so I was in my mind thinking okay, well, I'm going to start out to learn about medicine and do all this stuff 'cause my father wants me to be a doctor and so forth. And they said to me-- the guidance counselor said, "Okay. Well, you need to have a degree first in business" so I was enrolled in this associates of business curriculum and all I was learning was typing and-- typing and shorthand and I just-- I hated it; I hated every minute of it and it wasn't anything that I was-- anywhere remotely close to what I wanted to do. And in fact what I grew up thinking I wanted to do from the time I was nine years old was to either work for the United Nations or to work for an international airline. And the reason for that is probably the same reason that I ended up in human resources, again not really speculating it but it happened that way, and that is growing up the way I did, where I did, with the parents I did and the infrastructure that I had of a very mixed blessing if you will but a mixed situation I always found that even my parents had a hard time communicating and so-- and it wasn't just the language barrier.

**House:** Communicating with each other?

**Coleman:** Oh, yeah—

**House:** Well, yeah, she's Japanese and he's-- and was he American?

**Coleman:** Japanese, black-- he's black American. He didn't speak much Japanese really and she didn't speak English at all and—

**House:** So aside from that they're a great combination.

**Coleman:** --but throughout the years, right, she learned how to speak English; she got her citizenship; she went through all of that back then. She was the tiger mom at school for all of us because as you can imagine here's a Japanese woman who had to take on some of the same challenges as other women do for their children when they're in school and we looked so different from everybody. And so when my mother would go and have conversations with the teachers about something that perhaps was happening in school that she didn't think was right she would say, "Well, we need this" and the teachers would look at her like "Who's we?" because your kids don't even look like you." And so that was just I think a very hard time for my mother but she was-- she just took it on because these are her children and so growing up-- and I've sort of lost my train of thought here but I think growing up with that and then seeing that my mother was misunderstood a lot of the time out in the-- in society but then at home, right, because it's not just the language. It's the culture; it's the religion. It's all the different components that come to bear when we are living our lives at work that create those differences and so-- and you had unconscious bias there too. So I always thought gosh, this thing, communication; I wasn't as articulate about it at nine years old but I knew that there had to be a place for someone like me to be able to translate for people what their meaning was of what they were saying or what they were doing or what-- or the look on their faces. So communication was always sort of the heart of what-- where I wanted to be.

**House:** No wonder you wound up doing what you're doing.

**Coleman:** And since my first language was Japanese and I didn't learn English until I started school and I took three years of French so I learned to speak French I just felt like I could go work for the United Nations. So when things didn't work out at college for me the minute I turned 19 I decided that I wanted to go try to work for the airline and I literally went-- I believe I interviewed probably with 20 different airlines and I got accepted by one. I always tell people, "You only need one." And it's really funny because I remember to this day as much as my father wanted me to be a doctor he saw how badly I wanted to do this and when I went for my interview-- in fact the last interview was with TWA and at that time it was a really big airline. And I had been interviewing with some of these smaller airlines thinking first of all I don't know if they're going to want a black person, number one, and number two, I just didn't know if I would be able to-- if the big airlines would look at me. So I had been declined by all of these different places and I was about ready to give up and my father said to me "Well, you had said that TWA was interviewing" because I saw an ad in the paper and I said, "Well, they are but they're not going to take me because all these other airlines turned me down." And so I went for my interview-- and I had to drive to Boston-- I went for my interview and I remember they took those-- these were the days that they took your measurements, all right, so they took my measurements—

**House:** <inaudible>

**Coleman:** Oh, yeah.

**House:** Really?

**Coleman:** Oh, absolutely, and you needed to be proportionate and so I was-- I don't know-- 34-25-36-1/2 and they said, "If you can lose that half inch, we'll accept you."

**House:** Are you kidding?

**Coleman:** <laughs> I'm not kidding.

**House:** How outrageous.

**Coleman:** And it's really true. I guess it was 35-1/2 'cause I had to get back down to closer to 34 so anyway-- so they gave me two weeks to do it and I went home and I wasn't sure what to do and I looked up all these different exercises in a book that you could do and there was this one exercise where you could sit on your butt on the floor and walk-- basically you're walking on your butt; you're walking on your hips. And I guess I-- as I think back I had probably gotten a little bit nervous and disenchanted and was thinking this was not going to happen for me and I remember my father saying one day, "Okay. Come on. Let's get down on the floor and do these" and he did; he walked across the floor with me and we did those exercises. And two weeks later I went and I had lost that half inch and I <laughs> was accepted so it's a vivid memory for me; I remember exactly what I was wearing. Yeah--

**House:** What did you--

**Coleman:** And I was elated.

**House:** What did you do with them?

**Coleman:** I'm sorry?

**House:** Then with TWA what did you do?

**Coleman:** So then they have a training academy and it was a six-week-long training academy; it was a place called The Breech Academy and it was in Kansas City, Kansas. And I'd never been to Kansas City, Kansas, <laughs> either so that was a great experience. It was this beautiful, luxurious campus where you had pretty much-- at least for me, a little small-town girl who'd never really been anywhere, I had access to everything, right. I had access to great instructors, wonderful programming, great food-- which I

thought was great food; other girls would complain about it but I thought it was great food <laughs> but I thought food was good at the Catholic school too so that goes to show you my point of reference. And so I was there for six weeks and I was just determined to do well and there were about 50 women in my class and we all came from different parts of the country, and I'll never forget that of all the women in the class I was the one that got picked on the most for my accent because I had a New England accent and-- "Pahk the cah in Hahvad Yad," that kind of thing, and I guess it was pretty strong because even women who had deep southern drawls did not get picked on but I got picked on. And I said, "By the time I leave this academy I will not have this accent and I didn't. <laughs>

**House:** In six weeks you got rid of that--

**Coleman:** In about six weeks, I-- but don't forget language is my thing so <laughs> I just forced myself to get rid of that. And then I graduated and, lucky me-- in retrospect lucky me, in those days to fly international you had to speak two foreign languages besides your own so for me it was English plus two so—

**House:** You had it.

**Coleman:** So I had it and so women who had a lot of seniority, ten, fifteen years could not fly international in those days if they didn't speak those languages, and so I—

**House:** You're 19 years old.

**Coleman:** I'm 19 years old and so now I'm in New York-- so they send me to New York and I learn about that, living in a very tiny, little shoebox place of an apartment, my roommate and I, and we-- our first flight was to London and that was amazing to me. And I did that for five years and I flew from New York to London, to Ireland, to Japan, to-- I mean you name it; I was there. I even had a two-week tour of duty where my roommate and I because we were the two youngest women in the New York base decided that-- they decided that they would put us up in Hawaii and we flew the military air charters between Hawaii and Okinawa, Japan, when people were coming back from Vietnam. And that was an amazing, amazing experience, and even then the people on the flights, especially the military guys, would always take bets on determining what my nationality was.

**House:** Is that right?

**Coleman:** Yes. So it just followed me.



**House:** Who are you?

**Coleman:** It just followed me, yeah, but that was a wonderful experience. I got to use my languages. My mother was able to fly back and forth to Japan a couple of times a year for ten dollars-- literally ten dollars and so I felt like I was doing some good for my family and at the same time I was having the time of my life doing work that I loved and also at a time where I flew-- basically I had two flights a month I-- that were five days long. So I would go from New York to London, D.C., back to London, then back to New York so that was five days and then I'd be off for ten days and I'd do it again and I would be getting paid the whole time <laughs> and it was wonderful. They put us up in wonderful hotels and I'd have time off when I was in a different country and that's all changed now but when I was doing it it was—

**House:** Wow. What a privilege.

**Coleman:** It really was a privilege, and I only left the airline because I actually transferred to California because I had come to visit a friend out here and I fell in love with it; I just thought I have to be here. And at that time I was 24 and I said that I-- and she lived in Pacific Grove and it's beautiful down there and all I knew was Pacific Grove and Pebble Beach and Seaside and all this and it was gorgeous. In fact, she lived in Seaside and so when I went back I put in for a transfer-- not thinking about California the state, just thinking about this beautiful place that I had come from, and put in for a transfer and six months later I was here in California but I was in L.A. So I flew out of L.A. but I lived in San Jose so I ended up living in San Jose but-- and I flew out of L.A. but here was the thing: About a couple of months after that they dropped the language requirement for—

**House:** Oh, and all the seniors came rushing in.

**Coleman:** Yes, and so I ended up flying on reserve, which means on call, and I was flying domestic and I was going to all these little places four or five times a day and after while I just said, "This isn't really what I want to do" because—

**House:** Yeah. I didn't sign up for this one.

**Coleman:** --I could work in an office and work every day so I actually did set out to-- I loved the airline industry so I actually did set out within TWA to find a desk job if you will and I really thought that I'd like to do human resources because again I was back to the communication and all of that and so-- and I really felt that I could help with the entire infrastructure of TWA rather than just sort of flying part so I thought that was great but they weren't taking a lot of-- this was around the holidays and they weren't taking a lot of moves in those-- in that-- at that time and I just really wanted to do it then. And so I said, "Okay. Well, then I'll find something else," again young, not knowing better to find a job when you have a job, but <laughs> I said, "I'm not going to do this anymore" and I was lucky enough to-- I did what normal people

do. You go to the unemployment office and say, "I need a job. I'm looking for a job. What's open?" and I said, "These are the things I know how to do. I've never really worked in an office very much. I speak these languages. I'd really love to work in human resources and here are my skills." And this woman just went on and on and on about "You are so lucky." She was HP this, HP that. The next thing I know she's saying, "Here's the card. I want you to interview with them." She calls HP, sets up an interview. She says, "You need to be there tomorrow." Finally I just looked at her and I said, "What is HP?" <laughs>

**House:** Yeah. What's that mean?

**Coleman:** And she looked at me like I was living under a rock and so she told me about Hewlett-Packard and I went for the interview and two days later-- literally two days later on my birthday I was working at HP and—

**House:** So what year?

**Coleman:** So that was 1972-- October of-- I'm sorry-- February 1973.

**House:** Let me back up for just a moment. You said you had six brothers and sisters?

**Coleman:** There were six of us so I had five.

**House:** Six of in total?

**Coleman:** Uh huh.

**House:** How many are alive today? All of them?

**Coleman:** Four.

**House:** Four of the five?

**Coleman:** Uh huh. Yes, and—

**House:** Are your parents still alive?

**Coleman:** And my mother is still alive. And so I transferred here in 1972 and my mother was the first person to follow me out and each of my siblings moved out here after that.

**House:** Is that right?

**Coleman:** Yes. So they're all—

**House:** So you were the magnet.

**Coleman:** Right. Two of them have since lived-- have since moved to Las Vegas but the other two are here and my mother lives with me so-- and my father has since passed away, and so we have our nucleus right here.

**House:** So it's just captivating. You were so marvelous. I love the story and I wish I had known you a lot sooner.

**Coleman:** Oh. <laughs> Well, HP—

**House:** Yeah. Let's pick up the HP tread now.

**Coleman:** So I went to work for HP and I was working at what they called the Neely sales office so I'm old enough that I was around during those days.

**House:** In Santa Clara?

**Coleman:** Actually, it was in Palo Alto. I'm getting—

**House:** That's right.

**Coleman:** And I worked with-- so one of the people that I worked with at that time was Bill Krause was a sales engineer.

**House:** Bill Krause?

**Coleman:** Bill Krause of 3Com fame.

**House:** --very long.

**Coleman:** He had not been there very long, that's right--

**House:** No. He came in to sell the 9100.

**Coleman:** --but he was there and a number of people-- I'm trying to think of who else was-- in fact Claudia Coleman was working there at the time who-- and we got to know each other because she was also working in administration and I was hired—

**House:** You were the other Coleman.

**Coleman:** And I was the other Coleman there.

**House:** You were already married to Ken.

**Coleman:** No, but since then—

**House:** Well, I know now but--

**Coleman:** --but-- yeah, so she was Coleman, I was Watkins, I'm Caretha Watkins, and so I was there. In fact, I was at that point married so it was actually Caretha Kyles so when I started at HP my name was Caretha Kyles. And I went-- when I went there I took a job as-- in order processing and so I spent most of my time on the telephone either talking to the office down in-- Neely down in—

**House:** North Hollywood?

**Coleman:** --in L.A.-- somewhere in L.A.

**House:** North Hollywood or--

**Coleman:** North Hollywood, yes, so I'd speak to the people there all the time if I had a question; otherwise I was talking to a vender and learned all of the part numbers and all of that, <laughs> and actually it was-- in retrospect it was a great place to start. I was thinking I didn't want to be in sales, I wanted to be in HR but this woman sent me here, so anyway here I am. I actually thought I'd died and gone to heaven. So growing up in Leominster, Massachusetts, my-- both my parents worked in factories and my summer job was working in that factory and my mother's job was she was a supervisor working in a plastics factory, and so I learned how to work using molding machines and all these things where you had polyethylene vats and so forth when everything was unregulated, right, who knew, but that was a situation where I mean I thought it was good. I was making good money as a summer student and so I really liked it and I didn't mind working and it got me out of the house, I wasn't baby-sitting so that was great, but—

**House:** Are you the oldest of the--

**Coleman:** I'm the oldest but the situation-- the surroundings leave a lot to be desired, right, so the-- that was my only really experience of working outside of TWA so I walk into Neely-- into HP and everything is pristine; it's beautiful. The people are so nice. They have coffee and donuts. I felt like I was treated like a queen, right.

**House:** Did you ever know Barbara Waugh?

**Coleman:** No.

**House:** Barbara was in HR for HP Labs--

**Coleman:** I don't think so.

**House:** --in the late--

**Coleman:** I know the name but I don't—

**House:** She wrote a book about what it's like to come into a high-tech company and she said people would ask her why she came and she said, "Cause the bathrooms are clean."

**Coleman:** <laughs> But it's true, all of that-- right, all of that that people take for granted and I'm sure at some point I started taking for granted too because that's what happens, but it was wonderful and I could dress up to go to work, which I loved when I was working for the airline anyway, so it was great for me

and I did that for six months. And they had an opening come up at the Santa Clara division in human resources and I interviewed for it and I went to work for Abe Bromberg - (is this right?) and that started my human resources career. And I actually started off doing-- so I was-- they didn't call you administrative assistants in those days, we were clerks, and so I started off as an office clerk in human resources, which at that time was personnel, and then-- and I was also the person-- I was the relief person, right; I was the person who relieved the receptionist because we also had a responsibility for reception there. And one day I was out as the receptionist sitting there and this tall man walks into the building and he stands over me and he's really way over me 'cause he was six-something and I'm sitting in the chair, and I forgot who he said he was there to see; I think it was probably our division manager—

**House:** Bagley.

**Coleman:** --and-- Al Bagley, yes. And so I said, "Sure. Could I please have you wear this badge?" 'cause he didn't have a badge on and so I was going to make a badge off him and I said, "Could I please have your name?" and he said, "Yes. My name is Dave Packard," <laughs> exactly, and I was like "Oh, my God, it's Dave Packard." And I said, "I am so sorry" and he said, "You have nothing to apologize for. You did exactly what I would expect you to do so thank you" and that was fabulous, right, and so-- but again that just spoke to both Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard in terms of walking their talk, right; they were known for that so what you saw was really what you got and what they espoused was really how they lived their lives at HP. And so that was extremely meaningful to me and I've kept that with me for a really long time and he didn't treat me like a second-class citizen; he treated me like a professional with a job to do and he encouraged me to do it the best way I could and that—

**House:** That's how he was.

**Coleman:** --and that's how he was.

**House:** I never saw otherwise.

**Coleman:** And I think though that that's a testament to that's how HP was for me and I loved HP and I was there for six years and the only reason I left is because Ken and I got married <laughs> so-- which ended up being great for my career but who knew and—

**House:** So he was at HP too--

**Coleman:** So he was at HP.

**House:** --in-- was he at Santa Clara division?

**Coleman:** Here's the thing: So while I was at Santa Clara division and I think I was there a year before I transferred to data systems.

**House:** Okay. Yeah, 'cause I knew you from data systems.

**Coleman:** Yes, and so while I was there-- when I was at Santa Clara as I said I was married and we-- and then-- so I was working in human resources and then this position came up at data systems and it was to-- it was a promotion and it was to work in training and development, and so I thought okay, let me try out for this; I would really like to go do this. And so I did, I got that job, and while I was there I-- one of the things that had always sort of not necessarily been a challenge but it was a little lonely there weren't a lot of black people there-- I mean we-- but there were a number of us but HP was a huge company, right, and so-- and I think we sort of all knew who each other were for the most part. And one day one of my colleagues came to me and he said, "Hey, I know you don't know a lot of people, especially not a lot of black folks, especially not a lot of black professionals, and so this guy is having a party 'cause he's leaving to go to work in Europe for HP and you got to come and meet him and meet all these other people" and so I said, "Okay, fine." So my husband and I went to this party and it was going-away party for Ken Coleman. And so long story short, Ken and I were each married at the time we met. I danced with Ken but he doesn't remember dancing with me; I mean it was his party so he was feeling no pain. He left to go to Europe for two years to do this European tour for HP and in between that time he came back a couple of times and he would walk past my office 'cause he was in human resources, right, so he would come to visit different people at different times—

**House:** You're in data systems now.

**Coleman:** --and I-- well, the first time I was at Santa Clara but then I was at data systems and so when he came back—

**House:** He walked by you in each division?

**Coleman:** Right, so when he came back from—

**House:** He looked you up.

**Coleman:** --Europe-- no, it wasn't like that. When he came back from Europe he-- so one of his mentors was my boss at the time, Dick Anderson. There were two Dick Andersons; this is the Dick Anderson who was HR manager--

**House:** Oh, okay. I--

**Coleman:** --at DSD-- at data systems.

**House:** --only knew him slightly. I knew the other one fairly well--

**Coleman:** Right, okay. So he used to come and visit him so whenever he did he had to come by my desk and every time he came by my desk he would tap my desk and say, "Hey, how are you doing?" and "We ought to have lunch sometime" and he did this a lot but he would never ask me to go to lunch.

**House:** Yeah. The lunch part never happened.

**Coleman:** Exactly, and so he did this-- I saw him one day coming down the hall; I could actually see him coming down the hall from my desk and I thought okay. So he comes by my desk and he goes "We ought to have lunch sometime" so I pulled out my calendar and I said, "When?" and he-- and if you ask Ken if he's honest he'll tell you he was really caught because he had no intention of inviting me to lunch; I think that was just his line. So we did go to lunch and-- to discover that we-- both of us were separated so I was going through a divorce, he was going through a divorce, and then we just started dating from there and the rest is history in terms of our <laughs> lives together, but yeah, so I was there at data systems for a while, we got-- I-- and I ended-- actually ended up in engineering; there was this great opportunity to work for Howard Smith in engineering. And I decided that I would like to go give that a try and in fact it was-- I had now-- then I was coming full circle again because it was a division that was managed by Bill Krause. So Bill had become division manager for-- I'm going to forget what it's called-- I want to say Manufacturing Systems Group but I'm not a hundred percent sure.

**House:** It's something like that.

**Coleman:** It was something like that, right, and so Howard Smith—

**House:** This was the small-end business computers.

**Coleman:** Yes, and Howard Smith became the—



**House:** R&D manager.

**Coleman:** --R&D manager and so I thought well, that- that'd be kind of cool to go do that and it was brand new, right, and so I got to learn a lot doing that because Howard was a great person to work for. In fact, I'm trying to think if I was married by then to Ken; no, I wasn't because Howard gave me away to Ken but because became-- we became very close friends and his wife and I became very close friends and we-- and I just learned a lot about running a business because I was in the center of it. And so that was really great and both Bill and Howard were wonderful about giving me lots of opportunity and eventually as Ken and I decided to get married as I said Howard gave me away at our wedding so HP was not just a job ever.

**House:** Yeah. It was a family.

**Coleman:** It was a family, it was a career, it was a place where you just felt-- I felt very supported and then the one thing that I realized though wasn't going to happen for me was that I wasn't going to get too far up the ladder into HR because I realized that I really wanted to get back into HR and that I had learned a lot from working at the beginning part of this division and so I started interviewing back in human resources-- for a human resources role and I had these great interviews and people would be like "Oh, you're it. We'll call you" and then they wouldn't call me, and this happened about three or four times and finally I said, "I just need to get the real skinny on this" and I had a feeling-- because at that time Ken had moved up to corporate HR and I had a feeling that this was holding me back and so--

**House:** Oh, I wouldn't say so.

**Coleman:** Right, because I would be-- no matter where I was I would be in division human resources, right, and Ken would have some jurisdiction over that so I think there was a little bit of an intimidation factor if you will or something, whatever people want to call it, but it wasn't working for me. So I actually did go and I spoke with the then VP of HR, Tom Loudon (is this right?) and I asked him and I had gotten to know him so-- and of course he knew Ken well, and so we spoke and I just said, "I just-- I need straight talk. Just tell me. If this is going to hold me back, I just want to know. No foul. I'm not mad. I just need to know" and he said, "Yes." He said, "It probably will. It'll probably get in the way" and so that was fine; that's all I needed to know" and Ken and I talked about it and I said, "I think I need to leave. I need to go someplace where I can grow in my career." And so having made that decision the thing that was important to me was how am I ever going to find another HP, right, and so the only way to do that was to find a company where it had ex-HP people and lo and behold Ken Schroeder who had worked at HP and a number of people, Bill Abbott and so forth, had gone off and they were at this company called Spectra-Physics right across the street on Karabella (this cannot be the right name). And I interviewed there and I said, "Okay." It's a very small company at that time, I think it had a couple thousand people, but to me it still was fine, it was probably the size of a division, and so I went to work for Spectra-Physics but I ended up working at a different division, it was called the Autolab division, and it was in Santa Clara, which was

fine with the exception of Autolab was really a startup for Spectra-Physics at that time and I was-- that was 1979 and I was there for two weeks and I worked for a person name-- by the name of Judy Heyboer who was Spectra-Physics, Acuson, Genentech and a great lady.

**House:** What was her name?

**Coleman:** Judy Heyboer; you should interview her. And she took me under her wing and she was great so she was the HR director and I went to work for her, and again because it was a startup I-- she let me do everything, right, and-- which was great except I had been spoiled at HP. We had limited to no resources, right, and after two weeks I remember saying to Judy and I think I was in tears saying it, "I made a big mistake coming here. <laughs> I never should have left HP" and I realize now and soon after that it was the best thing that ever happened to me because I had so much autonomy. She encouraged me to do whatever it was I felt like I could do. The management there was very open so I pretty much could write my own ticket and I did eventually move up to corporate headquarters with Spectra Physics because Judy moved up to corporate headquarters and she became VP of HR so then she took me with her and then I had again great experience; I became a staffing manager. Then we went through a layoff and things were not going well for the company at all but guess what I found out; I found out that was a great time of blossoming and taking on more responsibility than you would ever take on when things are going up and to the right and you learn so many other skills when you're downsizing versus upsizing so that was wonderful. And a lot of people were leaving the company and I stayed and it was great and I flourished in that environment and I kept getting more and more responsibility and then I got the call from Software Publishing. And so I had been at Spectra Physics for three years and Software Publishing called and I went and interviewed with Janelle and Fred and John and I did know John prior to going to Software Publishing but I had never met Fred or Janelle but I knew John because he worked in that same group in engineering.

**House:** In the Bill Krause division?

**Coleman:** Yes. I think—

**House:** Did he work for Howard?

**Coleman:** I don't know. I'm trying to straighten that up in my mind but somehow John-- my path and John's path crossed at HP and then-- I think it was-- I really do think it was and I think he did work for Howard. And so I was employee number 30, they were-- and of course because they were HP they knew the value of human resources and so it was a real benefit to me that they were looking at bringing me on with 30 employees, right--

**House:** So now you're--

**Coleman:** I was the first and only, right, and so I would answer the phone so here I am at a startup and I'm answering the phone and it's "Hi. Software Publishing" and on the other hand it's "Oh, can I speak to your director of HR?" "Hold on, please. Hi. This is Caretha Coleman" <laughs> and-- but that- that's how you did it, right, and at the end of the day you were literally sweeping the floor. I mean I used to ask people, right—

**House:** Oh, yeah. At a startup--

**Coleman:** --but it was true; you really were sweeping the floor and-- but if I hadn't had that experience at Autolab at Spectra Physics I would not have been ready for-- I never would have been ready and so it was the perfect storm that came together for me; it really was and so—

**House:** Wow. That's a fascinating story.

**Coleman:** Yeah, it was great, and we grew-- we were the first desktop application software for the PC and again young, I didn't know, I just-- but I did know—

**House:** So what are you? Your early thirties now?

**Coleman:** Yeah. I was exactly thirty when I took that job, yeah.

**House:** What did Ken think when you switched? Was he still at HP?

**Coleman:** We talk about this. He was still at HP-- I think he had left to go to Activision-- he was at Activision.

**House:** Oh, did he go to Activision?

**Coleman:** And the reason I remember that is because when I was leaving to go to Software Publishing before I accepted the job we were sitting at dinner one night and I said, "Probably one of us should have a real job," right, because back then a startup was really a startup, right. And so we talked about it and we decided no, we would just go-- we would just both go for it and whatever happened we would deal with that at the time and so he was at Activision and I was at Software Publishing and it was wonderful. We had great conversations at night and we'd both be, right, looking at resumes <laughs> and all kinds of things and it was fantastic and growing our family at the same time. And it was a tumultuous time in some ways and in other ways it was the best time of our life and we both worked for people that we enjoyed being around and that we respected and had mutual respect and felt that greatly and that made a big

difference. And having a woman cofounder at Software Publishing was really-- it was a big deal, not a big deal in that they made a big deal out of it, that okay, she's a woman and so forth, but the fact -- the effectand what you looked at and what was important. I think Janelle even took that for granted because she is who she is but we now know that being in the room and having a position in the room and having a voice in the room makes a difference, and so whether you're a woman or an ethnic minority being in that room changes things and—

**House:** She started that in '78, '79?

**Coleman:** I want to say yes, <inaudible> '79-ish because she was the first one; she was doing it out of her home. Yeah. She was doing it and Fred was still working full time and John was still working full time at HP.

**House:** I wonder when Kurtzig did ASK.

**Coleman:** Well, around-- it was close in time because don't forget Ken Fox who she and Janelle are a-- he and Janelle are a couple. He was the VP of R&D at ASK, at A-S-K, yeah, so yeah, it just goes-- <laughs> I mean the valley was-- it was-- and Signe Ostby who was our VP of marketing was married and is still married to Scott Cook.

**House:** Was she already married to Scott?

**Coleman:** Yes.

**House:** When she was at SPC?

**Coleman:** Yes.

**House:** Oh, God. We could--

**Coleman:** Yes. I'm telling you it's-- <laughs>

**House:** So my--

**Coleman:** And Val Cook was married to Scott's cofounder.

**House:** Who was his cofounder?

**Coleman:** Valorie Cook Carpenter. I can't remember Val-- I can't remember Scott-- was it Scott Carpenter? I can't remember his I think they were both Scott—

**House:** It might be.

**Coleman:** --but-- yeah. Anyway, so—

**House:** My wife was employee number four at Intuit.

**Coleman:** Oh, is that right?

**House:** And she didn't make the book about it. They had to list the first seven and she's not listed and I'm in front of the board one day giving a talk and I said, "How come she isn't listed, Scott?" and he says, "Cause she was the first one to quit and I didn't put her in."

**Coleman:** Oh. I didn't know that she was there and—

**House:** And then she goes back to Scott one day and said, "You could have at least given me some stock" 'cause she wrote the manual for Intuit for the first package and he said--

**Coleman:** Didn't know that.

**House:** --"I can pay you or I can give you stock" and she says, "I'm a Ph.D. student at Berkeley." She took the money and he said, "And if I had given you stock you'd have never met Chuck."

**Coleman:** Oh, okay. Well, there you go.

**House:** So I just--

**Coleman:** I'm a true believer that things happen for a reason—

**House:** We are too. We are—exactly-- well, okay. This is fascinating. This is exactly what I wanted to see if I could find out. Okay. So now you're at Software Publishing. You're 30 people. Describe the next month.

**Coleman:** I was drinking from a fire hose. It's the proverbial really startup. I mean getting the kids off to school, going to work as early as I can, Ken and I trading off on early-mornings, late nights, right, being-- resume-- I would say that first month, the first six months was-- I was reading the resumes all the time and interviewing people. That was item number one. That's what we did; that's what I lived-- that's how I lived my life those first few months, hiring people.

**House:** So this could be '82? What year?

**Coleman:** --hiring people. Nineteen eighty-two.

**House:** What month? Do you remember?

**Coleman:** I started in November, November 1<sup>st</sup>.

**House:** November of '82.

**Coleman:** Uh huh.

**House:** Thirty people.

**Coleman:** Uh huh.

**House:** And in two years you're two or three hundred people. Right?

**Coleman:** Something like that.

**House:** Yeah. I mean just--

**Coleman:** A couple of hundred I think, yeah. Yeah, went crazy, went public in those went public in '83 I believe so-- '83 or '84-- no, I think we went public in '84 so I think I was there a year—

**House:** And how many children did you have by then when you went there?

**Coleman:** We had five because Ken had three and I had two and then—

**House:** Each of your previous marriages.

**Coleman:** Yes, and then we had a son. Oh, I'm sorry so we did have six 'cause our son was born in 1980. Our son was born while I was at Spectra-Physics.

**House:** You have six kids at home while you're in two startups.

**Coleman:** Yes. Well, a couple were older so they helped out-- <laughs>

**House:** Oh, well, that doesn't count.

**Coleman:** --so-- <laughs> yeah, but they were older and—

**House:** And one of them was looking for a job to get out of the house so they didn't have to baby-sit.

**Coleman:** <laughs> Exactly, but yeah, it was frenetic to say the least, right, and then the travel because we also opened a European office, right, and so there were times-- and I think by that time-- I can't remember when Ken started at SGI but I think maybe around '84 or '85; I'm not sure.

**House:** So I went there in May of '85.

**Coleman:** Okay. So was he there?

**House:** Well, he asked me to come over.

**Coleman:** Okay. So then—

**House:** Well, he and Ed asked me to come over.

**Coleman:** Okay. So he-- I think maybe '84 he started. You can ask him.

**House:** Yeah, I think that'd be about right--

**Coleman:** But literally I'd be going to London and he'd be coming back, right, because we had-- we have kids at home so you got to stagger these things as much as you can and we had help too but still you-- no-- it was no substitute for parents. <laughs>

**House:** So this gets us up to about-- we're now six months in. We're spring of '83 in your chronology. You've always been an outsider or not fitting in is what you opened the whole conversation saying. How was that experience at HP and how was it at Spectra-Physics and how was it at SPC? Did you have those feelings or not?

**Coleman:** Occasionally but it didn't-- it wasn't insurmountable; it wasn't one of those things that was-- as I was growing up it seemed like it-- and of course when you're growing up too everything's a little bit exaggerated, but no, it didn't-- I was too busy to even think about that, right, but there would be moments that it would come up. There would be moments that I knew that people didn't-- not necessarily-- people from the outside perhaps of a situation so if I were interviewing someone I could tell sometimes they'd be like "Hmm. Why am I interviewing with this person?" Now it could have been because I was a woman; it could have been 'cause I was a black. I mean I don't know, right, but yeah, there was always that but not-- it didn't take over and in fact one of our pieces of advice to younger people of color is you don't want to let it take over because if you do it'll eat you up and it becomes an excuse. And so, right, you can't lead with that. I got to lead with okay, everybody's good until they prove to me they're not and-- right, so I'm going to assume that—

**House:** On the flip side, you went to the party. There was a number of blacks at Ken's going-away party.

**Coleman:** Yeah, mostly black.

**House:** So it was kind of if you will an ethnic family in a sense.

**Coleman:** Uh huh.

**House:** Were you conscious of trying to hire against that-- did that affect your hiring thinking?

**Coleman:** No, other than my thinking would be it'd be nice to have a few more people of color around here, right, and so trying to find that and always being very involved because as the company grew the HR department grew so I had other people working with me who were doing a lot of the hiring, right, and then hiring managers so being able to talk to them not necessarily about color but just differences in



general, that we don't want every-- we don't want such a homogenous grouping of people, right. Then what was so good about having Janelle there, right, and then having-- so it was Janelle, myself, Signe Ostby, Diane Wheeler who was VP of manufacturing at that time, and Kathy Bailey, now Kathy Murphy, who was our CFO, right. We were all on the executive team.

**House:** So you had a heavy--

**Coleman:** We had—

**House:** So the diversity was more gender than it was ethnic.

**Coleman:** At that time, yes, but not that we didn't have ethnic minorities, we did, and yes, then-- and I would seek them out and especially once they came to work there I would make sure that I was keeping an eye on them, okay, "Do you need anything? How's it going?", that kind of thing I mean almost to the point where <laughs> I had somebody basically-- didn't say it to me but said it to somebody else, an African American employee, said, "Why does she care so much?" And it wasn't <laughs> that I was trying to trip them up; it was I wanted to make sure that they were being treated with equity so—

**House:** So fast forward to a couple of years ago. We have the Yahoo, Google, Intel reports that they have no Latinos, no blacks and few women. What does--

**Coleman:** That's unfortunate.

**House:** We've gone backward--

**Coleman:** Right, and I can't explain that but I do believe that there comes a point in time where you need to-- on all kinds of things where you have to put emphasis on a specific initiative. If you want things to happen, then you're going to pay attention to whether they happen or not; I guess that's what I'm trying to say, right. You need to be deliberate and intentional about it and-- because it's not like-- it's not as if people are just walking in and saying, "Okay. I'm black and I want to work for your company," right, so you have to have it in your own mind that it's really important that you have diversity and the reasons that you have diversity. Now I'm a believer that you need to have diversity because it's the right thing. I know that the selling point is because of the marketplace that we play in, because of the population that we have, which will soon be a majority minority population, because of the consumers that we have who we sell our products to and the dollars that they bring in, right. I know all of the statistics about why to do it because it makes financial sense for a company but at the same time it is the right thing to do. It is the right—

**House:** Yeah. It's a human dignity kind of thing.

**Coleman:** Right, and so I—

**House:** It's Dave Packard walking up to you and saying you did the right job.

**Coleman:** Right, and so that's sort of what I lead with. I can make those arguments for people if I have to but as I sit in the boardroom of companies I guess my feeling is it's the right thing to do and so how are we going to get that done. I do have a story I don't know if Ken told you. So when I had been-- I took the job at Software Publishing in November. In December or January we were trying to close on a house that we were putting an offer in in Los Altos Hills and the realtor tried to block the sale of the house to us; this was in 1982.

**House:** The selling realtor?

**Coleman:** Uh huh, because that person didn't believe that Los Altos Hills was ready for a black family and so as you can imagine—

**House:** Is that the house you live in?

**Coleman:** It's not the house we live in but it is the property that we live on.

**House:** Okay. Well--

**Coleman:** Yes. Yeah. So we've been there since 1982. That's probably part of the reason why we had to move, I haven't <laughs> thought about that until you said it, but we were-- so here we are two professionals, right, both VPs at our respective companies, and—

**House:** Yeah, and they don't want you in your town.

**Coleman:** Right, and-- but here's the thing: Ken found out that that house was owned by Hewlett-Packard because that was back in the day where your relocation for executives, right, including the company buying your home so that you could get on with your business.

**House:** Yeah. I came out here that way.

**Coleman:** And I was trying to think of who that was; I want to say Dick Watson was an executive at HP. Anyway, he went up to somewhere—

**House:** Bob Watson.

**Coleman:** Bob Watson—okay-- went up to somewhere for HP; I want to say Oregon or Washington or someplace like that.

**House:** Yeah, he did go to Oregon.

**Coleman:** So that was his house and so Ken went and talked to HP corporate about what was happening and of course they were all over it.

**House:** Oh, I bet. Yeah. That didn't take long to fix that one.

**Coleman:** Right, and so that's why we live where we live and we're very happy to be there but that was just in 1982.

**House:** Wow.

**Coleman:** So that-- and with that unconscious bias I don't know if the bias was gee, I want to make sure these people are set up for success; I don't want to put them someplace where they're-- I don't think so.

**House:** Yeah, that sounds suspicious to me.

**Coleman:** And I still-- we still tell our children-- I mean not so much anymore; our son is now 36-- but we-- when our grandchildren come around and so forth we still tell them, "Hey, be careful. I saw a cop at the corner today so"-- it's sad that we have to say that and would I say that if my child were white and 16 and driving? Probably, but I say it with a lot more emphasis and deliberation because this is a kid of color, right. So it's unfortunate but it is the reality that we live in. It's unfortunate that our industry hasn't done a better job of having many more people of color within their organizations and yet there are some companies who-- they have a lot. I mean the Indian community is very, very strong in the Bay Area and I think that they actually do a very good job in ensuring that they're spreading the wealth and I think that the way that-- I just think that the way that the general population looks at hiring African Americans is a little different and I don't necessarily think all the time that it is deliberate. I think it's again that thing called familiarity and what you're familiar with you're a lot more comfortable with, right. And so it's no different from I'm going to hire these five other people who look like me because I know what to expect from them

and they went to the same school that I went to and so forth and so on. So rather than look at it that way I think it's I want diversity in my organization and so in order to do that I'm not going to look at these five other people who look like me but I'm going to mix it up a little bit and I think it-- and it does have to start from the top. I know a lot of people are-- they have diversity managers now and diversity VPs and so forth and I think that's great as long as your CEO and executive suite thinks the same way and acts the same way. I think that's very important.

**House:** My daughter just retired as the chief diversity officer for Wal-Mart.

**Coleman:** Great.

**House:** She had two million employees working for her.

**Coleman:** She had her hands full. I'd love to talk to her.

**House:** She put a lot of great things in place but her stories are just incredible.

**Coleman:** I can imagine.

**House:** And she would say it absolutely has to come from the top; if it's not at the top it doesn't happen.

**Coleman:** But you hear things. So if I say to a search firm, "I really want diverse candidates" I still hear what I get back; I still hear people say things like, "Oh, of course, but you don't want to have your quality suffer. You still want to have people who can be successful."

**House:** Really?

**Coleman:** Oh, no. People say that.

**House:** People say that and it's not just search firms. I think that they are more sensitive to it now but even back in the day when I say women, "Oh, yeah, but you don't-- you want to have the right people," and I would guess that's from other executives, right, "Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, we need to hire women but we want to make sure that they're the right people and they've got the right talent and so forth." And sometimes I just want to say, "No. I want an unqualified black engineer. I mean if you could hear yourself"—

**House:** Look at the absurdity of this.

**Coleman:** Right, if you could hear yourself then you wouldn't say things like that, right, but it still happens.

**House:** --is there were several places that that kind of nuance played extremely well and I thought the illustration is we've fallen in love with Kevin Costner's choice of roles in his last several movies. And so I love right now down in the central valley--

**Coleman:** Uh huh. Yes, you said that.

**House:** Our town is 88 percent Latino. Jenny and I brought 14 percent of the advanced degrees into town. I mean it's a non sequitur but Costner grew up there so "McFarland" is sort of a statement. This movie was a statement. I mean he does these because he believes but I just thought the illustrations that that movie portrayed, sometimes subtle and sometimes not so subtle, but the subtle ones like the woman saying, "Of course I'm not" and Dorothy spins on her heel and says, "Yeah, right. Come on."

**Coleman:** Right, but they're real-- these are real stories like we were talking about and these are people's lives we're talking about and so we have to do a better job. I guess that's where I am. I'm not mad at anybody. I just think we have to do a better job. I guess that's where I am. I'm not mad at anybody.

**House:** What are you doing--

**Coleman:** I just think we have to do a better job.

**House:** You left Software Publishing-- I'm going to come back to that but you left in '96; it's 20 years ago.

**Coleman:** Actually, I left in '91.

**House:** You left in '91.

**Coleman:** Uh huh. I was there ten years.

**House:** Okay, 25 years. What have you been doing in the last 25 years?

**Coleman:** God, has it been 25 years? I guess so 'cause I've been around[ph?] the house almost 30. So when I left there I interviewed at-- I did the same thing you normally do. It's okay, let's interview, let's see what else is out there and so forth, 'cause I wasn't really sure what I was going to do, and I actually worked for the company Verifone 90 days, the shortest time I've ever worked for anybody. Here I went from always being true blue and it was just-- it just wasn't for me. I was excited about it because it was probably in my mind from the way it was described and I think it was real the most globally acting 'cause people had-- in those days, right, in '91, they were talking about being global and acting global but they weren't global, but this company really was global. I mean each of their VPs lived in a different state and your staff meetings were all over the place, they were never in one place, which I thought yeah, that's the reality, right. And I went to be their VP of HR and I didn't like it at all. I mean it was just-- it wasn't that I didn't like it so much as it was-- for a good-sized company there was not enough-- a lot of structure nor were they interested in having any structure and I wanted to put in more process, but the other thing too is that I was traveling just way too much and the reason I know that is because-- so that was '91 so in '90 we knocked down our house and started over and built it over. So in '91 we moved in our house and 90 days after I took the job at Verifone I realized that I had slept in my bed in that house five times and it just-- I just wasn't going to be able to do it and it just wasn't how I wanted to spend my time and I was also-- at that time also starting to have very bad migraines and so I just decided it probably wasn't the best for my health either. And so I went and talked to the CEO and actually they had a person who was at the company that I felt was perfect for the job and they hired me instead and I recommended that they promote her and they did and she did well and of course HP acquired them and she did better <laughs> so it was great. So I did that but then after I left there and I was interviewing and talking to people I realized this isn't what I want to do. I don't want to go grow another HR organization, I don't want to work for the company, but what I really liked doing was I really liked the building process of working with a startup; I really liked that a lot. And I was fortunate enough to hook up with David Liddle who actually had this company called Metaphor before-- right around the same time as Software Publishing; we were right next door to each other and so I had gotten to know David and he started Interval Research. Okay.

**House:** Did you go to Interval?

**Coleman:** And so I went to Interval <laughs> to-- actually I went to Interval as a consultant 'cause I interviewed with him and I said, "I really-- I don't want to go build another organization like that" and he said, "Well, then come play with me. Be a consultant. Come on. Just help me get this thing off the ground," and that was a wonderful experience, an absolutely wonderful experience.

**House:** Oh, that was a rock and roll deal.

**Coleman:** It was great and I wish that it had—

**House:** <inaudible>

**Coleman:** Yeah. I wish that it had continued on 'cause I mean I've never worked with so many brilliant people really and who were just experts in their field.

**House:** Xerox PARC and then Interval are I think the two shining beacons out of this valley.

**Coleman:** It's pretty amazing.

**House:** I mean HP for culture but those other two for brilliance.

**Coleman:** Yes. And so I did that for three years and then-- and I was at that time-- still I was working sort of part time like three days a week and I was then dabbling in other things, and one of the areas that I was dabbling in was I was working with VC organizations and their portfolio companies so I was doing some consulting with them and after three years I decided that that's really how I wanted to spend my time. So I just really immersed myself working with portfolio companies and did a lot of work with Mayfield and venture capital and their companies and I just loved that. Sometimes it was two person in a shop. Sometimes it was five people just-- they had the idea; they were just barely getting the product out and wanting to build their organizations. Sometimes it was okay, now I know what I'm going to do; how am I ever going to attract these people; how am I going to pay them; what am I going to-- how am I going to compensate them and retain them and so forth and so work with them through that. And really where my sweet spot ended up was doing executive and CEO coaching and to this day I really enjoy that a lot and I try to do that with minority entrepreneurs as well. And the other thing that I've been doing a lot of for the past 20 years is nonprofit work so I've been doing a lot of things simultaneously, and so now I'm doing a lot more nonprofit work, in fact very little of my work do I get paid for, and I discovered healthcare in 2007 and I've been on the board of Dignity Health and I became chairman of Dignity Health and then—

**House:** Congratulations.

**Coleman:** Thank you. And I termed out as chair after three years and I'm still on the board and/or just-- I mean healthcare has been amazing to me, it's been an amazing learning, and I never thought that I-- I never saw myself in healthcare. I didn't design that for myself. I—

**House:** Well, you were going to be a doctor.

**Coleman:** Exactly. That's true. Thanks for reminding me of that. And I just got a call one day and-- from a search firm and yeah, started meeting with them and before I knew it I fell in love with this organization and I was saying "Yes" and at the same time saying, "I don't know what I'm doing here. I don't know healthcare. I'm not really sure I'm going to be able to add value. I'm going to be drinking out of a fire hose 'cause there's so much to learn" and then I found myself in the middle of the healthcare debate and-- but

with a CEO who was probably the best CEO I have ever worked with in my life, Lloyd Dean, who definitely was in the middle of the healthcare debate and had the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C., and just really try to make a difference in terms of what healthcare became and also internalizing the fact that healthcare or certainly the lack of healthcare impacts people of color more than anybody, people of color-- so the disenfranchised; there are people of color, women and children. And so I'm like "This is where I'm supposed to be."

**House:** Yeah. You're going to have 24 million new clients.

**Coleman:** <laughs> But this is where I'm supposed to be and so again it's come full circle and just—

**House:** What a delicious life you've enjoyed.

**Coleman:** So it's been fabulous, yeah.

**House:** I think because you were different it's worked out perfect.

**Coleman:** That's actually a very good way to look at that. I've never actually thought about it in that way.

**House:** And it gave you a tremendous advantage in terms of insight and an ability to be at the right place at the right time. I know two languages; I can fly--

**Coleman:** <laughs> It's funny, very funny.

**House:** I'm looking for a job in HR, well, HP; what's an HP?

**Coleman:** Yeah. So I've been blessed. I mean I really, truly have been blessed and here we are now with 13 grandchildren and—

**House:** Wow.

**Coleman:** Yeah, so our family has continued to grow during that time.

**House:** <inaudible>

END OF THE INTERVIEW