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Tony Carr Interview Transcription

Kilimanjaro Project: Interview with DJ Tony Carr

Interviewed by GWU Professor Kip Lornell & GWU Student Iman Lee (Class of 2018)

KL [00:00:14]: Ok um, well let's let's jump into a little bit of background about you first. Since we are sitting here in the WFPW studios and it is the 3rd of April on 2012...let's all introdu-2016 sorry I have 2012 for some other reason in my brain. Uh this is Kip Lornell with George Washington University's Music Department and if you'd introduce yourself?

IL: And I am Iman Lee, I am a student, I am a sophomore at the George Washington University.

TC: And I'm Tony Carr, Host of "This is Reggae music" WFPW

KL: That actually brings me to my first question. If I am not mistaken you started doing this show in 1979? Is that correct?

TC: I started radio in 1979. I actually started at WHFS.

KL: Oh yes.

TC: I used to be there on Sunday afternoons for one hour. It was a commercial station. We actually rented that hour, but after a while it was a little difficult because we had to pay the station to maintain that so um I gave that up. In the meantime, I was a volunteer with WFPW. I started becoming a volunteer with WFPW and so in 1980 I think I had to leave WHFS and that show was actually revived by Dr. Dread from RAS records at the time a couple months after and he kept it going for a number of years, but he could afford it. I couldn't. It was...it...so I... like I said I was volunteering at WFPW and I wanted to get to do a reggae show, but the powers to be were not very receptive to me doing a pure reggae show. There was a Caribbean program here at the time.

KL: Is that Von's Show?

TC: Von Martin's "Caribbeana" and I figured I am going to get on the air one way or the other and so I told the then program director that, which is true, I had a pretty good knowledge of jazz music. I grew up with jazz music in Jamaica. A lot of people don't think we have Jazz in Jamaica and, but we do. I remember Monty Alexander when he was a young man.

TC: Sure, yeah.

TC: Before he migrated to the United States. So a long...at that time you had to have a license. I didn't have a license, but another good friend who was on radio in upstate New York when he was going to college up there. He had a license still and so we used to sit down and talk about Jazz, we used to sit down and talk about Reggae, we used to just sit down and talk about music period, he and I. And I said to him if I was to get a program, would you uh help out because you

have the license. He said “yeah.” I told him the idea I had. So after, I think the program director just got tired of me.

KL: Bugging’ him, huh?

TC: Yeah and he finally had a time slot open, which was like at that time I think it was like 1 AM to 7:30 AM, one um 11PM to 7:30 in the morning, the next morning. So we jumped at it and we did our thing. He did part of the show, I did part of the show and then I said to him well I am going to make that move now. So I started paying reggae music from 5 to 7:30 figuring the powers to be might not be up by the time I got off the air and when they found out it would be too late and that is exactly what happened! Because the first time the powers to be, which was the general manager at the time, Lawncrest Love, heard reggae early in the morning was during a membership drive and she called and she said Tony “why you play reggae? Nobody wants to hear reggae this time of the morning!” And I said well, “something is wrong with that picture.” She said, “Why?” I said, “because the phones have been going crazy and I think I have raised over 600 dollars already” and she said, “you have what?” and I said “I think I’ve raised over 600 dollars already. And I am the only one here, I can’t talk to you anymore the phone is going crazy.” And I hang up the phone on her. Which is true. At that time if you raised...if WPFW raised from 12 midnight to 9 AM raised 100 dollars, that was great. I was re—I—in that first drive, couple weeks doing the show. I didn’t even know if anybody was listening. I be honest with you because I was scared to put out the number or anything. I was just playing reggae music. Anyhow, the program director called me about ten minutes after, sleepy, apparently Lawncrest Love uh called him and said I told him some crazy thing that I raised 600 dollar I must be dreaming. I said no, I said “I can’t talk to you right now because the phone is going crazy and I have about ten minutes.” So it turned out that I raised close to 700 dollars. And then a couple months after, He looked at me and he gave me my own time sl—my own time shift to do my own reggae program. The good thing about that was that Sydney White was able to continue playing reggae music so instead of zero programs, we all of a sudden we have 2, which became three a little later with uh Wabian who came aboard. And then I left PFW after three years and I was at WOL for--with Cathy Hughes on a Sunday evening.

KL: Mhm

TC: For six hours, 6 PM to 12 midnight.

KL: Is that when they were on H Street?

TC: No, actually Wisconsin Avenue.

KL: Wisconsin

TC: Later, we went to H Street. I was over in H Street for a short while. Again I don’t think we had enough Caribbean businesses at the time to support them. Program-It had to be paid for.

KL: And by that time you are talking about early 1980’s?

TC: Uh yes, I was with them '83 through '86 and after a couple years uh we cut two hours off that...it just didn't work so I said my goodbyes to uh them and then I started working on the background with John Blake at playing the music and I helped out wherever I could. I was there with John until one day I got a call from the then program director at PFW, I forget his name now, but he said that he wanted to talk to me. I said sure and he came by. At this time I was at I was managing a record store for Kilimanjaro that I told Victor to get involved with and he came and he said that I am having a little problem, we have to suspend the then reggae host because he played a not very appropriate song.

KL: R & X words, huh?

TC: So he wanted to know, he said he wanted somebody that he could trust and he said my name came up several times so would I come in and sit in for a couple 2/3 months. And I said why not? I started it so I went back and on my first drive it was in the Fall I think it was. I raised about according to them, well the amount of money I raised according to them was in the same time slot 2 or three years and the guy said to me you know this might stretch into a little longer than 3 months if you are willing to do it. I said sure, I will do it. And I'll find him a different spot, which he did. So I have been back here since what? '89 I think it was '88-'89. And I have been working forever since. So I have had a long association with WFPW both as a volunteer, as a on here host. I think with the exception of about two or three people, I might have the longest tenure here. Von Martin, Askia Mohammed. Those are two people who I can think of that's ahead of me in terms of longevity with WFPW so I've been here. It was on Thursday nights. It was on Sunday nights midnight to 2 AM. And now I am on 10(PM) to 12(AM). And that's what, that's my association with WFPW.

KL: Now you seemed to be pretty adamant when we began the conversation that DC needed to hear more reggae music. Um do you feel that that is a kind of personal...? Obviously you like reggae and you know a lot about it, but there seemed to be something more than that to it.

TC: I well I don't know if you want to call it whatever you want to describe it. At the time, there were two people playing reggae music on the radio, which was Von Martin here. He was from Trinidad. And you had John Blake, who is also from Trinidad.

KL: And he was on HUR?

TC: HUR. And he is still there. And, but he is on at some ungodly hours of the morning now. Actually Sunday morning 2 AM to 6 AM uh I think that is ridiculous with, but uh you know, and the reggae music that both of them were playing were wasn't the type of reggae we were used to in Jamaica. They were playing reggae but you know you can play reggae and you can play reggae. They were just simply not playing. And that's how we started at HFS. And I grew up in a time where the music of Jamaica, which we all know now today as "reggae music", was being developed! I lived among, around a lot of the musicians who have created what was then ska, which became rocksteady. I grew up around a lot of those people.

KL: 1960's, 50's and 60's.

TC: In the 50's when I was a little boy. You know, before we knew these guys were actually attempting to play old American rhythm and blues because that's what we partied to in Jamaica. You know, a lot of people come up with this Rasta thing uh...It has nothing to do with Rasta. The music was there before. Even Bob Marley himself used to sing Doo-wops.

KL: Sure, if you just think of when he was born, it makes perfect sense.

TC: You know a lot of people don't realize that. And I remember one night some years ago I said I'm going to play some music now and I bet you none of you are able to tell me who this is. And I played a couple...they used to call them The Wailing Wailers and everybody was guessing everything. I said no, believe it or not that's Bob Marley and the Wailers. People called me and telling me I'm talking foolishness sending them this kind of music and I tell them "you don't know anything about the music." A few people, after, did call and say they remember that now, but those are not things people associate with Bob Marley. But Bob Marley actually was doing Doo-wops. I have them right here on this, that thing over there.

KL: Yeah well if you were coming of age in the mid to late 1950s, early rock and rolls, R & B, and Doo-wop is what you would have been listening to.

TC: Yes Sir.

KL: Sure.

TC: As a matter of fact, I have told people right here in the station who does all this, "you guys know nothing about American oldies. I can school you," because they used to do and I don't know why they stopped it, but um on some hard days they used to do all day rhythm and blues and I as usual pestered and I said, "I'd like to take part." All they think I know is reggae music. I said just give me one hour and I got my two hours and the guy said to me, "well the only time I have for you is 10-12." Guess what? He played right into my hands because that was the time I wanted because I would have been the last person to be doing this. So when I got on the air I said "I'm going to be playing American rhythm and blues from a Jamaican perspective and I'm going to kickback from the 50's when I was growing up and dancing to this music and know this music" and they were shocked. Some people called and said, "man I haven't heard these songs in years." Right? And I was talking about the stations we used to listen in the night WMZ in Florida which was 2000 watt stations so in the night you would hear these stations. New Orleans.

KL: WPFW probably in New Orleans.

TC: Yeah I don't remember those but we used to listen to quite a few stations. So we grew up on uh rhythm and blues from the New Orleans area perspective. The Fats Dom...Fats Domino was probably more popular in Jamaica than here, if you understand what I am saying. So we grew up with the music and I've done it twice and each time I did it. Because my fellow programmers of rhythm and blues because I love music. You know, I've been in music for quite a long time. I don't know how to play an instrument but I know how to spin the music.

KL: Now, how did you end up here in Washington after growing up in Jamaica?

TC: Well...I, my last job in Jamaica was a high school track coach and if you know anything about track and field...

KL: I can see where this is going...

TC: Jamaica is very crazy about track and field

KL: You are the top in terms of interest.

Tony Carr: And I...if...I'm not going to brag but I was one of the best coaches in Jamaica at the time. One of my athletes broke the junior world record for the 800 meters in 1960...was it '64, '65? He went to the Olympics. I've coached a total of 4 to 6 Olympians. Two of them: while they were in high school. So I was pretty good. Then I had met the coach from Howard. He had taken two of my boys to Howard University. Wilma Johnson. He was the coach at the time. And so we used to take part in the Penn relays.

KL: Yup, up in Philadelphia.

TC: My high school won the championships of America, which is a big high school 4 by 100 in '67 and we did very well the following years. We came second '68-'69. And he said to me, "I am moving to this new school and I need to get some of your guys if you can help me" so he made this suggestion or he made it that he could get me to school because we talked about that. That I feel that I am not being paid for what I am doing, for the results that I am getting. And maybe if I had a degree, I would be paid better so he made this thing he said, "you know, maybe I could get you into this school," which was federal city college and because every year where the principal and the fall of the excelsior where I coach, we had this big conversation about me being compensated for what I'm doing. I'm getting results. When I came here the school was nothing and I had a multiple visa so I had this idea that I would um come to America in the summer and see if this thing could work and I didn't tell the principal of what I had told his deputy and he said, "go ahead, take the chance." So I said if nothing works out, "I will be back in time for school to start in January." So I came and I was in New York for a couple months because I have family there and then I came down here I think October of 1970. Been here ever since. He got me into school, but the school was not ready for athletics in my opinion.

KL: And it really didn't until it became UDC.

TC: Well, you know its funny...no, you know, they had football. Believe it or not I played football. I was a football kicker. I was a extra point guy. What I really wanted to do was be a wide receiver run by points 'cause at that time I had 92, 93s at 100 meter speed so I had just stopped running track but I guess they were scared that I wasn't born in America so I would not know how to hold onto the ball properly blah blah blah so I became the field goal kicker so I played football for a couple years, but and they also had a very successful Women's basketball team at that time. They say Stockhart was the coach, they were the best in the country but again, they didn't have the funds or they just didn't seem to know how to get the funds to uh expand. Everybody else was expanding. The schools they used to beat up became top schools and I mean Jesus, Federal City College wouldn't think of playing University of Maryland back then because

they were no good but today Maryland is one of the best teams, right? Because they have the resources. I actually was hired as head track coach after coaching at Archbishop Carroll for a number of years I think I coached up there for a couple of years. We won the catholic championships each year and I got a couple guys to college and they hired me as track coach at UDC and I was there for about 3 seasons. Again, funds are limited to offer people scholarships. And at that time I was having problems with my visa. Created by the immigration department itself, believe that these people were very narrow-minded, were very tunnel...and I had to give up that job because that's a DC government job and I had to show that I had the rights to work, which I couldn't after a while. And this was travel by '79 and because I had the visa problem, I couldn't continue my education I was like 22 credits away and I met Victor mid-80's. They had just opened up this club and I was invited along with another friend they wanted to open up a reggae room apart from the main club, which was the front part. Huge concert-type place and you know I didn't want to pay anything but I told them if we build this place up, the crowd from zero in a month, I need to be paid properly...so after a month, crowd from nothing we started you know a nice size crowd coming in for the reggae thing and this other guy on the Friday night. And I asked well, I need some money and they pushed me aside and they invited me back. By this time I had gotten involved with playing African music and got interested in African music and I started playing again in the back where I actually started but I was mixing up the music more and I would reggae, soca, a little Latin, and so forth and then one day uh, of course Kilimanjaro at that time was almost the most popular club in DC. This was what? '80, '86 something around there I started playing there and one day Victor looked at me and said "listen, I want you to start playing in the main room" which was a shock.

KL: You were DJing at this time, correct?

TC: Yeah

KL: Ok

TC: Well I was always played at whatever parties when I came to DC. Everybody had a party, they called me. Because I always had a nice record collection from when I was in Jamaica. As a matter of fact I gave away hundreds 7 inch 45s before I left Jamaica and he said I want you to play in the main room and I was kind of curious. but what I had found out that a lot of people used to leave and come over to where I was playing. Because they liked what I was doing and it was kind of strange and...

KL: Who had been in the main room while you were DJing?

TC: It was an African guy. I don't want to call any names but it was an African guy. So they moved me to the main room and I was there for until about '91.

KL: So about 5 years, roughly?

TC: Yeah. Now, during this time I had gotten involved in the only one place in America who was bringing African music was a place in New York and your African by this time they started doing bringing reggae acts. Quite a few big ones too and which I was part of the promotional

team. And they started bringing in African acts. Some of the top African acts who had never been to America before and allowed them a base in Paris. We even brought Fella here.

KL: Fella 50.

TC: Yeah and so I was part of that promotional team. I was Emcee, I was DJ, I was jack-of-all-trades at Kilimanjaro and because of my track background, I was a very organized person. I even organized one or two New Years Eve things because I believe in doing things a certain way and if its done a certain way and everybody cooperated it will work so I was there for 5-6 years and he opened another club in New York, which was pretty good. I played there once or twice and he had one in his hometown in Kenya, which I thought was a mistake based on what I heard where he put the Kilimanjaro. It was not a very good neighborhood. That's what I heard. But I haven't been there so I don't know, but it took a lot of money from this place and he had some problems with the city. That is what created the downfall.

KL: I'm assuming that would be trouble with licenses and...

TC: Nope, not really...taxes.

KL: Taxes, ah ok. Keeping up with the official end of business when you are making money, especially a cash money business. Ok I can see where that could be an issue...

TC: And it became a big issue and eventually, by this time I had left. I had left because I saw some changes that I didn't like. I didn't like some of the—you know when you set a standard. If you don't maintain that standard and you allow young people to sort of get involved into things they shouldn't and then uh you started getting this young group, and this type of music, then you start to draw a certain element and they had I think one, maybe two shootings, one inside and one from outside. And uh the first...you know, he didn't handle it well. He didn't handle it well when the press came around. It was a very successful black man, a very successful African man, who is not American and I believe if at that time he should have had some good tax people in there to work with him.

KL: But he didn't.

TC: He didn't, unfortunately. And like any good thing, eventually it started to fall apart and eventually I don't know if he lost the building but I know the place was closed and I know uh because he had owned the building, he had bought the building and uh he must have lost the building. I am not 100% sure on that but I know that it was quite a sizable sum of money.

KL: Yes, he was probably paying it off as he was going along.

TC: Well he was, and then he wasn't. Well he wasn't a very disciplined person.

KL: In the pre Internet days, which this young lady has no recollection of because she is too young, what would be the best way for you to promote a show. You are the promotion team for

Kilimanjaro. Let's say its 1988. No internet. What means would you use, obviously you would put an ad in a place like the city paper. What other ways would you help to guarantee—

TC: Posters.

KL: Posters

TC: We used to flood the...it used to be everywhere, you used to see Kilimanjaro. You know globe forces in Baltimore?

KL: Oh yes.

TC: They were the ones who, I did many trips over there to pick up posters.

KL: That doesn't surprise me at all.

TC: So that was basically main because what you did was to tap the main roads, avenues, streets going into DC. 16th St, Georgia Avenue, New York Avenue

KL: Rhode Island Avenue.

TC: You tap those places. You put them up at strategic corners and you did some...If we were doing African you would have African guys here programmers here, you would work with them. There was reggae Caribbean music we had of course myself, John Blake, and in the evening Baltimore with Neil Mattei but that was the main...and of course they did some work with City Paper but posters were the key at the time.

KL: And putting the posters in the right places.

TC: In the right place, yes.

KL: Would you also put them in particular stores or venues that you know people would go to?

TC: Yes, you would put them into the Caribbean record stores; there were a couple around. You put them into African places, Caribbean places. Some people allowed them, some didn't. We would make smaller ones for the indoor, for people but that was the main and the other thing was as the DJ for Kilimanjaro if Joe Blow was coming into town, we made sure that person's music was played. We didn't care if anybody danced, but usually they danced, but we would make sure it was announced quite often that so and so was coming to town so those were the main and Kilimanjaro was not the only place who advertised that way. Everybody if you were in the nightclub business or you had shows. The Blues Alley, everybody were advertising using posters. The 9:30 club from they were at downtown it was 8th street.

KL: 8th Street.

TC: That's how they advertised. Posters.

IL: Can I ask a question that is a little bit related? Before you said that um when you came here a lot of people would call you to DJ parties and things like that but how did they know to call you or how did they know you since you were so new to the country?

TC: We were all students and when you are all students if you are from Jamaica, Trinidad or wherever, sooner or later you are going to run into each other, sooner or later you started hanging out with each other. Alright some people knew that I was a music collector. I was not a DJ per say but I was the guy who had the most up to date music so they are having a party, the guy who had...so they having a party, you call the guy who have the music and basically that's how I got involved and then little by little somebody offer to pay you and you say "Damn! They pay you? You can get money out of this thing?" The next thing you know you are buying turntables and thing. That's what you needed. I never had a big system but I had if I needed a big system I had a system that I could get which was owned by West Indian Record Market at the time, which was the first record...Caribbean record store in DC.

KL: Was that on Georgia Avenue?

TC: Yes, the first place was on Mt. Pleasant Street. It started out as an electronic repair place and then record store because at that time it was needed. They were at Georgia Avenue and Columbia for many many years. That's where the idea of doing a reggae program came up and I didn't know that I was going to be...that I was a fall guy. So when Jake Einstein from HFS said that, "Oh, where you guys been? I have been looking for someone to do reggae." "Ay! guess what? This guy said he will give us a hour. Who gon' get do it now?" And everybody looked out, "you." I said "I don't know nothing about radio" so I call up Jake and say, "you know, these people are crazy, they want me to do radio." He said, "don't worry I will give you an engineer who will teach you everything" and that's how it all started. I remember it was cold. It must have been about 12 degrees that day. And I was sweating like a pig in this cold cold studio because I was that nervous and he said, "don't worry, we are going to talk little" and that's what I did. I followed his advice. I didn't say anything that I was not supposed to say. I basically introduced the song, right? I basically intro the song...I just followed what he said.

KL: Where was HFS at the time?

TC: Bethesda

KL: Ok

TC: Was it Coral Avenue, one of those places.

KL: They were still in Bethesda then?

TC: Yeah, Bethesda. Great radio station if I might say so. They played music that nobody--

KL: Not just you, a lot of other people too. The person you...what upstate college radio station was this guy working at, do you remember?

TC: You know, I don't remember. It was Sydney White, but he was way upstate New York.

KL: Was it the Albany area?

TC: I think it was even further north of Albany. It was very close to the Canadian border. He used to tell me...way up! Some little culture place he said, "when snow fall, you couldn't see the top of your head.

KL: Yup ok. You got drafted apparently in one way or another to run a record store in Kilimanjaro for a while is that correct.

TC: Well it's not I was drafted. I just said to...I made the suggestion... As a matter a fact when I first approached Victor about the idea, he didn't think it was a great idea because there was already the African store, but I said, "you have the connections, the direct connection, even though that guy knew a lot of the artists." I said, "you are now beginning to develop this relationship with the African artists" so I think 5 of us went to Paris: Victor, his wife, uh Celie Lett who is now in South Africa and myself. That's four and we spent a week talking to artists and the artists they thought was great that we are dealing with an African in America so we get all out music exposed and that's how it started and we so we had a distribution system where they would send the master tape and then we would print the stuff here and then of course he was supposed to pay them and that's how that started.

KL: Remind me the name of that label?

TC: I think it was...it had something to do with Kilimanjaro.

KL: Yeah. Somewhere in the back of my brain the name of the label is resonating and I can't think of it.

TC: I don't, I gave away all my records when I started getting the CD because my living room at the time, half of the floor, half of my living room was records. I gave away records records and then I started CD came in and I started- damn ay I don't have to carry around all them big boxes because in those days, for example at Kilimanjaro I would have like two boxes of crates, beer crates, two of just African music. I would have two of reggae. I would have one filled up with Latin. Uh I didn't play that much American music but you know, Latin, soca music and so forth so you're talking about a lot of lifting. You know, a lot of lifting so when CD came around man I just invited a couple DJ friends and said, "come and help yourselves." People say I was stupid, that I should have sold them. I said well I got rid of them and so...I must have about 20,000 songs right here or more.

KL: Oh yes, there are advantages to MP3 players, no doubt about it. If there was going to be a tour by a reggae artist, a Caribbean artist, an African artist and they were coming to the US, what would be their next logical stop or where would they have been likely to play before they came to Kilimanjaro?

TC: That Depends. It depends. That depends. If Kilimanjaro brought them here of course, at that time then they had their club in NY. Sometimes we would bring artists down to Atlanta and if there were large African populations some place and of course a promoter can play, they would go there. Uh it depends on the reggae act. Out on the west coast, you will find that they are more into the roots reggae. A lot of the groups that have been around forever, they still play like crazy out in the west and the Midwest. If you bring them to Washington, maybe 100 people could turn up. We are into the more modern type of reggae artists here. The well-known acts... we are not... people here just don't go out just because a guy who used to sing a song 20 years ago.

KL: Gotta be more modern?

TC: Yeah

KL: Is that reflected in your programming now on FPW?

TC: This, you know... I have made changes to my programming over the years. I could do the same thing that everybody else do. I have always felt that if you do something different... you are all playing reggae, but if you do something different you will... and if you are doing it good, you will build a hardcore set of listeners and they will spread the word. So over the years I have evolved and I notice that other programmers are scared to play anything really new from unknown artists, but they had good music so I decided that I would be that guy who would be playing all these unknown artists per say. I interview a lot of people and its maybe the first time there had ever been here people actually to hear their voice was on my program. And I remember once I was in an argument and I said to this person, "Well my show don't sound the same every week" and they look at me like I was crazy. "But you play reggae." I said, "Listen to my show. I never sound the same way every week" so and I say it on the air you know that if you listen, I never sound the same way every week, but I'm playing reggae. "Why you not sound the same every week?" Sometimes I come in here and I have no clue what I'm going to do. I play the first fifteen minutes and once I do the first 15 minutes, it sets the tone for the night

KL: Was it that was when you were DJing too?

TC: No. When you are DJing, I firmly believe that you have to watch the crowd. You have to learn to read the crowd. And the crowd will tell you by starting to desert the dance floor and I used to watch, especially when I played at Kilimanjaro. There were certain people, if I didn't see them on the dance floor for 2 or 3 songs; you are not playing the right song boy.

KL: Was there a difference in DJing the Kilimanjaro in the reggae room and main room except for size.

TC: Much different because you had to know your stuff in the front room. These people knew their music. They knew their music and then you had to think you are playing for Africans from a wide cross section: The French speaking Africans, the English speaking Africans and you know, people think: they are all Africans they all think alike. They don't. They just don't. Just like us in the Caribbean, we don't think like Trinidadians, we don't think like Haitians, you know. So you have to learn to read the crowd and I would save certain music until I see certain

individuals and for whatever reason, when you play certain songs, those individuals: if they are sitting with a table of 12, everybody get up and go dance. And they having a great time. So you have to...that's what I did. I watched the crowd; I learned to read the crowd and It worked.

KL: Did they...? I wonder and this is probably an unanswerable question how they felt about somebody who was not African DJing a lot of African music. I wonder if they cared.

TC: No, I never had that problem. Can I say something to you? Between 1995 and 2001, I was the best Brazilian DJ in town.

KL: Where? Where was that?

TC: I played at any big Brazilian party during those years, I played it and I played at a Brazilian club that was in Columbia. 18 and Columbia upstairs place I forgot the name of it. They used to call it...

KL: Yeah I can't think of it either.

TC: And What I did...I went to Brazil and I collected some music I like. The guy who was a Brazilian friend of mine...he had a restaurant up there what was it? Wisconsin Avenue. Near was it general 5? Is that Wisconsin Avenue?

KL: That's Connecticut Avenue.

TC: Connecticut Avenue okay. And I looked at him one day and I said, "Why don't you let me play part of the night?" and he looked at me and said Tony, "The Brazilians are very..." He said, "Brazilians know their music." So I said, "let me try, just a hour, one night" and he gave me that hour and he never came back. As a matter of fact I kept looking for him and so the legend was born that this Jamaican guy and a lot of Brazilians would walk up and stat to talk Portuguese requesting a song and I would just, "no follow no follow." They were amazed they said "where are you from?" I said "Jamaica." And then I used to go to Brazil every year and I would take anywhere from 3 to 500 dollars alone to buy music. And I would go to every Brazilian show that was around and I watched and I learned and then, Brazilian DJs started getting upset and that's when I quit and guess what? After I quit, Brazilian music scene died because they didn't put in the kind of work I did. I was having fresh Brazilian music. They were playing Brazilian music from 10-12 years ago.

KL: In addition to DJing, in addition to running the record store...how long did the record store operate out of Kilimanjaro by the way?

TC: Probably from...I am not sure the exact year. About 5 years, 5-6 years.

KL: Late 80s, early 90s? '88? Something like that, roughly?

TC: Yeah 90s and you know and then they closed down the whole operation. I had left.

KL: You had left before they closed.

TC: Yeah

KL: Did you ever get involved with booking at all?

TC: No, not really...not really. I would you know, I would...and I wouldn't consider it as booking but somebody would contact Kilimanjaro who might not have been on the radar, was one of the tops where everybody knows who that person is and I "how much do you think this guy could draw?" That kind of thing and I would say, "well if promoted properly it probably can draw X amount of people." They would figure out, "Do you think people would pay this kind of money...?" And once we figured out if we drew at this price it would at least breakeven, the bar would sell, they would do the shows and after a while Kilimanjaro got a solid reputation of putting on big reggae shows. You know Third World played there, Dennis brown played there...you name it. Third world I think played there three nights straight fully. Each night was sold out. You would never see that today. You know, Greg Riser I think did 4 nights. Every night was sold out.

KL: Mostly African, African pop music and reggae. Did other things get slid in there sometimes too?

TC: Well I was probably one of the few DJ's who didn't play a whole lot of American music. I usually saved that for late in the night and I play a 15, if they are really going off I might play a half hour. But and I introduced salsa and merengue and when I first did that you know, it was a kind of Luke warmish response, but I also found out that a certain population of French speaking Africans was into salsa especially Senegal was into salsa a lot and so they were the ones who really and truly made me introduce salsa because they would come. A guy would actually bring his favorite LP and say, "I want you to play this track and that track" and so forth until I got used to it, but yeah we used to play...I played zuke which is French Caribbean music, soca music of course, reggae, it was a balance of course it had to lean towards African, you know. You try to incorporate as much of the African different nations' nationality of music of course the most popular African music was from Zaire and then Cameroon and then you had some High Life

KL: I figure High Life was in there somewhere.

TC: Yeah now the music from West Africa has changed. It is more. They have taken the element of dance out...reggae and they have come up with a very attractive bouncy beat and so nations that never used to have that much music coming out of it now is like Sierra Leone, Liberia...places like that, you know...they are coming out with a lot of attractive music. High life, the way I see high life is not coming out of Ghana like the good old days. It has changed, you know.

KL: Was there any kind of secondary or tertiary smaller clubs or places where you could hear African music maybe on maybe kind of an informal kind of level? I mean you think of Kilimanjaro was the big place. Was there any small places?

TC: Yeah there were maybe a couple places that were small and from Kilimanjaro there was another African club on 14th street and then Kilimanjaro, not Kilimanjaro, Zanza Bar actually started in the basement near the white house on Fridays and Saturdays and later they got other people involved and opened up that big place but it was never the same again. It was never the same again because getting involved with the place like the one it did, they have to be opened basically every night and I don't...Africans didn't come out every night. They come out Friday night. They come out Saturday night, funny enough, especially on Friday night because they were coming from work and that's how the Zanza Bar actually started because a lot of people who worked for the IMF and embassies and all that so it was a nice place. People well dressed. Music was good. Atmosphere was good and so you had different things that came out of Kilimanjaro but none of them lasted, none of them made the impact that Kilimanjaro did.

KL: It was a big deal for about 8 years or so.

TC: About, yeah nobody made impact.

KL: Now of course I talked with Victor a little bit and I'm going to go talk to Roland on Wednesday and I've left a message for Chris Toussaint. These are all by way of Deera. Can you think of other folks that you believe would be worth speaking with about kind of the working at Kilimanjaro, done booking, performed there?

TC: You know, the two people that who will...the two or three people who would have an intimate knowledge of Kilimanjaro...one is in South Africa, one is in Atlanta I think. He comes here every now and then. Who is the person in Atlanta? Ethiopian guy, I forget his name, but he was part of the promotional team and then you had another guy named Raymond Paris who is not doing so well these days health wise. He's in New York. He was here on and off but health wise...so he is mainly in New York now...I don't know of anybody here. There was a Trinidadian guy who was manager. There was an Ethiopian guy who was manager.

KL: By manager you mean managers of?

TC: Of the club

KL: Oh they were day-to-day overseeing managers?

TC: Right,

KL: Oh ok

TC: but I don't know where they are now.

KL: You said that you moved out of the city in '89, what made you decide to leave DC proper

TC: DC?

KL: Yeah

TC: I don't think I had any specific reason but I lived in Northwest a couple places and then um for some whatever reason it was. I think it had something to do with my driver's license. Yeah, I think it had to do with my driver's license. I was driving eleven years in DC on a suspended license, yet I had a license. Yet, I renewed my license.

KL: Even though it was suspended?

TC: and they said that I was suspended for 11 years because of some infringement I did in Virginia so when I moved to Maryland, this is what they told me. I said, "no but I have a drivers license here, see it was renewed." They said, "no you were suspended" and I said, "How did that happen?"

KL: Somehow I'm not shocked having lived in DC for thirteen years starting in the late 80s.

TC: So they told me to go to DC and I went to DC. They said I have to go to Virginia

KL: Because the infraction was in Virginia

TC: and they are the ones who cause the suspension oh my god I went to Virginia. I spent like 2 straight days there and they never had anything so they gave me a thing to say, "we don't have anything against Mr. Carr" blah blah blah and then I came back, showed them the thing and they accepted it. The guy had to put all kind of stamp to examine this this and "Okay Mr. Carr to reinstate you have to pay money to reinstate."

KL: Of course.

TC: So I paid that and then I got my Maryland license. Been living in Maryland ever since.

KL: Always around Bowie?

TC: Not really, I've lived in Bladensburg; I lived in Adelphi.

KL: ah okay.

TC: Tacoma Park

KL: Most recently in Bowie

TC: Yeah, I lived in Tacoma Park. I loved living in Tacoma Park. It was never far from anywhere

KL: Where did you live in TP?

TC: In where?

KL: Yeah, where did you live in Tacoma Park?

TC: Greenwood Avenue in an apartment building owned by Victor

KL: (*Laughs*)

TC: Which he lost

KL: Another deal that didn't work out for him huh?

TC: He was a bad landlord too.

KL: I suspect there were other business ventures that he was involved with too.

TC: Yeah, stupid man

KL: Apparently, the Kilimanjaro was the most public one I suspect. Did he do other...? What did he do before he was at the Kilimanjaro

TC: On the ground floor he had a mechanic shop.

KL: Oh that's right, the mechanic shop there.

TC: Yup, he had a mechanic shop.

[End of Interview 1:04:58]