

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Betty L. Johnson

COLLECTION: 4700.0896

IDENTIFICATION: Academic counselor at Southern University and long-time member of the Wesley United Methodist Church in Baton Rouge

INTERVIEWER: Toni Morrison

SERIES: McKinley High School Oral History Project: African American Churches

INTERVIEW DATES: June 20, 1997

FOCUS DATES: 1929 - 1997

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1274, Side A

Introduction; born in Baton Rouge April 1929; works as academic counselor at Southern University; parents Thelma Ambeau Johnson and George E. Johnson, Jr. were in the funeral home and insurance businesses; has always been a part of organized church; Wesley Church founded in the 1800s with Reverend Ryan as the first recorded minister; four generations of members at Wesley; Wesley United Methodist Church located on 544 Government Street; congregation near five hundred members; the church treasures music; church has diverse and distinguished membership; explanation of United Methodist jurisdictions; retreat location in Mississippi called Gulfside; church connection with Southern University through its members, like former SU presidents, G. Leon Netterville and Felton G. Clark; Wesley shares a relationship with Mount Zion Baptist Church and Reverend Gardner C. Taylor; Wesley and Mount Zion both encourage youth to pursue higher education; Wesley's heritage stems from sustaining since the 1800s; her father lent a few cars for use during the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott; Wesley contributed to the Civil Rights Movement through lectures by Dr. L. L. Haynes; changes over time were because of changing church doctrine and trying to change with society; church membership currently includes people involved with law and politics; typical Sunday service follows the Order of Worship with prelude, introit, processional, delivery of the word, opening of the doors, recessional, benediction, dismissal, and meetings; has community outreach with serving meals, offering education in juvenile facilities, helping families during the holidays, building houses with Habitat for Humanity; church membership was previously involved with the Blundon Home, an orphanage; women participate at Wesley as board members, secretaries, ushers, teachers; one young lady is certified as a Diaconal minister and the congregation is very proud of her; Wesley's attempts to attract youth through invites and encouragement to attend; offering General Equivalency Diploma training; volunteer work at the juvenile detention center; describes how African Methodist Episcopal and Christian Methodist Episcopal became United

Methodist; United Methodist state headquarters was moved to Baton Rouge;

Tape 1274, Side B

Continues United Methodist explanation; ministers must have academic training and attend an accredited seminary; working to get benefits for retired ministers; remembers Governor David Treen was a United Methodist; Wesley would invite politician to speak on special occasions; families giving windows and lecterns to the church during rebuilding; she enjoys the liturgical banners made by a group of women parishioners; believes it is important to capture these undocumented histories in order for future generations to know they come from a strong heritage; she continues heritage of three generations at Wesley; Wesley United Methodist Church gives her enhanced life; Wesley has many Old McKinley High School graduates; Johnson has witnessed the connection between alumni; interview conclusion.

TAPES: 1 (T1274)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 57 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 24 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence (3 pages)

RESTRICTIONS: None