

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Gina E. Eubanks

COLLECTION: 4700.2386

IDENTIFICATION: Clinton, Louisiana, native and program leader of food and nutrition for the Louisiana State University Ag Center and vice chancellor of extension at Southern University

INTERVIEWER: Wyatt Winnie

SERIES: History of Louisiana Cooperative Extension Services

INTERVIEW DATE: April 21, 2014

FOCUS DATES: 1970-2013

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4315

Interviewer Wyatt Winnie introduces Gina E. Eubanks program leader for food and nutrition at the Louisiana State University Ag Center and vice-chancellor of extension at Southern University; Eubanks was born in Clinton, East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana; she was born June 11, 1956; her parents are L.E. and Ora Eubanks; her mother was from Louisiana and her dad was from Mississippi; her mother's maiden name is Davis; calls her mother a domestic engineer; her mother cleaned houses in East Feliciana Parish; her father was a laborer and worked in the saw mill; Eubanks great-grandmother, Mama Martha, was blind; Mama Martha had a sixth sense; you could walk into a room and Mama Martha would know who you were; she knew her mother's father; he was the first person she knew as an entrepreneur; he sold vegetables and eggs off of the back of the truck; she lived close to the county seat; close enough to walk the town; she enjoyed school although she wasn't the best student; there was only one club she stuck with throughout school and that was 4-H; she only participated in the public speaking and sewing contests; she came to Louisiana State University for the 4-H Short Course; the agents at the time were genuine she felt they had an interest in her as a person; the extension agents integrated while she was in the eighth grade; she knew of Mr. Prince Lewis who was an African-American agent in East Feliciana Parish; she was a junior in high school when she got her first African-American agent; that agent eventually worked for Eubanks at Southern University; her first sewing machine came through 4-H; the extension office purchased the machine and Eubanks family paid the extension office for the sewing machine; they paid installments of seven dollars until they paid it back; she made women's clothes; she sewed all the way through high school until her freshman year in college; she earned an undergraduate degree from Southern University; graduated in three years; she also realized a master's degree would help her go one step forward; applied at Oklahoma State in order to get a master's degree in merchandising; Oklahoma was less diverse than Louisiana; she had been exposed to different kinds of people through 4-H; in college she was involved in the home economics club; as an undergraduate she served as president and went for outstanding student in home economics and was initiated into

the honor's society; she worked for about six years before going back to get her PhD; was a buyer for Goudchaux's for three years; a past dean helped her find a teaching job at Alcorn State University; after three years at Alcorn State University she received a call from the department head at Oklahoma State University asking her if she wanted to go back to school; she accepted the job and moved her entire family to Oklahoma State University; she taught intro to merchandising and fashion accessories; her first job ever was cleaning houses in Clinton; at Christmas she worked in the gift shop; those jobs led her to want to go to school for a better education; she didn't want to clean houses for the rest of her life; after receiving her PhD, she interviewed in many places and ended up in Virginia; she taught at Virginia Tech for three years; the day she took the plane to Baton Rouge to Stillwater, Oklahoma, she never thought she'd live in Louisiana again; at about the age of thirty or thirty one, she thought that home sounded good; she looked for jobs in Louisiana; interviewed for a job at Southern University and became the department head for clothing and textiles; she also served as coordinator for home economics and was sitting on the interview team for a job as an extension specialist; the interview team didn't select anyone and when they opened up the job again she applied for job; she was more nervous and worked harder to prepare for that job than any other; she felt she really had to work hard to impress the internal interview team; she has been in extension since August of 1993; when she went into extension she focused on parenting, youth development, nutrition, and child-rearing; extension is fluid; she describes the diversity of interests of the people taught through extension; some people might like canning and others sewing; she also state that in extension when you give a workshop or are teaching, you might see the gratification immediately; she was the assistant specialist for family and consumer sciences; she's also seen technological changes in extension; today she can tweet information; in the past there was nothing but a piece of paper; she can use YouTube so that people can see a lesson or piece of information; in the past she would have to bring people into a room to give a demonstration; the industry has gone from killing trees and xeroxing stuff to being able to tweet the information; she often looks to see what Louisiana State University and Southern University are doing in terms of technology; she just started using the technology herself; she said "I've got to figure out this technology,"; she describes how some people accept new technology and others don't; her parents played forty-fives, she played CDs; she knows what forty-fives are, but she plays CDs; she uses that analogy for the differing comfort levels of people using technology; during her involvement in extension as a 4-H member until now she's seen greater involvement of diverse groups; throughout her time 4-H she never wondered, "Is this person helping me because I'm African-American?"; the agents were just helping and teaching; they were delivering educational information; they had to have seen something in a little black girl from Clinton that they thought could go forward and become a productive citizen; she started an after school program called Youth Educational Support at Southern University; she had to carve out a program where she could reach the family; she concluded that the best way to reach the family was through the children; while recruiting for the program she came across a parent who asked, "I can really help my child learn?"; she describes how extension teaches parents to assist their children through teaching fractions while eating pizza or math and economics by practicing at the grocery store; the focus of the people she works with at Southern University Ag Center are limited resource clientele; they have a center for small business development; they try to give people economic stability, whether its enhancing their home environment or small businesses; she sees the livestock show at Southern University as a tribute to extension; the show's been going on for 71 years and she's seen families and children who have shown their animals that have gone on to become vets and

doctors; she also considers the after school program at Southern University as important; she sees it as an opportunity for individuals to value education and to understand that they can accomplish what they set out to do; she's currently excited about the joint program between Southern University, Louisiana State University, and Pennington called Healthy Communities; some people might think the program is moving slow, but she says, "we didn't become fat overnight, and so we will not become healthy overnight,"; she believes extension is for the people and it's up to extension workers to let the people know about extension; she says extension can help the people because extension workers value what the people have to say; end of interview.

TAPES: 1 (T4315)

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OTHER MATERIALS: LSU Ag Center News Release, Interview Questions and Notes

RESTRICTIONS: None