

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Earline Cary-Williams

COLLECTION: 4700.0874

IDENTIFICATION: Longtime member of Mt. Zion First Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, former teacher and administrator at several area high schools and at Southern University.

INTERVIEWER: Rose Jourbert-Thompson

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

INTERVIEW DATES: June 21, 1997

FOCUS DATES: 1930s- 1990s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1252, Side A

Born in Baton Rouge; through her career she worked as a high school English teacher, a school supervisor, a principal at two schools, and held two administrative positions at Southern University; baptized and joined Mount Zion in 1931; joined the church because her parents were members and loved it; she was a shy child but Rev. J.A. Bacoats nurtured her; Rev. Bacoats and congregation encouraged her interest in public speaking and upholstering; Rev. Washington Taylor was pastor before Rev. Bacoats; memories of Baton Rouge Bus Boycott; Rev. Jemison's dedication and leadership in the African American community; community felt the need to protect Rev. Jemison, men served voluntarily as bodyguards for him and his family; Rev. Jemison's service to the community, helping low income families get basic needs met, building a home for a poor family with ten or twelve children; Mount Zion is always willing to help those in need; threats against Rev. Jemison and his family during the boycott; Rev. Bacoats was an academician and, "church disciplinarian"; Sunday school, Baptist Training Union (BTU) and Nurture for Baptist Churches (NBC); BTU was boring, but she enjoyed Sunday school; church activities when she was growing up included picnics, suppers, and concerts; annual church picnic involves lots of good food, games, music, and a talent show; traditions relating to communion, baptism, Sunday school, services, and BTU; deacons handle spiritual matters, trustee board handles financial matters; deaconesses handle communion preparations; process of serving communion; music in church; church's role today is, "to help people live Christ-like lives"; people often do things that are contrary to Christian teachings;

Tape 1252, Side B

Mount Zion is unique to her because she loves it; while living in East Feliciana Parish, attended a Methodist church because there were no Baptist churches in town; she mailed her tithe (donation of 10% of her income) to Mount Zion while she was away; "age has caught up" with Mount Zion, members are mostly senior citizens; congregation is small but does things on a large scale under Rev. Jemison's leadership; ministries within the church; "month clubs" that donate money, display talents, and provide snacks and fellowship; music ministry and campaign to educate

young people about African American history; other ministries and how they assist in communicating the needs of the church to Rev. Jemison; prison ministry involves men from the church visiting juvenile offenders, helping with legal advice and other needs, promoting Christianity; because of Rev. Jemison Mount Zion, “has set itself up as a leader,” and a model for other churches and pastors; Rev. Washington Taylor and his son Rev. Gardner C. Taylor; Rev. G.C. Taylor is, “a preacher of all preachers,” his sermons are inspirational and powerful; she spearheaded the effort to hire Rev. Jemison at Mount Zion; long process of choosing a minister; church has helped her through bad times and celebrated with her in good times, helped her through her husband’s recent death; “There is no way I can communicate or verbalize what the church has meant to me”; need to develop more programs to prevent family deterioration, crime, unrest and racism; Rev. Jemison’s has mechanisms in place that will help in these causes.

TAPES: 1 (T1252)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 16 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 36 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence (3 pages), Interviewer's notes/word list, Interviewer's comments, Interview data sheet

RESTRICTIONS: None