

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Eunice Paddio-Johnson

COLLECTION: 4700.1029

IDENTIFICATION: Activist in civil rights in Louisiana; first black member of the St. Helena Parish School Board; retired teacher

INTERVIEWER: Greta de Jong

PROJECT: Civil Rights

INTERVIEW DATES: June 26, 1998

FOCUS DATES: 1970s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1516, Side A

Introduction; born on June 25, 1928, in Crowley, Louisiana; at three years old, family moved to Jennings, Louisiana; mother was a domestic and father was a farmer; parents divorced when they moved to Jennings; in 1942, mother began working in a research lab at the Jeff-Davis Parish Health Unit; unaware of racism as a child; memory of mother's employer treating her family as friends; memory of checking out books at the library without a card; memory of segregation at movie theater; memory of not being allowed to sit at the bar in the drugstore; memory of white man killing black man because he loved his black fiancé; state fair had a day for whites and a day for blacks; no problem with registering to vote in Jennings; attended Leeland College in Baker, Louisiana; received scholarship from her church, the Baptist Association; left Leeland College after one year to attend Grambling State University and graduated in 1949; employed in St. Helena Parish as a teacher; segregated schools and busses; reasons for becoming involved in civil rights include: hand-me-down books from white children, an all white school board and blacks not being permitted to vote; formed a group which met to figure out strategies to get the vote; new restriction on blacks - had to pass test to register to vote; dropped test because most black people began to pass it; gained access to public school busses; petitioned the school board to integrate schools; black children discriminated against during integration; black person not elected into public office until 1972; son Clarence Reed speaks about his experience with integration in the 1970s; sons experienced discrimination in bike race; little league baseball cancelled one summer because sons wanted to participate; assistant director of Head Start; no white teachers willing to participate in Head Start; white parents are still reluctant to have their children in Head Start; met husband Clarence H. Reed in Greensburg at Grambling State University and married in 1949; both became teachers in St. Helena Parish; both moved to Ithaca, New York to work at Cornell University; retired from teaching in 1972 and elected to the school board; first black elected public official; extremely difficult to get an action through as the only black person; came back to Louisiana in 1985; on school board from 1972-1974; other black people that have served on the school board are Otis Lewis and Gordon Yancey; Charlie Overton was first black person elected to the police jury; member of Turner Chapel AME Church.

Tape 1516, Side B

Member of the Order of Eastern Stars; husband was member of the Masons; the lodges tried to provide stability in the community by providing food for the freedom riders, providing funds for transportation, and talking about equality; Lola Stallworth was the first director for Head Start and one of the matrons of the Order of Eastern Stars; white people developed PTO as separate from PTA to remain segregated; Louisiana Education Association, black component, and Louisiana Teacher's Association, white component, affiliated with the National Education Association; National Education Association forced both components to merge; Martin Luther King helped develop strategies for the merge; became editor for the Louisiana Education Association Journal; developed a rotating presidency for the Louisiana Education Association; opinion on white supremacy; awareness of racism raised during college by participation in extra-curricular activities such as the debate team; World War Two veterans spoke about their experiences with discrimination in terms of promotion; discrepancies between black publications and white publications; Benevolent Association provides insurance for black people; Order of Eastern Star was a civic and religious organization; divorced in 1980 from Reed and remarried in 1984; started doing consulting work for the school system; directed Head Start; volunteered for AARP; became a pastor; Paddio-Johnson Foundation scholarship; husband died in 1992; fellow graduate refused to walk next to first black person to graduate from LSU Graduate School; closed the pool because a black student was attending LSU Summer School; husband Reed received masters from LSU; received masters from UCLA on a leave of absence for maternity.

TAPES: 1 (T1516)**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 1 hour**# PAGES TRANSCRIPT:** 43**OTHER MATERIALS:** None**RESTRICTIONS:** Yes - Interviewee would like to be "informed of other uses outside of academic research"