

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Eugene Miller

COLLECTION: 4700.0867

IDENTIFICATION: McKinley High School and Southern University graduate; Longtime member of Shiloh Baptist Church, executive director of their federal credit union and director of Project Lifeline drug prevention program

INTERVIEWER: Tayari kwa Salaam

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

INTERVIEW DATE: June 19, 1997

FOCUS DATES: 1940s -1990s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1243, Side A

Salaam introduces Eugene Miller; Miller's heavy involvement with Shiloh Baptist Church: president of the credit union, fiscal officer, deacon, director of drug prevention program, administrator of Shiloh Housing Development Inc., secretary of church board and social services; Miller born May 4, 1929 in St. Francisville, Louisiana; after eight grade, moved to Virginia to continue schooling; came to Baton Rouge to attend high school at the old McKinley; stayed for further educational opportunities and attended Southern University; is now age sixty-eight and retired, looking to "offer something back if possible"; directs drug and alcohol prevention program at Shiloh, funded by the Department of Health and Hospitals; grant that funded the program, which started in 1987, was written by Dr. [Durant? Dooran?]; research showed 4,800 families struggling with lack of income and/or education in South Baton Rouge; church's efforts serve the whole community; coalition of eighteen local churches; pastor Charles Smith believes in helping the physical needs of his congregants; church's credit union has been very successful; coalition of churches grew from drug treatment program; curriculum of drug treatment program includes outings on Saturdays; assistant coordinator of drug program takes care of programmatic side; they also partner with Our Lady of the Lake Hospital's Tau Center, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, and Southern University on their drug program; list of churches involved in drug program; rotating meeting places and attending events at other churches; Miller attended Southern University and Colorado Springs College; has various management degrees, worked in management for twenty-five years and insurance for eighteen or twenty years; he is not a rich man, but he feels like a millionaire through loving and helping others; not much money in his family growing up, but rich in morals and character; his parents were farmers; mother was more educated than father, taught people to read; he attributes all he has to his belief in God, a guiding force in his life; left St. Francisville as a teen due to scant educational opportunities there, attended Booker T. Washington High School in Virginia, then McKinley in Baton Rouge; Shiloh does work beyond the immediate community; Pastor Smith serves all of Baton Rouge; Shiloh has a mix of congregants, some travelling from far away, all ages from elderly to youth, making "all

kinds of money”; offering scholarships to students; commitment of church members to the programs and services the church provides some from being “Christ-centered”; Brother Frank Johnson is 105 years old, became a stonecutter because he believed a man can do anything; student recipient of their super scholarship says the Lord takes care of her; he thinks people like this are guided; founding of credit union at Shiloh in 1969; at that same time they started a daycare center, all attempts to get the church known in the community; he was first only on the church board, then got involved in credit union and drug program; he takes opportunities to help where he can; Miller also arranges weddings, meetings, and other events in the church; Salaam specifies that those are social services, versus what would be considered church ministries; believes church should align itself with what the Lord wants, “That is to help the downtrodden, and the meek and the hungry and be in the community of a beacon of light”; the meaning of being saved is someone who has totally committed to Christ; treating other folks right; believes we all have responsibility to help others; interview conclusion.

TAPES: 1 (T1243)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 45 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 27 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence (3 pgs); Interviewee info sheet; Interview data sheet; Interviewer's comments (2 pgs); Interviewer's notes and word list; Index (5 pgs)

RESTRICTIONS: None