

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Patricia A. Robinson

COLLECTION: 4700.1045

IDENTIFICATION: Director of Special Projects with the Louisiana Department of Economic Development

INTERVIEWER: Erin Porche

SERIES: McKinley High School Oral History Project – Baton Rouge Bus Boycott

INTERVIEW DATE: July 9, 1998

FOCUS DATES: 1950s- present

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1541, Side A.

Robinson born October 16, 1957 at Charity Hospital in New Orleans; she's Director of Special Projects with the Louisiana Department of Economic Development; parents James and Ella May Robinson; parents told her about hardships of segregated bus riding, how community rallied together for support during boycott; standing on different corners for rides; people just walked; she didn't think about the history until she was older; Reverend T.J. Jemison was a major player in the boycott; she attended McKinley Junior and Senior High; sports were integrated during her time in high school; she saw racism in how white teams were favored; at McKinley they always had new teachers who didn't challenge them or prepare them for college; difficulties of walking to and from school every day; protesting the dress code at school; her mother was a domestic worker and most of her female relatives were teachers; she wanted to major in business; wanted to go to UCLA but hadn't taken the right entrance exams; parents idea that she would be a teacher or nurse; she graduated with honors, went to Southern University at age sixteen and majored in business; experience of racism "all around her"; circuitous and inefficient bus route to Southern University; vowed never to ride the bus again in the summer because it was so hot; busses were not well-maintained; even today there is no direct bus route to Southern; example of racism where she was fired from a job and filed a complaint with the EEOC; she set the precedent because later others filed similar complaints; racism didn't stop her; she feels she has to try harder to prove herself; she just recently dealt with her department being reorganized which was an attempt at subtle racism; she wasn't fired because it would have been obvious so instead they gave her a less than ideal position; she's tougher than that and hung on despite the hardship; she is proud of the economic development work she does in her community; riding in the back of the bus was insulting; she didn't understand segregation and thought it was unfair; she is confident in herself and won't let racism hold her back because she has a purpose in life;

she learned about Jemison's role in the bus boycott through reading and being told by older people; older woman she visits named Mary Williams; civil rights museum in Memphis; civil rights events at Southern; she was scared of the police and their dogs; discussion of Martin Luther King's visit to Baton Rouge; Highlander Center in Tennessee; she was not involved in the Civil Rights Movement; decision to buy from African American businesses; she does volunteer work in her community; her concern about helping low-income people; suggestions for other people to interview; role of the church in the bus boycott was organizing people; her mother told her what it was like to ride the bus before the boycott; African American bus drivers started working in the 1970s; Mary Williams also told her about problems with the bus; end of interview.

TAPES: 1 (T1541)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 33 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 20 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Biographical info sheet, interviewer's comments

RESTRICTIONS: None