

**T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection**

**ABSTRACT**

**INTERVIEWEE NAME:** Beryl McGhee

**COLLECTION:** 4700.0861

**IDENTIFICATION:** Secretary at Southern University; Member of Bethel A.M.E. Church

**INTERVIEWER:** Toni Morrison

**SERIES:** McKinley High School Oral History Project – African American Churches

**INTERVIEW DATE:** June 18, 1997

**FOCUS DATES:** 1997

**ABSTRACT:**

**Tape 1236, Side A**

Introduction; born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on February 12, 1955; father is Larry Clayton McGhee, Sr., director of facilities planning at Southern University; mother is Fredrica Williams McGhee, a second grade teacher at Sharon Hills Elementary; secretary at Southern University; Bethel A.M.E. Church located on Sixth Street; role of Bethel is to help with the spiritual, emotional, and physical lives of the people in the South Baton Rouge community; role of the church in McGhee's personal life is the opportunity to do service; Bethel founded in 1867 by Reverend George Gordon; outreach services at Bethel include the Eva Scott Gilchrist Quality of Life Center, the Governor's After School Drug Program, the State Saturday Tutorial Program, and the Juneteenth Picnic; Bethel Church traditions include Founder's Day, Hat Day, Men and Women's Day, Miss Christian Teen Pageant, Revival, Bible school, Children's Interface Sabbath; Bethel joined the South Baton Rouge Minister's Coalition within the last six years; special relationship with New St. John Missionary Baptist Church; Bethel supported through tithes and fundraising activities; new minister Reverend Charles James trying to institute the Buy a Brick Campaign to build a memorial wall; fundraising activities include a giveaway at Men's Day and Miss Teen presentation at Women's Day; Bethel played a role in the civil rights movement; description of a typical Sunday church service; chancel choir basically older members with traditional voices; gospel choir is three or four years old and is more modern music; two women ministers include the pastor's wife who's an associate minister at Bethel and a minister at Herd Chapel and also Audrey Jones who's a licentiate; other females in Bethel include Joyce Laudun the pro tem of the steward board and the administrative personnel; McGhee believes Bethel has allowed women more freedom to move into the ministry than other denominations; A.M.E. stands for African Methodist Episcopal Church; originated when Absalom Jones and Richard Allen could not worship freely in the Methodist church and decided to form their own church; difference between A.M.E. Zion and A.M.E.; organization of A.M.E. church includes districts, bishops, and conferences; current bishop is Richard Allen Chapel, Sr. from Africa; Bethel located in the eighth district; Bethel sends delegate and alternate to the conferences; Bethel addresses the needs of the youth through Bible school, the tutoring program, the outreach center, the YMOB and YSIS; all Bethel activities are open to the public; size of congregation is

100 to 175 and includes blue and white collar workers, college professors, teenagers etc; Bethel went from mainly an upper class setting to a more diverse setting over the years; significant event at Bethel occurred when Frank Reed was brought in from Baltimore to perform revivals; weekly activities include Bible study, the tutorial program, and choir rehearsal; former reverend Brumfield instituted many youth programs; current minister very involved with the youth, also; good relationship with Southern University and LSU; effect of location on Bethel

**TAPES:** 1 (T1236)

**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 36 minutes

**# PAGES TRANSCRIPT:** 24 pages

**RESTRICTIONS:** None