

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: John Zippert

COLLECTION: 4700.1030

IDENTIFICATION: Member of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)

INTERVIEWER: Greta de Jong

PROJECT: Civil Rights

INTERVIEW DATE: June 28, 1998

FOCUS DATES: 1960s - 1980s

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ABSTRACT:

Tape 1517, Side A

Introduction; born on November 13, 1945, in New York City; grew up in a middle class family; father was a mechanical engineer and mother was a housewife; attended public schools in New York City; attended the Bronx High School of Science; attended the City College of New York for three years until going to Louisiana in 1965; eventually graduated from City College of New York in history by receiving credit for CORE materials and taking two history courses at USL; parents were Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany arriving in the United States shortly before the Great Depression in 1929; participated in march and picketing at Woolworth's in New York City protesting segregated lunch counters in the South; joined CORE chapter at City College of New York; active in student government and numerous organizations during college including S.D.S. and W.E.B. Dubois Society; president of the student government at the City College of New York during September of '64 to September of '65; participation in march at Selma following "Bloody Sunday;" became a summer volunteer for CORE in '65 and traveled to Waveland, Mississippi for the training; assigned to Opelousas, Louisiana in St. Landry Parish to register people to vote and arrived on June 21, 1965; priest from Holy Ghost Church said there wasn't a need for CORE and so they were sent to Eunice, Louisiana; description of workers in Eunice; integration of restaurants in Eunice; working with people to participate in the ASCS election in Eunice; registered African Americans to vote in St. Landry Parish; arrested for registering people to vote in St. Francisville and Tallulah, Louisiana in 1965 and early 1966; main problem with CORE is fleeting volunteers.

Tape 1517, Side B

Evaluation meeting in Plaquemine, Louisiana to report on CORE accomplishments; during meeting, Ronnie Moore the Louisiana director of CORE asked Zippert to go back to Opelousas and continue work; stayed with Courville family in Opelousas and used attorney Marion Overton White's office; in 1965, worked on supermarket demonstration to hire African American cashiers; tutored at integrated school in Palmetto, Louisiana; worked with farmers trying to get a better price for sweet potatoes by setting up the Grand Marie Sweet Potato Marketing Cooperative; meeting with Father McKnight and his assistants Carol and Charles Prejean; married Carol Prejean; tried to put together a CAP Agency called Acadiana Neuf with the Head

Start program; first job was with the Southern Cooperative Development Program in August of 1967; in January of 1970, started working for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives which involves work with farmers, land retention, and credit union organizing; met with draft board during Vietnam War explaining that volunteering for CORE was his service to the country and was never called to serve; the Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities State of Louisiana report on aspects of the poverty program in South Louisiana; report included copies of checks received form CORE and reimbursements to CORE; newspaper stories in Louisiana labeling Zippert a communist.

Tape 1518, Side A

From 1979 to 1982, FBI investigated every check written by the Federation in the past five years; in 1985, Green County and Perry County issue of absentee ballot fraud; moved from Louisiana in September 1971 to the Federation's training center in Epes, Alabama; in August 1976, moved to Eutaw, Alabama where he currently resides with his wife; bought weekly newspaper the Green County Democrat; met Clyde Johnson at the fiftieth anniversary part of the Southern Tenant Farmer's Union; description of the process for making sweet potatoes; cooperative forced sweet potato market into competition; Wilbert Guillory, a sharecropper, became manager of the cooperative; successful with African Americans being elected to the ASCS at the community level; Zippert and wife removed the miscegenation statute in Louisiana by filing a suit against the clerk of court of St. Landry Parish Harold Sylvester before they were allowed to get married.

TAPES: 2 (T1517, TI518)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 2 hours

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 59

OTHER MATERIALS: None

RESTRICTIONS: None