

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Odessa Brown

COLLECTION: 4700.2369

IDENTIFICATION: Thibodaux resident, hurricane survivor

INTERVIEWER: Daelin Wesley

SERIES: Louisiana Sea Grant Coastal Change Oral Histories Project

INTERVIEW DATES: November 1, 2012

FOCUS DATES: 1960, 1992, 2008, 2012

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4294

Full name is Odessa Renee Brown; born October 3, 1960 in Woodville, Mississippi; lives in Thibodaux, Louisiana and has lived there for approximately 30 years; Brown says culturally Thibodaux has changed since she arrived; has become a lot more diverse; many people have moved on to other areas; when she first got there people mostly worked in oil field type jobs at that time; now there is a lot of diversification in jobs; a lot of people have moved into this area due to having to move from the coastal areas where they were before; they are coming farther inland; Brown had a "normal" childhood; grew up in a small town, had a lot of friends; not a lot to do but she has very good memories; there was a lot more closeness with family and just the community; people cared more about each other; her parents operated their own business; she was able to have a simple but quality life; parents stressed education and doing the best that the children could, taught them good work ethics and knowing what and what not to do; her childhood set her up to be the person that she is today; to understand the values in life that would bring you through; Brown says the racial population in Louisiana has changed quite a bit; Brown has seen an influx of different ethnic groups come into the state, which has greatly increased the population; as far as the land area, there has been quite a bit of erosion that's actually changed the coast line; to some extent the changes have affected everyone indirectly; Brown says summer temperatures seem higher and winter seems to creep in earlier; longer winters now than what they had at one point; more rain at some times and having that heavy rain probably caused some of the erosion; has heard hunters and fisherman discussing those issues as far as fishing, etc.; now some of the fish they would normally be able to go out and catch at any time, there have been many restrictions placed on those; such as red fish; at one time they were plentiful, now redfish have such restrictions on them you can't catch that many fish; for the future of her community Brown sees things moving more towards the technological, whereas one time the community depended more on agriculture and the wildlife; people were hunters, fishermen, and shrimpers, etc. now education has broadened the horizon for people to move into different areas; she sees this community becoming more technical, and she doesn't see people living off of the land as much as they did at one time; she thinks hurricanes do effect Thibodaux more than they do on other places depending on the geographical area and due to the fact that Thibodaux is a

place that for a long time has had a strong sugar cane industry; hurricanes have greatly effected that particular area of economics in the Thibodaux area; the first hurricane she recalls going through since she lived in Thibodaux and felt strongly impacted by was Hurricane Andrew; she thinks that was back in the 90's; she remembers being a child and getting the end parts of Betsy and Camille, but Andrew was the first hurricane she can recall being impacted by, then Katrina; Andrew was her first experience that she could remember of living through a hurricane, and it was catastrophic, scary; going through it all night long, being out almost a week without electricity; seeing the impact it had on the whole area: trees uprooted from the ground, people's homes messed up, it was just something to see, experience, and really know what Mother Nature can really do; Brown has one child; describes in detail preparing for hurricanes; discusses in detail her experience in Hurricane Isaac, August 2012; every time there has ever been a mandatory evacuation Brown's home and family were threatened: Gustav, Katrina, Andrew, some of the major ones; having experience hurricanes with now, it makes her really relieved that God is in control, because anything can happen and the weather can get so severe that no matter what man does to try to prevent flooding, it doesn't always work; when she first came to Thibodaux for quite a few years there wasn't a winter here, but in the last several years they have had cold winters; Because of industries like sugar cane, etc., she thinks that the air is a little bit more polluted than where she comes from, mostly because of the industries and the low lands; she doesn't know very much about coastal erosion; she hears about it and knows that some of the areas around South Louisiana, due to the impact of the hurricanes, have lost a lot of the coastal lands and wetlands; because of coastal erosion and the high tides and winds from a storm, etc., mudslides and things are caused; can happen suddenly but sometimes it's over the course of years; Louisiana is losing a lot of the coastal lands, and therefore people have to end up moving from certain areas; some years ago she took a ride down to Venice, Louisiana; because of coastal erosion people had to move away from that area, closer inland; these people are dependent on that type of living for many years and now that has changed for them; coastal erosion can have an effect on seafood; there have been so many restrictions on it, certain kinds of fish that you should not catch because of certain pollutions in the water; oil field drilling has caused a lot of pollution also; and the coastal erosion when it happens, brings a lot of sand into the areas; rocks and things are shifted back into the water; and the coral reefs are effected too; the most important part of Brown's life is God; when you are a person who seeks God in your life, other things fall in place; ask God for wisdom and knowledge; Brown says three words that describe Louisiana are laid-back, retro, and happy. People in Louisiana seem to always be upbeat about something; she says "retro" is that she finds that pretty much the south is just behind when it comes to certain things.

TAPES: 1 (T4294)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 42 minutes

PAGES INDEX: 7 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: None

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