

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Rev. T. J. Jemison

COLLECTION: 4700.0627

IDENTIFICATION: Pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church, civil rights leader

INTERVIEWER: Roderick Jones, Derrek Vaughn, Michelle Johnson

PROJECT: McKinley High School Oral History Project -- Year One

DATES: 15 June 1995

FOCUS DATES: 1919-present; primarily 1950s-1970s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 911

Jemison born in Selma, Alabama in 1919; parents; parents' education and professions; civil rights movement in Baton Rouge; 1953 bus boycott; 1918 trolley car boycott in New Orleans; African-American maids and cooks returning home from working for whites had to stand up over empty seats because of division between black and white seating on buses; ordinance 222 passed, allowing them to fill the bus back to front while whites filled in front to back, which allowed more African-Americans to sit down; Jemison leads confrontation with bus drivers who refuse to honor the ordinance; police first threaten to arrest Jemison, then force driver to comply; driver suspended for 3 weeks, whites spread story that Jemison got him fired; names people involved in getting ordinance passed; Chester Laborde arrested for standing guard outside a boycott meeting with a gun; Jemison says most trouble was with the driver themselves, not police; ratio of black to white bus riders; free ride program to help get through boycott; Jemison traces what led him to be involved in civil right movement, cites childhood in Selma; ordinance allowed back-to-front/front-to-back seating passed in 1954; Dr. Martin Luther King; Jemison says King patterned Montgomery boycott after Baton Rouge boycott; C. K. Steele of Tallahassee; A. L. Davis of New Orleans; Southern Christian Leadership Conference; free car lift; closing down bars; meetings held at public high schools; McKinley and Capitol high schools; mass meetings; creating a sense of crisis to motivate black community into action; fear of violence and use of body guards; wiretapping; integration of Baton Rouge High; educational manifesto; taxis for students to protect them from before and after school contact with white students; Southern students used to integrate lunch counters; strategies for avoiding big confrontations; Southern campus; students shot in 70s; Jim Crow laws abolished 1971; problems with leadership in African-American community today; United Defense League; Christian Center Movement.

TAPES: 1 (T911)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 90 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 30 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None