

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAMES: McKinley Alumni Association members: Isadore Tansil, Doris W. Thompson, Eva Legard, Harold Jefferson, Elouise Paulfrey

COLLECTION: 4700.0693

IDENTIFICATION: Alumni of McKinley High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and members of the McKinley High School Alumni Association

INTERVIEWERS: Roderick Jones, Shawnda Hollins, Shanta Jenkins, Nadia Graves, Carmen Posey

SERIES: McKinley High School Oral History Project – History of McKinley High School

INTERVIEW DATES: July 13, 1995

FOCUS DATES: 1940s to 1995

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1020, Side A

Introductions; McKinley was the only formal education available for African Americans; Dr. James Monroe Frazier directed the entire Baton Rouge Colored School System; Frazier born in Blue Ridge, a small town in Bienville Parish; biographical information on Frazier; Frazier was a disciplinarian; Frazier inspected schools, looked for kids playing hooky; Field Day program where kids competed and did field activities; social activities confined to weekends; youth socialized with their contemporaries, not adults; youth hid their smoking from adults; Tansil whipped by Frazier for sneaking off to buy candy; Doris Thompson attended McKinley in the early 1940s; kids performing songs and dances at school concerts; games played at Field Day; oratorical and singing contests; McKinley offered Latin; A.E. Carter in English and Virtle Jones for chemistry were favorite teachers; got good academic foundation at McKinley; J.D. Young a talented algebra teacher; education at McKinley helped Thompson when she was a teacher; poor lighting at home strained eyesight; crowded space in house as kids studied together; hand-me-down textbooks; having to pay for textbooks; lack of air conditioning in schools; musing on whether or not the weather was so hot back then; on hot nights would sleep outside; no worries about locking doors; upset about LSU possibly changing McKinley's name; foresaw that LSU would try to take over McKinley to use as their new laboratory school; stigma about old McKinley building that whites may not accept; importance of historical McKinley building; efforts to maintain McKinley and maybe put it to community use; thinks developers should put money into renovating McKinley; wishes more alumni would get involved; Baton Rouge didn't get a second black high school until 1950, Capitol High; organization of alumni association;

recent McKinley graduates don't have the same esteem for the school; Posey says she didn't understand the school's significance before working on the oral history project; Jones attends Istrouma, wants to transfer to McKinley; blacks had one high school while whites had three; those white schools got money for remodeling and asbestos abatement, but McKinley hasn't; insulting to blacks in Baton Rouge that McKinley is not being preserved; competitions McKinley has won in band, sports, academics; marching band practiced in the streets of South Baton Rouge; trying to remember details of defunct youth organizations.

Tape 1020, Side B

Current students share their feelings about McKinley, including dress code and poor maintenance; teacher who is interested in working the oral history project into the curriculum at McKinley; teachers used to be more involved with students; teachers doubled as counselors; teachers would see students at church; teachers sometimes bought shoes or clothes for poor students; alumni concerns over possible change of McKinley High name; the class of 1956 stood together to oppose unfairness, including by teachers; encourages students to be brave, to stand up and fight for preserving the McKinley name; challenge teachers and make them give you more; no compulsory education when they were in school; if you couldn't make it, you dropped out; now kids are passed along so they arrive at college unprepared; discussion of LSU professors who are involved in this oral history project; in 1982, McKinley Alumni Association became the first chartered and incorporated alumni association in Louisiana; wish to turn the old McKinley into a multicultural center; future possible uses of these oral histories.

TAPES: 1 (1020)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 5 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 39 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Interviewer's notes and word list, List of interviewees, Preliminary index (4 pgs)

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