

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Fred C. Matthews, Jr. and Melvin Sambo, Sr.

COLLECTION: 4700.0863

IDENTIFICATION: Matthews is a trustee and Sambo is a deacon at Magnolia Hope Baptist Church

INTERVIEWER: Lavada Taylor

SERIES: McKinley High School Oral History Project

INTERVIEW DATE: June 18 1997

FOCUS DATES: 1922 - 1997

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1238

Names, birthdates, occupations; Matthews grew up farming, moved to Baton Rouge with his father in 1920; Matthews worked more than thirty years at Exxon refinery before retiring; Sambo grew up farming; Hope's Day Plantation; Sambo moved with mother to Baton Rouge in 1935; works at Baton Rouge Rice Mill; went to C.C. camp in 1933; Sambo works at Exxon for eighteen years, then at UC Hospital in San Francisco for eight, then returned to Baton Rouge when his mother became ill; worked in construction from 1964 until retirement in 1985; explains C.C. camps; PWA cleans out LSU lake in 1932; City Park and zoo; Matthews's father pastor of Magnolia Hope 1922-1948; explains difference between deacons and trustees; Matthews explains why he has never accepted a position as deacon, but has always remained a trustee; Matthews's father wanted him to preach, but he never got the call; Matthews serves as head of Baptist Men; Matthews's recounts his various offices within the church; explains the brotherhood; retreats; Leland College; Baton Rouge College; Dr. Gardner Taylor; Caesar Clark; American Baptist; Deacon George Betts; racial injustice; role of Black ministers as liason between blacks and whites during slavery era; Ku Klux Klan; Sambo discusses life at Hope Estate Plantation; Garrick or Garrett name of family who owned it; white family protected blacks on their plantation, even buying guns for them to use to defend themselves against the Klan; Judge Favrot; Hart owned most of South Baton Rouge at one time, including property on which Magnolia Hope church now stands; Hart refused to sell land to church; Sambo's grandfather, George Betts, bought the land and gave it to the church; Sambo says blacks at that time may have been illiterate, but did have common sense.

Tape 1239

Matthews discusses use of term "Uncle Tom" for black straw bosses; deference to whites all an act; Dr. Clark unable to enter governor's home through the front door, even as president of Southern University; no blacks allowed in legislature except cleaning staff; president of Howard University speaks at 1944 or '43 Southern University commencement; Clark uses singing group as a front for going to speak to the legislature by way of introducing the group; becomes an annual event; Matthews began work at Exxon in 1929, stayed for nearly forty years; worked 38 years in the laboratory; was in charge of forty black employees used for all the support work (cleaning, etc.) for research; Matthews shows 1973 copy of company paper; only double page feature ever done on a company employee was given to Matthews and distributed internationally; work maintaining Baton Rouge cemeteries; Matthews discusses the successes of his children and grandchildren; personal philosophy; Sambo discusses his children and grandchildren; the brotherhood organized by 25 churches in 1953; Matthews member of Grand Jury in 1963; both men discuss problem of black on black crime and youth today; Sambo held up in his own home; church trying to do outreach to help solve the problem; Matthews involved in program to keep kids in school, especially targeted at McKinley; Matthews recalls guest preacher from Arkansas thirty or forty years ago; Matthews explains that good leadership in the church and in business requires respect and concern for the actual people you are responsible for; spirit of Christian community; Butler Community Center; Matthews recalls story of church in Copenhagen, Denmark; witnessing by example; not enough blacks attending church services in Baton Rouge today.

TAPES: 2 (1238, 1239)**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 2 hours**PAGES TRANSCRIPT:** 117 pages**RESTRICTIONS:** None