

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAMES: Brenda and Isaac Patterson, Jr. **COLLECTION:** 4700.0843

IDENTIFICATION: Members of the Family Ministry at Shiloh Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

INTERVIEWER: Tayari Kwa Salaam

PROJECT: McKinley High School Oral History Project: African American Churches

INTERVIEW DATES: June 21, 1997

FOCUS DATES: 1950s-1990s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1214, Side A

Introduction; Brenda and Isaac give their full names, birthdates and birthplaces; both raised in South Baton Rouge; Brenda works for Greater New Guide Baptist Church, Isaac works for Dow Chemical Co.; Brenda attended high school and graduated from Delta Business College, Isaac attended McKinley High and went to Southern University for two years; Brenda's parents are Henry and Tilly Mae Rosea; Isaac's parents are Isaac and Edna Patterson; Brenda's mother was a maid, father was a bus and truck driver; Isaac's mother did domestic work, father worked in construction and for a lumber company; their parents' educational backgrounds; Brenda says her parents were "lower class with a class" meaning they worked hard to get what they needed and the family was happy; Isaac feels similarly about his parents; role of religion in Brenda's life, she's a Baptist; decision to be baptized, importance of being serious about one's religion and not playing around; example of gospel music being sung with more depth of feeling in her younger days, now it's almost music you can dance to; truly listening to the pastor's words; her view is to take her Baptist religion seriously; religion has helped her deal with emotional things and put her problems in order; role of religion for Isaac, instilled a behavior pattern and discipline; even if he strayed, his religious grounding brought him back; it helps to structure his lifestyle and teach right from wrong; religion is good because you have a choice and know what the consequences are; Shiloh Baptist Church is part of the South Baton Rouge community; now, most parishioners come from other communities so the church's impact is wider; estimate that the church has 2,500 members currently; Brenda feels that membership has grown because the church has grown along with the people and new generations; Shiloh is a large church but it has many small aspects that people can be involved with; Shiloh meets the needs of people from any class, any educational level or social background; pastor Charles Smith has a way of tapping into the different resources of his parishioners to get things done at the church; they don't know how Shiloh got its name, they assume it's based on something Biblical; explanation of church

traditions like speaking meetings and midnight watch; one tradition that has changed is instead of paying dues they now tithe because that's what the Bible says to do; steps taken to prepare congregation for tithing; benefit of tithing for the church and for parishioners personally; more on midnight watch tradition; Brenda says Shiloh had an undue reputation of being stuck-up because people were dressing up for masses and that made some parishioners feel inadequate; Isaac says Shiloh embraces people from all walks of life;

Tape 1214, Side B

Isaac speaks about the church's leadership, Reverend Smith "talks from one end of the spectrum to the other"; Smith recognizes that God is what holds him up; story about a woman who was coming to mass drunk, the reverend's and parishioners' reactions to her, how she later became a productive church member; embracing people because you don't know what they have been or what they could become; explanation of the family ministry at Shiloh, mostly consists of married couples but single parents are not excluded; workshops they hold on marriage, divorce, parenting, etc.; goal is to strengthen the families involved, provide support and guidance when children are acting out; explanation of how family ministry is broken down and organized; Sister Jennifer Jones is their evangelistic leader, offers guidance, suggests workshops and retreats; legacy of Shiloh, it has been around for over 100 years, standing in the community and delivering God's word; most important legacy is spirituality; the "church on the hill" mentality; memories of the earlier church live on with older parishioners but new parishioners can still be a part of it; the church's legacy is the people who attend; strong leadership at Shiloh; the Patterson children did summer enrichment programs at Shiloh and they understand that they represent their parents and their church; Brenda praises Reverend Smith, loves Shiloh and would never leave it for another church; Shiloh "feeds the whole person", there's always something going on there, parishioners are guided to use their strengths, they recognize that everyone has been through bad times; must accept the church as a means to salvation; they discuss other people who have been interviewed for this project; deep history between Shiloh and McKinley High; interview conclusion.

TAPES: 1 (T1214)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 23 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 49 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence (2 pgs); Interviewee data sheets (2); Interviewee info sheets (2); Index (8 pgs)

RESTRICTIONS: None