

JACKSON STATE COLLEGE
Jackson, Mississippi

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWER AGREEMENT

I, MOHAMMED-BASSIRU SILLAH, in view of the
(Interviewer, please print)

historical and scholarly value of the information contained in the
interview with Mrs. KATHERINE J. MOSLEY, knowingly and
(Interviewee, please print)

voluntarily permit Jackson State College, Jackson the full use of this
information, and hereby grant and assign to Jackson State College,
Jackson all rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information,
whether or not such rights are now known, recognized or contemplated.



Interviewer (signature)

OH 78.10

Interview Number

6-23-78

Date

OREGON JEWISH ORAL HISTORY
AND ARCHIVE PROJECT
INTERVIEWEE AGREEMENT

You have been asked for information to be used in connection with the Oral History Project of the Oregon Jewish Oral History and Archive Project. The purpose of this program is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

A tape recording of your interview will be made by the interviewer. An original verbatim typescript of the tape will then be made. The tape of the interview and the original verbatim typescript will then be filed in the Oral History Office at the Jewish Community Center. These materials will be made available for purposes of research, for use in school courses, for scholarly publications, and other related purposes.

* * * * *

I, Barbara J. Masley, have read the above
(Interviewee, please print)

and, in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, I knowingly and voluntarily permit the Oregon Jewish Oral History Archive full use of this information. I hereby grant and assign all my rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information, whether or not such rights are now known, recognized, or contemplated, to the Oregon Jewish Oral History and Archive Project.

Barbara J. Masley
(Interviewee signature)

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Date

Biographical Sketch

Mrs. Katherine J. Mosley was born on the 7th of April, 1928 in Meridian Mississippi. Her mother and father were married for fifty-seven years. She has two brothers and she is the eldest of the three children. Mrs. Mosley has lived in Meridian, Mississippi; Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; San Francisco, California; Buffalo, New York; Washington, D. C.; New York, New York; Syracuse, New York; Jackson, Mississippi.

She was educated at Dillard University, Atlanta University, Syracuse University, and University of California at Berkeley. She is married, and she is a Professor in Sociology at Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi.

Summary of Interview

This interview was conducted with Mrs. Katherine J. Mosley, interviewed by Mohammed-Bassiru Sillah, on the subject of 'The Experienced School Teacher'; on the 22nd of June, 1978 at 9:00 a. m. in Room 316 of the Department of Sociology at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. Mrs. Mosley was active and friendly during the interview.

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JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Farish Street Project

INTERVIEWEE: Katherine Mosley
INTERVIEWER: M. B. Sillah (Mohammed Bassiru Sillah)
SUBJ: SUBJ: "Early Life in the Farish Street Community"
DATE: June 22, 1978 (Date of Interview)

This is an interview with Mrs. Katherine Mosley for the Jackson State University Oral History Workshop by Mohammed Bassiru Sillah. The interview is conducted in the Department of Sociology Room 316, at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. June 22, 1978 at 9:00 A.M.

- S: Mrs. Mosley what was the City of Jackson like in recollecting your past experiences?
- M: Any particular area of Jackson?
- S: Like Farish Street. . .
- M: When I came to Jackson, Farish Street was very much alive, it was the seat of the Black businesses. From Capitol and Farish to Davis and Farish you could find any kind of business that you wanted, operated maybe not owned, but operated by Black men.
- S: What were the people saying about the City when you were a child? Was it a good town to work in terms of educational opportunities?
- M: Well with Jackson State University, which was then Jackson College, Tougaloo, Jackson was a very good place for educational opportunities. However, Blacks in Jackson, at the time, were not particularly geared to the educational opportunities here. Many families sent their children out of state to school.
- S: What are your early recollections about your early school days?
- M: My early school days?
- S: Yes ma'am.
- M: I did not go to school in Jackson. I went to high School in Meridian, Mississippi; elementary and junior high school, and I suppose were the

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- M: happiest days in my life. I have had some very good teachers and some of them made lasting impressions on me. I feel that I had an adequate background from which I could jump off into college. Courses that I took are no longer in the high school curriculum. For example, I had three years of Latin, and that's no longer in the school program. I had physics, geometry, algebra in the area of mathematics, I had four years of science. We had all kinds of extra curriculum activities in which we could engage. Homemaking was mine but I never learned to sew because that was too time consuming and too slow for me. But photography cooking, coral groups, that kind of situation. In fact, as I said, they were the happiest days of my life.
- S: How did you precieve social life as a much older adult?
- M: I beg your pardon.
- S: How did you precieve social life as a young adult in those days?
- M: If you would notice from my background interview, I travelled quite a bit. My father was a railroad man, and because of the very interest that I had I lived in many places. So I just can't categorize social life in one capsule because every place in which you live presented a different kind of social life. For example, I lived in three cities in New York State. Buffalo, Syracuse, and New York City. New York City had everything to offer whenever you wanted it. Buffalo had everything to offer. And in Buffalo, if we couldn't find anything to do there, we would cross the bridge and go into Canada. So I had a varying and most interesting social life. On the West Coast, I got the opportunity to engage in activities with all kinds of people. I learned to eat Russian food, Korean food, Mexican food, Japanese food. So my social life would depend upon the groups with whom I happen to have had contact at a particular time. It was full, I can tell you that.
- S: Was an education difficult to earn in those days?
- M: Education or a degree? Is that what you are talking about?
- S: A degree, yes.
- M:

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- M: Not if you put your mind to it. Schools and Universities were much more demanding than they are now to me. For an example, I have students who can not conjugate a verb. If you could not do that when I was coming along, shame on you. We had strictly an academic atmosphere at each of the Universities which I took courses. Now you kids major in Jaccob T. Reddix Student Union and Plaza. You come to class when you get ready and sleep when you get there.
- S: When did _____ come here?
- M: When?
- S: Yes ma'am.
- M: 1949.
- S: What was your impression of the big bands of the thirties and the forties? Did you attend any of their concerts?
- M: Oh sure. Not during the thirties, cause I was but a Lad, but in the forties, sure. Woody Herman, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, that kind of a band.
- S: What were some of the things you particularly enjoyed doing on the weekend?
- M: Now or then?
- S: Now and then.
- M: Reading, I've always, under my bed or at the side of my bed there is always a book or two books so that if I wake up late at night I can pick it up and read it. For example, I read "Gone With the Wind" in two days and one night. I like to read. I use to do embroidery and knitting and crocheting. I dont' have time for that anymore. I am involved in a zillion community organizations, Girl Scouting, Boy Scouting, I've done camping on weekends. It all depends on what comes up.
- S: Mrs. Mosley, what religion do you belong to?
- M: Catholic, Roman Catholic.
- S: Are you a member of Masons or Eastern Star?
- M: No.

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- S: Can you recollect an occasion when you experienced hard times in the group?
- M: Hard times?
- S: Yes ma'am.
- M: Anytime that you find yourself in a group that is different, you may experience for a moment a hard time trying to find a way to belong if you have the interest to belong. But I am an outgoing person and I can get along with the devil so difficulties don't arise with me.
- S: Do you recall any event which has some great affect on your life?
- M: Event?
- S: Event, yes ma'am.
- M: Can we come back to that one. I'll have to think about it. A single event?
- S: A single event or it can be a general event.
- M: At the moment I can't.
- S: Do you recall the circumstances around any of the following, like the flood of 1927.
- M: No, I wasn't here. See what you are trying to ask people questions from way way back. I don't know anything about that.
- S: Besides your teaching career, what are some of the jobs you have held to earn your living?
- M: I have been a National Girl Scout personnel member. I have done research for private companies and that's about it besides teaching. Oh I worked in the social services department in a hospital.
- S: Do you enjoy your teaching career?
- M: Up to a point when my students feel as though they want to work and work along with me, I enjoy it.
- S: What was your impression when you first entered into teaching career?
- M: I had really no particular impression, I knew what it was about and since my first teaching job was in a college, I tried to transfer in my teaching job the things that I had done and observed as a student inna college in a University.

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- S: Is teaching a boring work?
- M: Boring?
- S: Yes ma'am.
- M: When the students don't study. But when they are alert and on the ball it most invigorating and fasinating.
- S: Do you gain from your students?
- M: Yes.
- S: What school were you teaching before coming to Jackson State University?
- M: None. This was my first teaching. I had been a graduate assistant at Atlanta University at which I had two introductory sociology classes at Morehouse College. You cannot really call that. . .I don't believe that's what you have reference to. I had taught Introductory Sociology at Morehouse College.
- S: Philisophically speaking. .Psychologically speaking what was the first day like when you stood before your students?
- M: Psychologically speaking what?
- S: Were you nervous on the first day when you stood in front of your students?
- M: No. Fortunately, or unfortunately, my first class of students contained many returning veterans from World War II. Several of my class members were kids with whom I had gone to elementary school with. So, I was completely at ease.
- S: Did you implement discipline at school? If so, in what way?
- M: If I find that my kids are goofing off, I will schedule for them a test the next class day. Assign assignments in which detailed research would be involved. Library assignments. I would also assign them to look at certain T. V. programs that are geared to. . .maybe something that we are talking about in class. That's the way I handle discipline. Every now and then I might have one little honey that I will have to sort of embarass.
- S: What was your family like?

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- M: Oh, I had a loving close family. I can remember two granddaddies, one grandmama. My mother and father, and I had two brothers. I guess we were like peas in a pod. In fact, we enjoyed a very close family relationship until the family was broken in 1969 with the death of my older brother. Even after his passing, the four of us got close together. My mother passed last October and now there are just three of us and when I go home to my father, every two weeks on schedule and sometimes in between if I am needed. My father, my younger brother and myself keep in constant ^{Contact} with one another. So, as the family dwindles, we get closer. My parents were married for fifty-seven years and they believed in the sanctity of the institution of marriage.
- S: Who was responsible for your schooling?
- M: My grandfather who had died earlier. My mother told me the day that I was born he set up a savings account primarily for my education. When I graduated from high school I got a scholarship. I was in the top ten of the graduating class so I had a scholarship. His savings supplemented. My father was truly responsible for it and since I was such a gad about, I got a job. My master's degree costed my father one \$10.00 because there were scholarships and I worked and the money that I did not use from the savings, it gave me my master's degree. At Syracuse University, I had a full fellowship. Even including \$200.00 a month to spend. When I went to the University of California, I was on full fellowship. So,
- S: That was fantastic. Were your parents hard disciplinary folks or restrictive.
- M: I wouldn't classify them either way. My father was the head of the household. A patriotic kind of thing. As I can go back and remember he never told us not to do a thing without giving us a reason for not doing it.
- S: Did he ever _____?
- M: Definitely so.

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- S: How do you compare ^{to} this child with the child of the thirties and forties and fifties?
- M: Well, I can't think back to the children of the thirties but after the II World War, there was a change in children and it grew out of the economic system. Mothers and fathers were both working and they were out of the house and children almost grew up by themselves. There was a relaxation of parental communication. So, I believe that there has been a decline in family relationships since World War II. The closeness is not there. The respect is not there. The discipline is not there. The doing thing together is not there. It is only now among certain family groups that are trying to restore the closeness that once existed in their families before the mother and father left the house at the same time, or mother worked in the day shift and father worked in the night shift.
- S: In your earliest recollection what was the business community like?
- M: Here?
- S: Yes ma'am.
- M: It was a what's happening now. The Black businessmen ,if they were any good at all thrived. If they were just in it to keep them from doing something else, they did not last. There were many White stores also in the Black community, but during the sixties Blacks sort of got away from and Whites went out. As I told you, Farish Street was the center of Black businesses. In the last five years, it has been on the decline. I can go down Farish Street now and see nobody in the 100 block that use to be there. Coming up in the 200 block it is no longer there. In fact, the area is going through urban renewal. In the 300 block you don't see anything. in the 400 block the only thing that standing now that was there when I first came to Jackson is the Collins Funeral Home. Central Methodist Church is still there. A little further up the street is the Dotty Cab Company and Harmon's Drugstore and Farish Street Church. But it is a completely changed

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- M: business community.
- S: How has the business community changed since then?
- M: Well, more and more Blacks are getting away from business ventures. I don't believe that we have developed the concept of a Black business community to the extent that Blacks will help other Blacks in cooperate ventures. It's hard for a single entrepreneur or a single businessman to make it. He can't do it. . .capitol, money, property, the young Black is just now beginning to find ways and means that Whites have known for years. The Small Business Administration has done wonders for the Black businessman if he so desires to do into business. Such fields as Business Administration and Marketing and what have you until a very few years ago, you would find a very few Blacks going into it around here. Now if they went away to other schools, very seldom did they come back and open businesses.
- S: Can you recall the first expereince that you had with telephones?
- M: Yes I can. It was a tall black thing that now it is an antique. The first old telephone that I remember that I saw was on a wall. I suppose it was one of the first ones ever installed in Meridian, where you would of sort of put the little receiver to your ear and wind up the little thing and somebody on the other end would answer and say with whom did you want to speak.
- S: What was your family's source of getting water as far as you can remember?
- M: City.
- S: When did your family first get electricity?
- M: Get what?
- S: Electricity.
- M: Oh, I can't remember because I was very young child.
- S: What is your recollections of health services offered in Jackson when you were a child?
- M: Health services?
- S: Yes ma'am.

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M: I was born at home with a Black doctor and a Black nurse in attendance and after two weeks the Black nurse left and a nanny took over. Hospitals were sort of off limits as I remember until 19____. It's strange you should ask that question. My father and I were talking about that the other day. My first recollection of a hospital, I think I was twelve years old and it was naturally a White hospital. This White doctor did not refer to us as Black and White. The Doctor and my father use to hunt together. The Doctor and my grandfather would sit down and swap jokes and the Doctor was a country boy and sometimes he would drive by our house. We lived in a great big white house that sat upon a hill and he would come by and say now I cannot climb those steps because I am tired, you come sit on the steps and let's talk about such and such a thing. It was personal relationship plus a professional relationship. This was where during my college days I had my first working experience with this doctor. His son who is now at that same hospital is just in direct opposite to his father. He wants to keep everything separate. Black is Black and White is White and

S: What did you do for recreation during the holidays?

M: Baseball . . .since I had no sisters I had to play with the boys. Bicycling, I was taught to shoot a rifle, a B-B Gun, a pistol, I would go hunting, I worked with my mother in the flowers. She taught me how to knit and crochet. I didn't ever play with dolls. The one doll that I owned is still at my mother's house. Roller skate, that kind of thing.

S: Where did you attend public dances?

M: Where?

S: Yes ma'am.

M: I never attended a public dance until after I had finished high school, in New Orleans, Louisiana. That dance was Count Basie with Eddie "Clean Head" Vinson doing the vocals.

S: What is your earliest recollection of public parks? Were you allowed

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- S: to go there?
- M: No. Not at all.
- S: Were there any restrictions?
- M: Sure, by a law. You had a Black park and you had a White park. The Black park never had the equipment that the white park had. Just like schools. I had to pass by two White schools to get to the one Black school. Sure I came up in an era of segregation. Segregated everything.
- S: What were some of the social traditions which you enjoyed most?
- M: What kind of traditions? I got traditions but social traditions?
- S: Yes ma'am.
- M: Give me an example. Like family celebrations, Thanksgiving, Christmas and we made almost a holiday out of everybody's birthday, Mother's Day, Father's Day, May 19th. was my mother's and father's wedding anniversary and we made celebrations out of that. In the Catholic Church we talk about things like the day on which a person was baptized in the church, we make a celebration of that.
- S: What was the name of the theatre that you went to the most? Were the Blacks allowed there?
- M: Segregated. Blacks upstairs and Whites downstairs and that was in Jackson long after I came here. Now that's in the south. When I lived in other places in other cities other than the south you didn't have those restrictions. Like in Buffalo, in Syracuse and in New York City and in San Francisco. But in Atlanta, New Orleans, Jackson and Meridian, you had a segregated facilities. We use to call where we sat the buzzard's roost cause it was always high.
- S: When did you first hear of Martin Luther King?
- M: When I was a graduate assistant in Atlanta University, and in one of my Introductory Sociology classes, I had Martin Luther King as a student. He was a mere lad. He went to college at age 15. You mean you had him as a student

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- S: You mean you had him as a student?
- M: I had him . . . I knew his mother, his father, his brother and his sister very well.
- S: When did you first hear of Malcolm X?
- M: In the sixties.
- S: What are your impressions about the world of yesterday and the world of today?
- M: There are some things that happened in the world yesterday that I wish would come back in the world today. I realize that people change. Times change. New inventions are created, attitudes have changed and I cannot expect the clock to turn back. I believe in changes I know that nothing is static. Every bit of change that takes place is not necessarily progress, but man is constantly creating and recreating and we must learn to live with these creations and these new creations. Many changes . Religion, politics, schools, what have you. Now even though I might have ideas about the yester year but I am living in today and I have to go along with it. Not necessarily in my life style but in order to live with and work in a system I will have to go along with many changes. For an example, I can remember my mother cooking on the stove that was wood and gas. . . I don't think I'd ever want to go back to the days where we had space heaters. You see now we have automatically controlled heat. There are conveniences that's come along with the change. We have become lazy and slaves to them. Once upon a time, PTA were really Parent Teacher's Association, where the parent and the teacher got together to discuss the progress of that child. I would love to see that happen again. Now it is a hit and miss thing. I would love to see husband and wife and children all go to church together. Seldom do you see that, parents send their children. I would love for families to sit around and have a family meal together where there are prayers. Each child taught to say the grace. Very few families sit down to a meal together. There are

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- M: students on this campus who eat a meal and not say grace before. But this comes back from childhood training. The families, sure you have had problem families and problems in families, and families with problems in each generation but it appears that family problems are more numerous. I am sure back in those days you had people who had drug problems but they were not as pronounced as they are now. Children were taught, when I was a child, to respect the elders regardless of who he was. Now these kids respect neither man, God, nor the devil.
- S: When do you hope to retire from your teaching career?
- M: I wish I could retire this afternoon. There are some things that I would like to do before I get too old to actually appreciate those things.
- S: Okay Mrs. Mosley, thank you very much. I appreciate your effort very much.
- M: You are quite welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

WMM