

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW AGREEMENT

You have been asked for information to be used in connection with the Oral History Program at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. The purpose of this program is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.) es

A tape recording of your interview will be made by the interviewer, and a typescript of the tape will be made and submitted to you for editing. The final retyped and edited transcript, together with the tape of the interview will then be placed in the oral history collection at Jackson State University Jackson, Mississippi. Other institutions or persons may obtain a copy. These materials may be made available for purposes of research, for instructional use, for publication, or for other related purposes.

Catherine McMichael

I, _____, have read the above and, in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, and in return for a final typed copy of the transcript, I knowingly and voluntarily permit Jackson State University, Jackson, the 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 Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi.

Mrs. L. B. Walker Jones
Interviewee (Signature)

June, 1978
Date

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

THE FARISH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT PROJECT

FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE MARINO BRANCH Y. W. C. A

O. H. 78.11

LILLIE B. JONES

Interviewed
by

CATHERINE McMICHAEL

on

June 20, 1978

Introduction

Mrs. Lillie Bell W. Jones, was born in Covington County. She lived in Covington County until 1935, when she came to Jackson, Mississippi. She is a graduate of Jackson State University. She taught in the Jackson Public School System for eight years, after this she began working for the YWCA. She was instrumental in the building of the \$250,000 facility on Farish Street in 1964-65.

Mrs. Jones is a graduate of Jackson State University and has done further study at the University of Chicago and the University of Connecticut.

Mrs. Jones discusses her educational background; occupational experiences; history of the Marino Branch YWCA; programs offered for the elderly and young; founders of the Marino Branch YWCA; changes which have occurred as a result of her becoming director, and the influence the YWCA has had on young people.

INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Lillie Bell Jones
INTERVIEWER: Catherine McMichael
DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 20, 1978
O.H. 78.11

McMichael: I am Catherine McMichael, a student at Jackson State University. This is an interview with Mrs. Lillie Bell Walker Jones for the Jackson State University Oral History Project. Mrs. Jones is the Director of the Marino Branch YWCA, 517 Farish Street, Jackson, Mississippi.

Mrs. Jones, before we talk about the Marino Branch, let's talk about you. I understand that you were born in Covington County and moved to Jackson in 1935.

Jones: I didn't exactly move to Jackson during that time. We came here from Alcorn College. It was a large span between the time I came back to Jackson in 1935.

McMichael: Where did you attend school? Did you go to college at Alcorn or was that a high school also?

Jones: No, I attended high school at Westly High School in Meridian, Mississippi. My early education was at O'Haven Academy in Meridian, Mississippi. I attended Alcorn College and from there I went to Jackson State University where I completed my college education.

McMichael: What was your major?

Jones: Social Science.

McMichael: Have you ever lived any place other than Covington County or Jackson?

Jones: Yes. We lived in a number of places. My father was a methodist minister. We lived in Enterprise, Pelahatchie, Meridian, and other places in Mississippi.

McMichael: Do you remember your first job?

Jones: Yes. My first job was teaching at Jim Hill here in Jackson, Mississippi. My second job was with the YWCA.

McMichael: Which holidays do you celebrate most?

Jones: Christmas is an interesting time to get with your family.

McMichael: What is your religion?

Jones: I am United Methodist. I belong to the First United Methodist Church. I am the co-chairman of trustees and chairman of the executive committee of the United Methodist Church.

McMichael: How did you become associated with the YWCA and when?

Jones: When I was a girl, I was a Girl Reserve. When I was teaching at Jim Hill, I was advisor to the Girl Reserve and I worked with the young people in the church. All of that gave me this urge to get more interested in YWCA work.

McMichael: Do you think there is any difference in the program now as opposed to when the program first started?

Jones: Yes. There is quite a difference because at first they had the Negro YWCA which was started in 1919. We got more interested in YWCA work when they had places for the young people to live.

McMichael: What are some of the programs offered for young people here?

Jones: We have a lot of programs; sewing, typing, music, recreation, basketball league, softball league, volley ball, tennis, and other activities. We have the "Y" Team Club. The Girl Reserve was changed to the "Y" Team so we could include the young men in the program.

McMichael: Are there any students who have used their experiences here to help them get jobs?

Jones: Yes. We have the Career Training Program. We trained most of the cashiers that were out in the Jackson Mall. We helped to supply some of the first young people to work at Allstate, especially the blacks.

McMichael: How do young people go about entering in these programs?

Jones: We go around and talk about the programs. I have been at the YWCA since 1945. This program has helped young people to develop leadership qualities.

McMichael: Is there a fee other than membership dues?

- Jones: Yes. There is a small fee on some of the classes and the others there is no fee. We have some federal funded programs now. So, we can do a lot more for our young people without charging a fee. We have the CETA program. We have about fourteen or fifteen young people who have graduated from college and some are working on their masters.
- McMichael: Do you have a free lunch program?
- Jones: In the summer, we work along with the mini park. We have free lunch programs. In the winter, we have the afternoon supplement, milk and cookies. We have some kids who come here after school because their parents are working. They stay here to about 6:00 o'clock or until their parents come to get them.
- McMichael: What are some changes that were made when you first became the director of the YWCA? What was the situation and how are they different?
- Jones: We have had a lot of changes because now mostly all of our programs are intergrated. Persons can attend any YWCA now and get into these programs.
- McMicheal: How has the YWCA changed from when you were a teenager?
- Jones: There have been many changes. We went to the "Y" because it offered these recreational activities. We were learning, growing, attending meetings, and finding out what was going on in other places. We have about three or four thousands women attending the convention. They discuss problems that women face. We are very concerned about what happens to the women in our community.
- McMichael: Do you attend the conventions?
- Jones: I attended the last, maybe, twenty years.
- McMichael: Do you have any programs for the senior citizens of Jackson?
- Jones: Yes. We have senior citizens program not only in the Farish Street area, but all over Jackson. We had membership all over Jackson. We have over a thousand members. Some have been members of the "Y" over twenty years. Some people have been members here every since I have been here. Those woemen are senior citizens now. I think the oldest member of the "Y" is nearly one hundred years old.

McMichael: Do you think the programs at the YWCA helped the boys and girls to become better people after they go out and venture on their own?

Jones: Yes, they do. Just today I saw several people who came up to me and told how much it meant to them coming up through the YWCA. They all seem to have grown from those experiences.

McMichael: What holds the YWCA together?

Jones: The christian purpose is one thing that holds it together. The Young Women's Christian Association of America is a movement in the christian faith. It helps us to relate ourselves together in the struggle for peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all people. Those are the kinds of things that will hold you together when you are working on a common cause.

McMichael: Can you describe some of the hardest problems that you have faced while working at the YWCA?

Jones: Yes. We have had many problems. After we intergrated, it was difficult to try to get ourselves ready to live the christian conviction.

McMichael: To my understanding, the organization enables women to receive academic credit for training or they can take this and go to a college. Would you please clear this up.

Jones: No, we don't do much of that here. We have worked with Hinds Jr. College in some typing classes. We have tried to encourage people to take the G.E.D. test. A young woman came by last evening who had been given a push to go on and finish and she did. She has two degrees, Social Studies and Criminal Justice.

McMichael: Can you name some of the families from this area that has contributed most to the Marino Branch YWCA?

Jones: Yes, but I wouldn't want to name just one because we have had a lot of them. They have all helped us through the years. But one person who helped us in the struggle to get our Board intergrated was Dr. Phil Fredrick Thompson. Mrs. Dyson was chairman of our committee on administration. Dr. Thompson worked very hard. Mrs. Ruth O. Hurbert, Mrs. Ethel Alexander, Mrs. G. W. Williams, and Mrs. M. C. Collins have really helped us. Mrs. Brinkley, Mrs. Frazier, and Mrs. Betty Marino helped us get the organization structured. Dr. R. S. Sanders worked with us giving us

Jones: the support of the United Way. We are a United Way Agency.

McMichael: When you came to the YWCA to work, what was it like?

Jones: I didn't have to much work at that time. We got started in two rooms at 406½ North Parish Street. They have torn that structure down now, but that's where we got started.

McMichael: Do you have anything that you would like to say about the YWCA that we haven't discussed?

Jones: It has been a pleasure to talk with you about the past, present, and future of the YWCA.

McMichael: Thank you very much for taking with me. I appreciate you taking the time out to talk with me.

Jones: Thank you for being with us.