

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Charles Vincent

COLLECTION: 4700.0652

IDENTIFICATION: Southern University history professor

INTERVIEWERS: Shawnda Hollins, Carmen Posey, Roderick Jones

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

INTERVIEW DATE: June 26, 1995

FOCUS DATES: 1860s-1960s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 942, Side A

Vincent directs Southern University's oral history program, so being interviewed is a role reversal for him; is trying to get a bank to put a photo of McKinley on its calendar; Posey explains the McKinley High School Oral History Project; T. Harry Williams was Vincent's mentor; Williams took a personal interest in him, even wanting to give advice about marrying; glad to meet young people who are interested in history; importance of history, especially for African Americans to understand advances made; hopes that some of the interviewers will become history majors; African Americans first came to US as indentured servants, then as slaves; since caveman times, the person with the bigger stick sought to enslave the weaker; not just Africans have been enslaved; the difference in African slavery was because they were enslaved by a people of another race; first time a whole race of people became synonymous with the word "slave"; scars of slavery still run deep; doubts that his generation will outlive this scar and transcend racial hang-ups; societal institutions deemed African American slaves as subhuman; Jim Crow laws extended this feeling perhaps up to present time; education best way to level playing field for African Americans; suspicion that he was recently subject to discrimination when refinancing his mortgage; learn everywhere you go by talking to people and asking questions; defines Reconstruction; African Americans had access to education during Reconstruction; most African Americans started a self-determined life off the plantations; by 1900, black people had purchased 15 million acres of land in the South; now African American landholdings are shrinking; African American schools founded during Reconstruction; some schools got state aid, but most were self-funded by African American community; Booker T. Washington wasn't educated until his teen years; don't call Washington an Uncle Tom; Washington's rise to become president of Tuskegee; W.E.B. Dubois' thirst for education, doctorate from Harvard, extensive publishing; Harvard disparaged Dubois' degree from Fisk, because it was a black school; when Dubois went to University of Berlin, they wouldn't accept his degree from Harvard; Dubois proponent of going to bed early and getting up early; these

black educators had direct influence on McKinley; Carter G. Woodson, father of black history; Dubois greatly inspired Vincent; encourages them to study the lives of Washington, Dubois and Woodson; Frederick Douglass said it was like an entire race of people were suddenly in school; education programs introduced during Reconstruction; black institutions of learning founded at that time; backlash against black education movement at end of Reconstruction.

Tape 942, Side B

After 1900, terrible fall in duration and availability of black education; no African Americans in Louisiana legislature from 1900 to 1967; Ernest Morial took office in 1967; lack of black voting from 1906 to 1940s; Huey Long did some things for poor Louisianans; some of Vincent's schoolmates missed months of school while working in cotton fields; Vincent's wife's school in Ponchatoula ended in late March for strawberry season; clarifies statistics about African American school attendance; in 1918, Louisiana paid less for Negro education than any other state, and more for white education than any other Southern state; Mary McLeod Bethune's place in African American education; early women in African American education; politicians still don't want to discuss black education; presidents consider involvement with Jesse Jackson political suicide; encourages past college presidents to write their memoirs so history can understand what they were trying to accomplish; Bethune's visits to Southern University overseeing National Youth Administration programs; agencies that funded black education; disparity between property value of black and white schools in East Baton Rouge Parish in 1920s; shocking disparity between salaries of presidents of LSU and Southern University; statewide, property value of white schools was forty million, while only two million for black schools; admires professor and author James Anderson; cost disparity between money spent educating black and white students; black students moving to Baton Rouge to attend McKinley; Baton Rouge, Alexandria and Shreveport were places black students went to attend high school; political changes and black education allies in 1950s and '60s; hardship of relatives to host out of town high school students; debate over what grades McKinley originally served; effect of busing and integration on McKinley; agencies that fund schools; both McKinley and Southern opened with strict, paternalistic administrations; uniforms worn at Southern University; value of uniforms for combating jealousy; McKinley dress codes in the different time periods; Dubois' style included gloves and a cane; school rules and regulations.

TAPE: 1 (T942)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 2 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 31 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence

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