

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Adolph Jerome Byrd

COLLECTION: 4700.0631

IDENTIFICATION: Shreveport, Louisiana, native; McKinley High School student 1935-1942; WWII veteran; Grambling State University alumnus; longtime teacher in Louisiana school system

INTERVIEWER: Roderick Jones

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

INTERVIEW DATES: June 21, 1995

FOCUS DATES: 1930s-1940s, 1995

ABSTRACT:

Tape 915, Side A

Born January 22, 1922 in Shreveport, Louisiana; attended McKinley High School from 1935-1942; Principal Frazier locked school doors at 8 AM; only sports were football and basketball; he was an average student; role models were older male students and graduates of McKinley that kept him and other younger students on the right track; automatic respect for teachers in the classroom; took seven years to graduate because he was continually dropping out to work and support himself; working at Dutch Mill on Government Street; kids wanted to go to school no matter how poor they were; graduating from high school was their only outlet; children were raised by the whole community; news about bad behavior always got back to parents; lying or doing something you weren't supposed to meant catching a whipping; cut school to go swimming and got caught because his elbows got ashy from the water; Eddie Robinson helping him to start college at Grambling in 1942 (then known as Louisiana Negro Normal and Industrial Institute); former McKinley students he admired; Maggie Nelson was his favorite teacher; McKinley was only African American school in the area until Capitol High School opened; differences between McKinley now and when he attended, more sports and activities available today, more administrators; prominent graduates including Reverend Gardner C. Taylor, Dr. Louis Joseph James, Eddie Robinson; lack of discipline and respect he sees in young people; dislikes young men wearing earrings and baggy clothes; importance of "treating everybody else like you want to be treated"; people misunderstand the work of law enforcement officials; parents who get angry with teachers when their children are reprimanded; no shame in admitting when you've made a mistake, importance of taking accountability for your actions; need for nonviolent criminals to get their GEDs, be rehabilitated and allowed a second chance in life.

TAPES: 1 (T915)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 47 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 26 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Interviewer's Comments, Interviewer's Notes/Word List, Correspondence, Information on persons mentioned in interview (2 pages), *USA Today* article, Photograph

RESTRICTIONS: None