

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Virginia Butler

COLLECTION: 4700.0892

IDENTIFICATION: Longtime member of Greater Beulah Baptist Church

INTERVIEWERS: Shawnte Green, Chastity Lovely, Melvin Heard, Beau Bogart

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

INTERVIEW DATE: July 9, 1997

FOCUS DATES: 1920s - 1990s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1270, Side A

Introduction; Butler born and raised in St. Francisville, Louisiana; worked in field during her childhood; cooked in LSU's Highland Hall cafeteria for thirty-nine years; sometimes helped out cooking at the State Capitol; she came up the hard way, working in the fields, no TV, no telephone; while in St. Francisville, Butler's mother, Patsy, worked in the fields, in Baton Rouge her mother did occasional day's work; after his retirement, her father, Ed, pastored a church in North Baton Rouge; pastors at her church, Greater Beulah Baptist Church in Baton Rouge; religion has taught Butler how to treat her fellow man; when someone does her wrong: "turn it over in the hands of the good master"; first went to Ebenezer Church; baptism in a lake in 1929; before her baptism, Butler was frequenting saloons and staying out all night; attends church on Sunday, Bible class on Tuesday; working for a white lady in 1929: "Wash, iron, cook, scrub, do everything. For three dollars a week!"; got religion when she heard a voice call her three times and tell her to spread the word of redemption; holds onto faith although life has not always been smooth; sings with Greater Beulah Church choir; liked Ebenezer, but family was going to Beulah, so she switched churches; Beulah has good membership and nice usher board; Butler has been president of their choir there for thirty-five years; puts high value on generosity and sharing; discussion of an upcoming baptism; when and how people choose to be baptized; baptism is a personal decision; loyalty of choir members to their choir president; three choirs at Beulah: senior, men's and children's; two usher boards: junior and senior; duties of ushers; differences between community and regular services; speaking meetings where people testify; Butler places value on mutual respect between people; church programs and activities; importance of talking with and listening to others; threatens to whip anybody who tries to take her picture; her favorite religious song will "put clapping in your hands"; importance of addressing problems with people directly; recites 23rd Psalm, her favorite; women don't preach at Beulah; church dress code; addressing problems with people directly; praise for John Thomas, Beulah's senior deacon; ways in which church helps its members like providing food or money;

Tape 1270, Side B

Couldn't attend Sunday school as child because it was too far away from her home; funeral wakes in the church; no weddings at Beulah for a long time; transition between Reverend R.A. Clark and Reverend Alando O'Connor; comparison between pastors; gives permission for someone to sign her release form, on account of her poor eyesight; end of interview.

TAPES: 1 (T1270)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 52 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 31 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence; Interview data sheet; Interview index (4 pgs)

RESTRICTIONS: None