

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Civil Rights History Project

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African American History & Culture and the
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Gertrude Jackson oral history interview

conducted by LaFleur Paysour

in Marvell, Arkansas, Nov. 22, 2010

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
1		[START AFC2010039_CRHP0004_MV1.WMV]
2		MS. GERTRUDE JACKSON: You know this
3	01:00:01	is great, greater for me.
4		INTERVIEWER: Well, we'll be able to
5		share a little bit of this visit with
6		people all over the United States of
7		America and the world.
8		MS. JACKSON: Okay.
9		INTERVIEWER: We certainly need to
10		get to know who you are and what
11		you've done. Please, tell us for
12		starters, what is your name?
13	01:00:19	MS. JACKSON: Gertrude Jackson.
14		INTERVIEWER: And so much of what we
15		know about you comes from what we've
16		read in the newspapers and heard on
17		the radio, what you did as a wife and
18		a mother and a community activist but
19		tell us when you were born, where you
20		were born a little bit about what it
21		was like to grow up where you grew
22		up.
23	01:00:40	MS. JACKSON: Okay. I was born in
24		Madison, Illinois in 1923, and later,
25		my daddy moved to Arkansas to take

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26		over the farm that--when his daddy
27		died, and he came down to Arkansas to
28	01:01:00	take over the farm for his mother and
29		that's how we got to Arkansas.
30		INTERVIEWER: How did your family
31		come to be in Madison, Wisconsin?
32		Where did the family start and how
33		did you get from there to Madison,
34		Wisconsin?
35		MS. JACKSON: Illinois. Well, I was
36		there--I mean, we were in Illinois,
37		you know, when I was born. Daddy had
38	01:01:25	moved to Illinois and he was working
39		and that's where we were born, and
40		then he came back after his father
41		died to take over this 88-acre farm
42		for his mother. That's why, that's
43		what brought us back.
44		INTERVIEWER: So how many brothers
45		and sisters did you have there?
46		MS. JACKSON: I had six brothers and
47		I may have to count them--five
48	01:01:53	sisters, four sisters.
49		INTERVIEWER: Okay, can you say that
50		again? How many brothers and

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
51		sisters?
52		MS. JACKSON: Six brothers, I have
53	01:02:00	six brothers, and four sisters.
54		INTERVIEWER: So what was it like
55		growing up on an 88-acre cotton farm?
56		Did you actually work?
57		MS. JACKSON: A little because I was,
58		mostly stayed in the house and kind
59		of fixed them and stuff, but see, at
60		7 I wasn't going to be helping, but
61		it was okay. What was it like
62		growing up there? It was good. It
63	01:02:34	was different. It was so different
64		from Illinois, just say for instance,
65		my first year in school was in
66		Illinois and I see in Illinois, I was
67		first grade, everybody had had their
68		own room. And they had a place where
69		you--a little room where you hang
70		your coats and things and that was
71		when I got to Arkansas--well, first
72		let me back up. In Illinois I just
73	01:03:07	had to walk about a block to school,
74		no more than that, and when I got to
75		Arkansas, we had to walk four, five

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
76		miles to school, and then you get in
77		the school and everybody is in the
78	01:03:24	same room from the first through the
79		eighth grade. And they had little
80		nails on the wall at the back of the
81		room where you hang your coats, and
82		you could take your little snack.
83		They would sit at the back of the
84		wall and that was just so different.
85		It was just hard getting used to
86		that. That's what was strange to me
87		when we moved to Arkansas, and the
88	01:03:51	classroom's just one big room, and
89		like, fourth through the--first
90		through fourth grade would be on one
91		end of the building, and fifth
92		through eighth, they were on the
93		other end and the big heater is
94		right--you all know what a heater is?
95		INTERVIEWER: Definitely know what a
96		heater is.
97		MS. JACKSON: So it was in the middle
98	01:04:14	and that's about it. It didn't take
99		me long to get used to it, walking.
100		It wasn't bad but I just wasn't used

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
101		to it, but it didn't take me long to
102		catch on, okay.
103	01:04:29	INTERVIEWER: So how many children
104		were in that one-room school?
105		MS. JACKSON: Oh, it wasn't many at
106		that time. Back in there, no more
107		than about maybe 60.
108		INTERVIEWER: How many?
109		MS. JACKSON: 60.
110		INTERVIEWER: 60 children in that one
111		room?
112		MS. JACKSON: Right.
113	01:04:47	INTERVIEWER: And how many grades?
114		MS. JACKSON: Through the eighth. So
115		fourth on back, we were one end and
116		the others on the other end.
117		INTERVIEWER: So how much schooling
118		did you eventually have?
119		MS. JACKSON: Eventually I got two
120		years in college--no, three I was in
121		college.
122		INTERVIEWER: So--and where did you
123	01:05:11	do your high school work?
124		MS. JACKSON: Here in Marvell. At
125		that time, Marvell only went through-

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
126		-Marvell only went to the 10th grade.
127		The high school went to 10th grade
128	01:05:23	here in Marvell, and this is where I
129		got my--up to 10th grade. What you
130		would do, you'd have to find someone
131		to live with and just daddy would pay
132		them rent and see if they had a
133		woodstove, too, and they would--he
134		had - - shop on wood, so he would put
135		that wood in the wagon and leave my
136		brothers bringing - - kept us wood
137		through winter, that's how we kept
138	01:05:53	warm. And that's about... I think
139		that's about it. But--and I
140		graduated--when you graduate, this
141		graduation was from the 10th grade
142		because this is as far as they went,
143		and they had a school in Helena that
144		went to the 12th grade, so that's
145		where my sister went and finished.
146		But at the time, I finished, my mama
147		got sick and I didn't go any farther.
148	01:06:33	And then years later, at school, I
149		got my GED. They were giving people
150		GEDs and then years, a few years

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
151		later, I was working with Mid-Delta
152		and they said let us go to college
153	01:06:51	and so I just got thirty--I was in,
154		you know, early childhood. Okay.
155		INTERVIEWER: When you were growing
156		up, let's talk about your earliest
157		years in Illinois, and then in
158		Arkansas. When you were growing up,
159		do you remember instances of outright
160		flagrant discrimination?
161		MS. JACKSON: No, I don't. But did
162		you say in Illinois or just all over
163	01:07:23	everywhere?
164		INTERVIEWER: Let's just start with
165		Illinois. Do you remember?
166		MS. JACKSON: No, I don't remember
167		any.
168		INTERVIEWER: Nothing in Illinois?
169		MS. JACKSON: No.
170		INTERVIEWER: And Arkansas, your
171		early years in Arkansas?
172		MS. JACKSON: I just noticed the
173	01:07:39	schools, you know, different schools
174		were... It was different.
175		INTERVIEWER: That's good. Describe

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
176		for me the difference between the
177		schools, between the schools that you
178	01:07:53	were allowed to attend and the
179		schools that--what's the difference?
180		MS. JACKSON: Oh, okay. Well,
181		there's a lot of difference. How can
182		I explain that? We were in this one-
183		room school like I say, I already
184		explained that, and then they were--
185		the other schools, the white schools,
186		just beautiful and all together, and
187		the white children rode the bus to
188	01:08:16	school but we walked. And that was
189		the difference. And one thing that
190		brought to mind when you said that,
191		we'd be walking to school and the
192		white--the bus passed us, there's a
193		boy on the other side of the metal
194		and he'd be passing by and he'd say
195		"nigger, nigger, nigger, nigger,
196		nigger," so one day, a boy got--he
197		was waiting for him and the boy
198	01:08:45	stepped on the ditch and he got him a
199		stick, so the feller put his hand out
200		of the window and said "nigger,

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
201		nigger," he popped him, and after
202		that they never--they had the window
203	01:08:56	rolled up when they'd come through.
204		INTERVIEWER: So I'm quite sure there
205		were many times when you and your
206		pals, your childhood friends would go
207		home to your parents and your uncles
208		and aunts and tell stories like that.
209		What did they say to you in response
210		to how you were to respond to that?
211		MS. JACKSON: To what I just said?
212		INTERVIEWER: Yeah, when there were
213	01:09:20	moments when people called you nasty
214		names and were mean to you and you
215		would go home to adults and say--what
216		kind of advice did they give you
217		about responding?
218		MS. JACKSON: I never really
219		experienced being--something happened
220		at school like that, because I was
221		just - - I didn't mettle.
222		INTERVIEWER: There was a newspaper
223	01:09:50	report not too long ago. It talked
224		about how one of your daughters has
225		said that she wanted to be white so

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
226		she could have--
227		MS. JACKSON: So when I got upset
228	01:10:02	with her, and like the spirit say, I
229		asked her why--it came to me just
230		like that. And I said, now why do
231		you want to be white? So we can have
232		some swings and some seesaws and have
233		a pretty school, and see, if I had
234		cut her off I never would have known
235		her reason. And she said it's since
236		she'd been grown, that was the pretty
237		school. Oh, yes, and we could have
238	01:10:33	some swings and seesaws and we didn't
239		have any of that, just the naked
240		ground, just nothing. And of course
241		we had invented our own - - games and
242		like that.
243		INTERVIEWER: So the first time you
244		heard her say that, how did you feel?
245		MS. JACKSON: I felt like--white?
246		Why do you want to be white? But
247		then after she explained, I said...
248	01:11:04	Then I found out it wasn't white--
249		it's what, the things they had.
250		MALE VOICE 1: Mrs. Jackson, do you

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
251		think you could tell that story from
252		the beginning?
253	01:11:15	INTERVIEWER: I was just about to ask
254		that. Figure out a way to--
255		MS. JACKSON: I think that's the
256		beginning. What I just said?
257		MALE VOICE 1: Yeah, talk about how
258		your daughter came to you so everyone
259		at home will be able to hear it from
260		the very beginning.
261		MS. JACKSON: Oh. I was in the
262		kitchen cooking and she's just
263	01:11:36	standing round, and she said "I wish
264		I was white." And I stopped, kind of
265		like--didn't like it. And I said,
266		well--the spirit said ask her why.
267		And that's what she told me--so I can
268		have some swings, and seesaws, and go
269		to the pretty school and... She said
270		it was the prettiest place, and see,
271		we didn't have swings and seesaws at
272		our school. But to make a long story
273	01:12:15	short, she wanted to be in that
274		pretty school, and wanted to have
275		some swings and seesaws.

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
276		INTERVIEWER: So how did that story
277		influence your life and what you were
278	01:12:27	doing, your life's work?
279		MS. JACKSON: Well, really at that
280		time, I didn't dwell it. It just
281		kind of passed through, because you
282		know, I knew that's the way it was.
283		INTERVIEWER: So you spent so much of
284		your life in the area of community
285		organizing. What motivated you? How
286		did you get started doing that?
287		MS. JACKSON: I think the first thing
288	01:12:52	that motivated me, if I can kind of
289		tell, explain the Marvell school
290		district, okay, the Marvell school
291		district covers like, oh... 20 miles
292		around. And there were a school--
293		okay, we had so many schools out in
294		the--see, I grew up in Gum Bottom.
295		Somebody grew up in Coffers Creek
296		[phonetic]--there was a school
297		everywhere, where there was a church
298	01:13:25	there was a school. And then the
299		Marvell school district years later
300		decided to build a school down there

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
301		for--and about six of the communities
302		came together, went to this one
303	01:13:41	school. It was a beautiful school,
304		but what happened after three or four
305		years, the sewage start messing up,
306		and the sewage would back up in the
307		school so at first it was just water
308		and they would come on and say "Oh,
309		the bathroom flooded today," and see,
310		I wasn't paying it much attention.
311		The bathroom flooded, and it would
312		come on--it got where it got so bad,
313	01:14:12	everything was flooding out and the
314		boys had to clean it up. They'd get
315		them - - from the store, the boys had
316		to get the boxes and things and clean
317		it up, so we decided to go to the
318		school board. That's where I got
319		started, went to the school board to
320		tell them about it, and they would
321		say, "Oh, they just don't know how to
322		use the bathroom." And so it went on
323	01:14:42	so long, they'd come home from
324		playing so long, so regular, my
325		husband said "I'm going to go out

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
326		there and see this thing." And so we
327		had gone to the school board for
328	01:14:54	several times and they just wouldn't
329		do anything, just felt like we didn't
330		know how to use the bathroom at all.
331		And the last time we went to the
332		school board and my husband asked
333		them about fixing it again, - - just
334		my husband and another lady, she's
335		passed away, but coming from the
336		school board that night, my husband
337		said, "If I could get these people to
338	01:15:27	take the children out of school,
339		they'd fix it." That man got up the
340		next morning and went all through the
341		community and was telling them about
342		it, and everybody agreed to take
343		their children out, and so that's the
344		first boycott, turn at boycott, and
345		when we did, so they went down the
346		next day. This was on a Friday--we'd
347		come that Monday, my husband went
348	01:15:56	down to the school to see what was
349		going on. He said well, I forget how
350		many children they had, but eight or

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
351		ten children showed up at school, and
352		so after that--and it just stayed
353	01:16:08	vacant until they didn't get to
354		school at all that year.
355		INTERVIEWER: Let me get the
356		timeframe for this. What year was
357		the first year that you went to the
358		school board to complain?
359		MS. JACKSON: You know, I... I really
360		can't remember. I know my... You
361		know, I just don't remember because
362		let me see - - went to that school
363	01:16:45	when he was 5. Now, if we could do
364		some math...
365		INTERVIEWER: We'll figure that out
366		later.
367		MS. JACKSON: You're right--figure
368		that out later, okay.
369		INTERVIEWER: Now, your husband went
370		through the community basically
371		knocking on doors and asking parents
372		to keep their children at home.
373	01:17:02	MS. JACKSON: Right.
374		INTERVIEWER: Everyone unanimously
375		said "Yes, we will keep the

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
401		court. We didn't go to court for
402		that, but after we walked out of
403	01:18:08	school and they send people down--
404		well, what happened, they were going
405		to send somebody down to see about
406		the plumbing. And so come to see the
407		president of the school, his brother
408		was--what do you call it, sanitation
409		thing in Helena, so they send someone
410		down to see how it was when we took
411		the children out of school. And so
412		the superintendent said there wasn't
413	01:18:46	nothing wrong with it and so we
414		wanted to have it checked, so they
415		called a feller, whoever you call
416		that came out and checked it, and he
417		said, "Oh, it's fine. Nothing wrong
418		with the bathroom. It's fine." But
419		see, that was his brother that
420		checked it, and see, Howard was here
421		at that time, and Howard called the
422		sanitation place from Little Rock,
423	01:19:11	and they came down and checked it
424		out, and they made them dig it up,
425		and do it over because it was put up-

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
426		-it was put in going up here, and
427		that's why the bathroom was messing
428	01:19:23	up. And they fixed it and we got
429		back in school. I guess it lasted...
430		INTERVIEWER: How long were the
431		children out of school?
432		MS. JACKSON: I think they were out,
433		like--I remember, I forget what month
434		it was but they were out, like, near
435		the whole term.
436		INTERVIEWER: We'll have to do some--
437		I'll have to get that schedule.
438	01:20:00	That's fine; it's a beautiful story.
439		FEMALE VOICE 1: Were there any
440		stories in the newspapers about it?
441		MS. JACKSON: No, we didn't.
442		Newspapers never...
443		FEMALE VOICE 1: We can probably
444		check the board of education records.
445		INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I made a note,
446		too--
447		MS. JACKSON: If they did, we didn't
448	01:20:15	know about it.
449		FEMALE VOICE 1: Okay.
450		INTERVIEWER: Okay, I made a note to

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
451		fit it--
452		FEMALE VOICE 1: You said your son
453	01:20:20	was five years old when he attended
454		the school--he was five?
455		MS. JACKSON: That's what I was
456		trying to figure out--I don't know if
457		he was 6.
458		FEMALE VOICE 1: If he was 6 in first
459		grade--when was he born? In 19...
460		MS. JACKSON: He was born in 1945,
461		Pop was born in '47--I don't mean,
462		what am I saying, '40?
463	01:20:45	INTERVIEWER: Yeah, you are, but--
464		MALE VOICE 1: That's right.
465		MS. JACKSON: Is that right?
466		FEMALE VOICE 1: We can find out.
467		INTERVIEWER: We'll find it out.
468		FEMALE VOICE 1: We'll find out when
469		he was born.
470		MS. JACKSON: Okay.
471		FEMALE VOICE 1: And that will give
472		us a year.
473	01:20:57	MS. JACKSON: Okay.
474		INTERVIEWER: Tell us what you
475		remember about the children talking

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
476		about the work that they actually had
477		to do to clean up after the bathroom
478	01:21:07	flooded.
479		MS. JACKSON: Mine was too little at
480		that time to do it, but the bigger
481		boys did--you know, the big children,
482		they had to do it. And they'd talk
483		about it at first it's just water. I
484		wished--I was trying to get ahold of
485		these couple old boys still living, I
486		wish I could have got them to tell
487		the story about how they used to have
488	01:21:32	to clean up the bathroom, mop up
489		water and all that, and get - - old
490		boxes from the store to, you know,
491		put stuff in. I wished I had one of
492		them here because they'd tell that
493		story.
494		INTERVIEWER: We'll probably find
495		one. Let's move a little bit forward
496		and talk about your work in the
497		freedom movement. When you first
498	01:21:58	heard that there were people who were
499		doing work in the civil rights arena,
500		what did you think?

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
501		MS. JACKSON: You know what? Now,
502		the workers came in. They came into
503	01:22:12	the family, stayed, had a meeting
504		with the family here in town, so see,
505		I lived 12 miles out and they came
506		and they said some--we're civil
507		rights workers. It's down in Mr.
508		Adam's house, and Mr. Adam wanted him
509		to bring some people in that may be
510		interested and four or five of us
511		went to this meeting and listened to
512		what they had to say. And to make a
513	01:22:46	long story short, we got some work on
514		- - the first--back up.
515		INTERVIEWER: First of all--
516		MS. JACKSON: That's how we went
517		there to talk with them and then they
518		asked us to go back and get a group
519		together and some interested people
520		and we came back and checked with
521		some people in our community, which
522		was called Jones Ridge and
523	01:23:10	we had six or seven people to meet
524		and they'd come down to tell us what
525		they were all about.

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
526		INTERVIEWER: Let me take you back a
527		little bit. Tell us exactly who Mr.
528	01:23:24	Adams is.
529		MS. JACKSON: He's just a neighbor.
530		He's a farmer. He ran the store, and
531		he was one of the people that kind of
532		would be--I'd call a civil rights
533		worker. I don't know. We hadn't
534		heard talk of anything but they said
535		come here, it's a man, it's somebody
536		here from the civil rights and he
537		wants to talk to us.
538	01:23:57	INTERVIEWER: And what's Mr. Adams'--
539		what's his whole name?
540		MS. JACKSON: Overtis [phonetic].
541		Overtis Adams.
542		INTERVIEWER: And do you remember the
543		names of any of the people who came
544		from other parts of the country to--?
545		MS. JACKSON: - - You know, it's
546		about two of them still living--Eva
547		May Williams and a brother, I forget
548	01:24:27	his name but he's a Williams, might
549		think of it before we leave.
550		INTERVIEWER: But so Eva May Williams

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
551		was someone who came from--
552		MS. JACKSON: Oh, no, she lived in
553	01:24:38	school district, but she's the one
554		that, you know, when we come together
555		to do something about the school
556		situation, because she was the
557		secretary.
558		INTERVIEWER: Now... I'm sorry, I
559		thought I stepped on one of your
560		sentences. I'm sorry. Now, there
561		were SNCC workers who were working in
562		the area.
563	01:25:06	MS. JACKSON: Right. Mm-hmm.
564		INTERVIEWER: What do you remember
565		about the SNCC workers? Do you
566		remember their names, where they came
567		from?
568		MS. JACKSON: Myrtle Glascoe and
569		Howard Himmelbaum. And so once we
570		got visited, you know, they were here
571		a while before anything, we started
572		to do anything, but just kind
573	01:25:28	of got to feel and we would meet and
574		they'd always have a building full, a
575		church full to come out and hear what

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
576		we were doing and what we were trying
577		to do and after so long, he said now,
578	01:25:43	you all do it yourself now, but they
579		would just be there. He didn't want
580		to be the leader all the time, and
581		that's about that.
582		INTERVIEWER: So do you remember any
583		other names of SNCC workers?
584		MS. JACKSON: Nancy Lane, William
585		Lane [phonetic]... So many of them
586		are gone, because not many of them
587		are left so it's hard to think.
588	01:26:15	MALE VOICE 1: We're talking about
589		the people who came from out of town.
590		MS. JACKSON: Oh, those are the ones
591		you want--those two.
592		INTERVIEWER: So what was the
593		atmosphere like? What was the mood
594		like when those SNCC meetings were
595		going on here in the area?
596		MS. JACKSON: You know, it was just
597		kind of nice. We'd have a packed
598	01:26:37	church every Thursday night. And so
599		we just made it--come on, ask me.
600		INTERVIEWER: So the people who did

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
601		come from out of town, where did they
602		live? Where did they eat?
603	01:27:01	MS. JACKSON: Some of them, the first
604		place they lived was my uncle, Howard
605		Himmelbaum, he lived with my uncle
606		and they had a place in Helena that
607		they stayed but my uncle kept them
608		for a while until he got nervous
609		because he had a store and his house
610		was right by the store and they
611		didn't want white folks to see him
612		coming out of his house so then he
613	01:27:33	moved, he moved way back and lived
614		with my cousin Carrie--Carrie Davis
615		[phonetic] at that time. But he had
616		to walk a couple miles back to the
617		mud and stuff to get over there, and
618		so we said, well, won't nobody find
619		him back there because if he just
620		comes out on the porch and opened the
621		door, the store was right there, even
622		with the house and stuff. We didn't
623	01:27:58	want him. Then my uncle got real
624		nervous about having this white man
625		living with him. He didn't stay with

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
626		him long--maybe a month, and he moved
627		back down where he couldn't be found
628	01:28:13	and walk out every day, come by the
629		house and we eat and all. I'm
630		thinking they also had a place in
631		Helena where they could live. Come
632		on, ask.
633		[background noise]
634		MS. JACKSON: Okay. You mean a
635		paper?
636		INTERVIEWER: Tell us the name of the
637		gentleman who stayed with your uncle.
638	01:28:47	MS. JACKSON: Howard Himmelbaum.
639		INTERVIEWER: Okay.
640		MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.
641		INTERVIEWER: What else do you
642		remember about him?
643		MS. JACKSON: Well, you know, we got
644		so comfortable, one thing we did, we
645		got a little too comfortable with him
646		and he'd come to the house and he'd
647		eat and sit round with my children,
648	01:29:07	go out together, you know where you
649		go to your little cafe or wherever
650		people--and they would go out

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
651		together and it was just like, we
652		just got very comfortable with it and
653	01:29:20	so--and we were blessed that didn't
654		anything happen to us. And I
655		remember one day, when they built the
656		Zachariah [phonetic] housing project
657		and the president--I mean, what do
658		you call it? Who's of the state?
659		INTERVIEWER: Governor.
660		MS. JACKSON: Governor--governor,
661		right. The governor came down that
662		day and a lot of people to show off,
663	01:29:49	you know, they were opening up the
664		housing project and so Howard was
665		there, so the superintendent of the
666		school, he stepped to me. "Gertrude,
667		who is he? Who is that?" I make
668		like I couldn't find--"no, that right
669		there, right there." I said "Oh,
670		that's Howard Himmelbaum."
671		INTERVIEWER: Do you remember anyone
672		else in addition to Handelbaum?
673	01:30:18	MS. JACKSON: Myrtle Glascoe.
674		INTERVIEWER: Okay, talk about--
675		MS. JACKSON: It's just those two.

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
676		INTERVIEWER: Talk a little bit about
677		Myrtle Glascoe. What do you remember
678	01:30:25	about her?
679		MS. JACKSON: What I remember about
680		Myrtle? Well, she'd come to the
681		house and they'd just say things,
682		they'd just--just like another one of
683		my 11 children. And just remember
684		her, just point something, up and
685		come into the house and sit right at
686		the table with all my 10 children and
687		like I say, just like another
688	01:30:56	daughter, she would go to the
689		meetings with us and you know, they
690		would explain different things about
691		civil rights and things like that.
692		INTERVIEWER: So what did they
693		encourage the people attending the
694		meetings to do?
695		MS. JACKSON: You know, just stand up
696		and be bold and let's get something
697		done.
698	01:31:20	INTERVIEWER: And can you remember
699		the names of the people living in the
700		community who stood up and said yes,

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
701		we're going to be bold? Do you
702		remember people who actually joined
703	01:31:31	the movement and worked very hard?
704		MS. JACKSON: Let me... It wasn't
705		very many that worked very hard, but
706		most of them saw what we were doing,
707		and then see, some of them were too
708		afraid and they just stayed back but
709		they would come to the meetings and
710		listen, and I can't think of the
711		names of the people--about six of
712		them were, you know, standing back,
713	01:32:01	giving us, you know, spinning their
714		ideas and things. And so--but like I
715		say, most of them were afraid and we
716		knew the teachers were afraid, and we
717		didn't want them to be in the
718		meetings because we didn't want them
719		to lose their jobs.
720		INTERVIEWER: What about others who
721		were afraid? How did they explain
722		their fear?
723	01:32:28	MS. JACKSON: Now, this one man, - -
724		told my husband--he said, Jack, don't
725		fault what you're doing, but I can't

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
726		join. He said Jack, I'm just scared.
727		I'm just scared. I won't go with you
728	01:32:42	but I'm for what you're doing. And
729		other than that, that's about it.
730		INTERVIEWER: And do you remember
731		what people said to people who were
732		afraid to get them to step out of
733		their fear and be bold?
734		MS. JACKSON: No, I don't remember
735		anybody bothering them. It was just
736		a few little - - come to those
737		meetings. Now, one thing that
738	01:33:11	happened down in my country, Maxine
739		Hathaway was one of the
740		schoolteachers here in Marvell, and
741		you know, on Sundays if we were in
742		church, after Sunday school we're
743		going to say something about the
744		situation. And so different people
745		told her, "Girl, you better stop
746		going to the church. Tell me they
747		have civil rights meetings down at
748	01:33:37	that church." And so she left our
749		church and went to the church where
750		they didn't meet, came here to

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
751		Marvell and went to church.
752		INTERVIEWER: So once you became
753	01:33:53	involved, there were moments of...
754		There were repercussions. White
755		people did not like what you were
756		doing. How did they respond to you?
757		MS. JACKSON: Well, not really, but
758		I'll tell you one day I was in the
759		drugstore, and the lady that worked
760		at the drugstore--by the way, she's
761		in a nursing home now. But anyway,
762		this white man was in there, and I
763	01:34:25	was getting my medicine and she said
764		to me, she said, "There she is, there
765		she is, there she is," like they were
766		trying to find out who was that that
767		was doing the civil rights work and
768		so that's the only thing that I saw.
769		INTERVIEWER: And did anyone say
770		anything to you once you were pointed
771		out?
772		MS. JACKSON: No, they just--I guess
773	01:34:48	the feller just wanted to see what I
774		looked like, just wanted to see that
775		lady that's heading civil rights.

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
776		INTERVIEWER: So do you remember
777		instances of other people having
778	01:34:59	crosses burned in their yards or
779		gunshots fired?
780		MS. JACKSON: Overtis Adams had a
781		cross--not Overtis. This is way out
782		in the country. I can't think of his
783		name right now, but they burned a
784		cross in his yard and then John
785		Hamilton, he's one of the leaders.
786		He's one of the big leaders that was
787		with us--John Hamilton and his wife.
788	01:35:28	INTERVIEWER: What do you remember
789		about the time that the cross was
790		burned?
791		MS. JACKSON: I just remember that
792		the children--we were just excited,
793		didn't know--we didn't know what it
794		meant, but my daughter was talking.
795		They were talking some time ago--all
796		we know, that when somebody burns a
797		cross in the yard the white folks
798	01:35:49	didn't like you, so she said that's
799		all she can get out of it. Then she
800		noticed some reason the white folks

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
801		didn't like you.
802		INTERVIEWER: Were there black folks
803	01:35:59	who tried to respond to that in a
804		retaliatory way?
805		MS. JACKSON: No, no we didn't do
806		anything, just kept going on like it
807		didn't happen.
808		INTERVIEWER: And how many cases of
809		cross burnings do you know of?
810		MS. JACKSON: Just two. One in Masco
811		Anderson [phonetic]. Now, John
812		Hamilton, it got in the air because
813	01:36:32	he was the main person along with my
814		husband, John Hamilton--it got in the
815		air that--and he lived way back off
816		the road--that a gang had planned to
817		come and you know, attack them that
818		night. And so what the men did was
819		about 10 or 12 men, they met down
820		there with their guns, because this
821		man is way back, had to go down the
822		field to get to his house and they
823	01:36:59	went there and stayed all night to
824		see if anybody was coming in, because
825		one of the boys said now if they come

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
826		driving out through here I'm going to
827		blow them away, so that's the
828	01:37:11	incident there.
829		INTERVIEWER: Let's talk about
830		newspapers for a little bit. Did the
831		newspapers cover--did they write
832		stories about the civil rights
833		activity going on down here?
834		MS. JACKSON: No. No, we didn't--no,
835		it was never in the news. Now...
836		What was in the news--well, it wasn't
837		here, but Beatrice, our executive
838	01:37:50	director, she was going to school in
839		Little Rock, and she would read it
840		there and then just talk about
841		Jackson and she heard some things.
842		She was here, but she was sitting
843		around talking about it at school in
844		Little Rock, and...
845		INTERVIEWER: How much conversation
846		was there about the activity
847		happening just a stone's throw away
848	01:38:19	in Little Rock? There was a
849		difference--
850		MS. JACKSON: Say that again.

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
851		INTERVIEWER: So the people who lived
852		in this area, outside of Little Rock,
853	01:38:29	did they pay close attention to what
854		was--
855		MS. JACKSON: Yes, they did. Uh-huh.
856		INTERVIEWER: What kind of
857		conversations did they have about
858		Little Rock activity?
859		MS. JACKSON: Well, just discuss the
860		situation and--it wasn't very much
861		because... And oh, like my children
862		were so little because I remember
863	01:38:53	they were so little because okay,
864		every time the news came on they had
865		to be quiet, so this news came on
866		they were showing in Little Rock, you
867		know, going in the school and the
868		club and things. My little girl
869		said, "Oh, the news is good tonight,"
870		because she was excited--she just
871		didn't know what it was all about.
872		But that's all we saw the few times,
873	01:39:18	you know, when it would come on the
874		TV about what was going on. My
875		husband didn't have to say "You all

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
876		be quiet--the news is on." Oh, it
877		got quiet.
878	01:39:32	INTERVIEWER: So did you and your
879		husband spend any time telling your
880		children exactly what was going on?
881		MS. JACKSON: Exactly what was going
882		on, yes.
883		INTERVIEWER: How did you explain to
884		your children what was going on in
885		Little Rock?
886		MS. JACKSON: I just told them it's
887		just like it is here in Marvell--
888	01:39:52	whites go to one school and so now
889		they're trying to integrate them and
890		let blacks go to the school, and the
891		fight was about because they didn't
892		want them in their school and that's
893		why they had to bring down the troops
894		and all these things.
895		INTERVIEWER: And how did your
896		children respond to that story?
897		MS. JACKSON: Well, kind of like they
898	01:40:22	already knew because it's just like,
899		it was here, you know? You see what
900		I'm saying? We were going--the

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
901		whites were going to the big school
902		down here and we were going to the
903	01:40:31	little chicken coops.
904		INTERVIEWER: Tell us about the
905		moment when there's an issue about
906		the county fair.
907		[laughter]
908		MS. JACKSON: It wasn't really an
909		issue about the county fair, but this
910		is the way it happened: We decided to
911		boycott the school and so Reverend
912		Anderson, the man with the burned
913	01:41:01	cross in the yard, he's at the
914		meeting. He said I'll tell you all
915		what, since we're boycotting school,
916		let's boycott that fair, and they
917		said yeah, and that's how we come to
918		boycott the fair. And another thing
919		about the fair, the superintendent,
920		you know, - - in college in Pine
921		Bluff, that's a black college at that
922		time. The superintendent, the choir
923	01:41:34	from - - College was coming down to
924		sing at the choir, and we heard that-
925		-we were in Little Rock at this trial

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
926		about this boy. You know, we had to
927		go to trial, we had to go to court,
928	01:41:51	so we were in Little Rock, so Mrs.
929		Hamilton on our way back home, she
930		said let's go by the college and tell
931		them don't come down to sing because
932		we're boycotting everything. So we
933		went back and talked with them, and
934		the superintendent was out of town.
935		They said he would have to change it;
936		we can't change it. But anyway, they
937		came on down to sing and then I got
938	01:42:21	another lady that we just, we said
939		let's go to the fair and see how it's
940		going to come out so we went to the
941		fair and just parked out from--in the
942		ditch about the fair, and it worked.
943		People didn't come. I saw some
944		little children come, saw some little
945		white boys--they'd come around. They
946		had heard something. They didn't
947		know what--some little black boys,
948	01:42:44	too. Oh, they say you ain't supposed
949		to go to fair today, they'd be--and
950		they'd just run, just running, and it

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
951		was just... It was just nothing going
952		on because nobody came. But the
953	01:42:56	college choir came down, this big bus
954		came down and children got off and
955		they washed up the bleachers, they
956		sing like they had a crowd but it
957		wasn't sold there. And see, the fair
958		didn't make any money that year. So
959		that's what happened with that. And
960		it was just interesting, too. You
961		know, some things just motivate you--
962		once you get started, you want to
963	01:43:29	reach at something else.
964		INTERVIEWER: Could we take a break
965		for a second?
966		MALE VOICE 1: Sure.
967		INTERVIEWER: We're going to take a
968		break for a second.
969		MS. JACKSON: Okay.
970		MALE VOICE 1: - - They boycotted the
971		fair--
972		MS. JACKSON: Oh, my lord.
973	01:43:44	MALE VOICE 1: - - Sister, I didn't
974		hear the part that it impacted whites
975		accidentally because they heard the

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
976		story. They didn't have all the
977		information, but they ended up not
978	01:43:53	going to the fair as well. Do you
979		remember the year that that was?
980		MS. JACKSON: Oh... Didn't nobody go
981		to--it was - - but to me, I looked
982		out there and it's just empty, except
983		you know, the little stuff they have
984		set up out there. And then--
985		FEMALE VOICE 1: Was it before the
986		civil rights workers had come or
987		after?
988	01:44:13	MS. JACKSON: No, after.
989		MALE VOICE 1: Okay, so they came in
990		1963, '64, so it would have been
991		after that.
992		INTERVIEWER: Okay...
993		[break in audio]
994		INTERVIEWER: --Some hair-raising
995		details about crosses being burned on
996		other people's yards. Don't you know
997		someone else who has had a cross
998	01:44:37	burned?
999		MS. JACKSON: No, just my yard and
1000		just Reverend Masco Anderson.

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
1001		INTERVIEWER: Tell us about the cross
1002		being burned in your yard.
1003	01:44:50	MS. JACKSON: Well, like I say, the
1004		children going have to go to school
1005		and they saw it. It was like, what
1006		they did, they burned the shape of a
1007		cross in the grass and we all just
1008		went out and looked at it, and the
1009		grown people knew what it was like,
1010		what it was about, but my daughter
1011		was telling me lately, she said see,
1012		out here you all are whispering, you
1013	01:45:15	all--you know, we didn't sit down and
1014		really explain to them. We hear you
1015		all talking but all I know, they said
1016		when they burn a cross in your yard,
1017		it was because white folks--something
1018		about white folks didn't like you if
1019		you got a cross burned in your yard
1020		so that's what she was telling me.
1021		INTERVIEWER: So how did it affect
1022		you?
1023	01:45:39	MS. JACKSON: I guess I was--what's
1024		that that people take to make them
1025		strong and bolder, these athletes--I

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1026		guess I was on a high, and I was just
1027		fine with it, because--just had a
1028	01:45:54	little fight in me and just ready to
1029		go on. But it didn't stop us. And
1030		then before that then, I don't know
1031		which comes first--it doesn't matter.
1032		When they set the shop on fire where
1033		we keep the tractors and trucks and
1034		things, my daughter went out on the
1035		porch one night to do something, and
1036		she looked up and she said, "The
1037		shop's on fire" and boy, everybody
1038	01:46:26	jumped to attention then. My husband
1039		had gone to bed. I said, the man
1040		must have been expecting somebody to
1041		attack him. He jumped out of the bed
1042		so quick that he didn't even put on
1043		his shoes. So he went out there and
1044		the truck--the tractor was out there,
1045		so what he did, he found the log
1046		chain, what old chain he had, hooked
1047		to a tractor, then hooked it to the
1048	01:46:54	truck, pulled the truck out across
1049		the field, and that's where the truck
1050		burned up, and what had happened,

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
1051		somebody had stuck a rag or something
1052		down in the gas tank and set it, set
1053	01:47:08	the rag on fire, and that's what was
1054		burning, so--but anyway, it caught
1055		the truck. Now, if we hadn't seen
1056		it, it probably would have got the
1057		tractors and everything else. Pulled
1058		it out across the field and that's
1059		where it burned up. And like, we
1060		didn't put no papers in there, so we
1061		weren't doing stuff like that.
1062		FEMALE VOICE 1: And Miss Jackson,
1063	01:47:32	wasn't there also an incidence where
1064		they put sugar in the--
1065		MS. JACKSON: Yeah, in the cotton
1066		picker. They didn't lock up--he was
1067		working some land way away from home
1068		and when they get through, they just
1069		leave it in the field until they get
1070		back, so his brother went to the
1071		field that morning to, you know, pick
1072		cotton. He said before I got there I
1073	01:47:58	could see some tracks, looked like
1074		four tractor tracks, so he said,
1075		somebody's been up here sniffing my--

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
1076		getting gas out of his tank so that's
1077		what he put it to. And he got up
1078	01:48:11	there and got on the cotton picker,
1079		he says I got halfway down, piece
1080		down through the field, it stopped.
1081		And they said you can put sugar in
1082		the tank and that will lock up
1083		everything but they don't know what
1084		made it happen, but it locked up and
1085		they didn't have no cotton picker.
1086		But James, the brother was a good
1087		mechanic, you know, - - mechanic on
1088	01:48:36	himself, and they fixed it.
1089		INTERVIEWER: Did you ever know who
1090		did it?
1091		MS. JACKSON: Never knew who did it.
1092		INTERVIEWER: There's also an
1093		instance, a case of shots being fired
1094		at you. Is that true?
1095		MS. JACKSON: Okay. I guess this is
1096		what my grandson is saying. I was
1097		going home from work one day and this
1098	01:49:02	truck pulled up and it was coming but
1099		when it got close to me it slowed
1100		down. When it slowed down, some kind

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
1101		of flash went over me, that's the
1102		first time something--I felt
1103	01:49:15	uncomfortable. They followed me just
1104		a little while and after a while, the
1105		driver must have changed his mind--
1106		the driver pulled off and sped by me
1107		but when he sped by, the man on the
1108		passenger side had his little pistol.
1109		He shot right across in front of the
1110		hood of my car. And I wouldn't tell
1111		my husband because I knew he was
1112		going to get out and try to find who
1113	01:49:38	did it and I didn't want him putting
1114		himself in danger like that. It was
1115		a long time before I told him; didn't
1116		tell any of them, because I go to
1117		work every day. He would have been
1118		thinking about me going to work every
1119		day.
1120		INTERVIEWER: What year was that?
1121		MS. JACKSON: I'm just so sorry. I
1122		don't know.
1123	01:50:03	INTERVIEWER: Did you tell anybody?
1124		MS. JACKSON: Later on, about maybe a
1125		month or so later. I told him about

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1126		it and...
1127		INTERVIEWER: Had you heard of things
1128	01:50:17	like that happening to other people?
1129		Did other people tell you about
1130		things like that happening to them?
1131		MS. JACKSON: I heard about the
1132		things in Mississippi, you know, the
1133		little boy that got killed and stuff
1134		like that, and then, well, after
1135		that, the civil rights workers in
1136		Mississippi got killed. I think
1137		Myrtle told you about that, or did
1138	01:50:40	she?
1139		INTERVIEWER: How did you respond to
1140		that?
1141		MS. JACKSON: I knew they were
1142		letting me know they didn't like what
1143		I was doing, and then I knew I wasn't
1144		going to stop doing what I was doing,
1145		and that's about it.
1146		INTERVIEWER: Wow. Was there any
1147		time when your husband came to you
1148	01:51:17	with any kind of thoughts that he was
1149		having reservations about doing what
1150		he was doing?

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1151		MS. JACKSON: You know, he never did.
1152		He would just get up there - - and be
1153	01:51:31	prepared to do what we had to do for
1154		- -.
1155		INTERVIEWER: Not a moment of fear?
1156		MS. JACKSON: I don't remember him
1157		talking about being afraid or
1158		nothing. But I know one--I can say
1159		this: To get to one of our farms we
1160		had to drive through the white man's
1161		property, and so the man told him,
1162		three of them told him don't come
1163	01:52:10	back through there and for a long
1164		time they went like, six or seven
1165		miles out of the way to get to the
1166		field when they could get to it like,
1167		30 minutes directly. And so one day
1168		he came in, he had done that for a
1169		long time, I guess maybe a couple
1170		years before. But anyway, when he
1171		left one day he said, well, I'm gone.
1172		And he had his pistol--the first time
1173	01:52:39	I ever saw him get his pistol. He
1174		said they might get me today, but I
1175		think I can get some of them. At

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1176		least I think I can get some of them,
1177		and I think that's when he broke the
1178	01:52:50	thing about going through this man's
1179		field, didn't nobody ever bother him,
1180		though.
1181		INTERVIEWER: How did you feel when
1182		he said that to you, they might get
1183		me?
1184		MS. JACKSON: Well, I can't explain
1185		it but you know... In my heart it
1186		felt like they ain't going to get
1187		him, but he walked out with his
1188	01:53:13	little--his called it his little
1189		piece. And that's the first time he
1190		ever met--they might get me today,
1191		but I think I can get some of before
1192		they--because you know, they're not
1193		going to come at you one-on-one.
1194		There's always going to be a crowd
1195		when they come after you.
1196		INTERVIEWER: One second. Are we
1197		going to film at the community
1198	01:53:39	center?
1199		[background conversation]
1200		MS. JACKSON: Say something about the

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1201		center?
1202		MALE VOICE 1: The community center.
1203	01:54:10	MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.
1204		INTERVIEWER: First of all, just
1205		describe--tell me what motivated you
1206		to start a community center.
1207		MS. JACKSON: Well, like I say, I
1208		wasn't thinking about it. I was
1209		sitting at my desk, see, Mid-Delta
1210		was - - and I was sitting at my desk
1211		and it just dropped in by spirit and
1212		all it said was something for
1213	01:54:32	children and it stayed there like,
1214		like a couple months, just something
1215		for children, just something within,
1216		until one morning Mr. Gale Thrower,
1217		the Ag teacher, came to my office and
1218		he says, Miss Jackson, I see you all
1219		have a room back there that you're
1220		not using. And he said you know how
1221		the children haven't got anywhere to
1222		go, and I would like to fix it up,
1223	01:55:04	you know, where the children have
1224		something to--and I said, boy, God
1225		must have sent you here and we got

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1226		started from there. His thing was -
1227		- my thing was education, because I
1228	01:55:21	wanted more head starts--I wanted
1229		every child in the district to have
1230		seen a book before they go to school.
1231		And what I did that year, retired
1232		teachers, I had about two--Maxine
1233		Hathaway, Anna May Smith, and by me--
1234		I used to haul, pick up children,
1235		take them to head start. Then I knew
1236		where everybody was, and I went to
1237		different houses like Mrs. Hathaway,
1238	01:55:54	took about three houses to just go
1239		and read a book. I said you all are
1240		all I want, I want to let every child
1241		see a book before you go to school
1242		you see. You know, we just did--that
1243		wasn't our culture, so when I found
1244		the families for, and they went to
1245		these families that read stories--did
1246		the same thing we do at head start.
1247		And Maxine Hathaway and Anna May
1248	01:56:22	Smith and Beatrice, I think Beatrice,
1249		the executive director did one. But
1250		anyway, that's what I wanted--I said

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1251		you all are going to see every child
1252		that's going to school to have seen a
1253	01:56:37	book before they go, and that's what
1254		we did. They would take the little
1255		their little paint and everything
1256		just like we did at head start, put
1257		the easel, the tree where it would be
1258		an easel and they would do their
1259		little painting and stuff and just
1260		read little stories to them because
1261		you would be surprised that the
1262		people never saw a book when they go
1263	01:56:55	to school. So that's what I wanted,
1264		and I wanted them to have these shots
1265		because there were so many children
1266		that didn't go to school because you
1267		don't have those shots, you can't go
1268		to school. And it's so hard for them
1269		to get, like, 30 miles, you know, out
1270		there all the time and so what we
1271		did, I got--after these teachers,
1272		these ladies did the home start and
1273	01:57:27	of course I was doing one too. And
1274		what we did about the shots, just
1275		come down, the nurses from Helena

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1276		would come down to this big raggedy
1277		center where it was - - and they gave
1278	01:57:44	shots. They would come down and give
1279		them shots, and then after we got,
1280		after we founded BGACDC, then they
1281		got a grant and they built a building
1282		onto it, and the staff would come
1283		from Helena, and that's how they got
1284		everything. They did everything
1285		there. They do everything there that
1286		they did in Helena.
1287		INTERVIEWER: So describe the
1288	01:58:10	building before you tweaked in
1289		massaged it and polished it to turn
1290		it into the community center. What
1291		did it look like?
1292		MS. JACKSON: It looked pretty good
1293		except there wasn't no roof, there
1294		wasn't no...
1295		And of course, there wasn't any
1296		ceiling. That's most of what this--
1297		Channel 2 came down and took pictures
1298	01:58:34	of that and what we were doing.
1299		INTERVIEWER: There was no roof?
1300		[background noise]

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1301		MS. JACKSON: Well--
1302		[audio ends abruptly]
1303	01:58:42	[END afc2010039_crhp0004_mv1.wmv]
1304		[START AFC2010039_CRHP0004_MV2.WMV]
1305		MS. GERTRUDE JACKSON: See, I worked
1306		in Helena a while, and that's how I
1307		got at the center. You're not
1308		taping?
1309		Wait, I'm not ready right now. You
1310		know, you've got to help me out some.
1311		MALE VOICE 1: You're doing just
1312		fine. You're great.
1313	01:00:21	Okay, we're rolling again. We're
1314		rolling.
1315		INTERVIEWER: Okay. When you got the
1316		idea to start working on a community
1317		center, you were already working with
1318		children.
1319		MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.
1320		INTERVIEWER: In what--with what
1321		agency?
1322		MS. JACKSON: Mid-Delta. Mid-Delta
1323	01:00:42	Community Service.
1324		INTERVIEWER: And tell us a little
1325		bit about Mid-Delta Community

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1326		Service. What did you do there?
1327		MS. JACKSON: The first job I had
1328	01:00:54	with Mid-Delta was transporting
1329		children to head start, go all--I
1330		guess I would do like, maybe 40 miles
1331		in the morning, 40 in the evening,
1332		going picking up children, going
1333		across the fields in different
1334		communities, just knocking on the
1335		doors and see who was there for head
1336		start.
1337		INTERVIEWER: So how many children
1338	01:01:22	did you transport?
1339		MS. JACKSON: 15--20, 15 in one room,
1340		15 in another so that's 30 children.
1341		And we always had to make a couple of
1342		trips. And that was--it was kind of
1343		not so nice, but I had the station.
1344		The gentleman had been out to my
1345		house to ask me if I'd do it. They
1346		thought I was the only person that
1347		they could find in the district that
1348	01:01:53	had a station wagon, and they came
1349		down and asked me would I pick up the
1350		children for head start. My husband

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1351		said you can't do that. She's
1352		rolling all over this country--so we
1353	01:02:11	turned it down, a little fly on your
1354		paper.
1355		[laughter]
1356		MALE VOICE 1: Yeah, I don't think
1357		the fly filled out a release form,
1358		so...
1359		INTERVIEWER: Priceless.
1360		[laughter]
1361		MS. JACKSON: But anyway, they
1362		couldn't find anybody and they came
1363	01:02:27	back again and so he says go on, and
1364		so that's the first job I had for
1365		Mid-Delta was transporting children.
1366		And from there, teaching head start.
1367		INTERVIEWER: Do any of--tell us a
1368		little bit about some of the children
1369		who were standouts for you, the
1370		children that you will remember for
1371		the rest of your life there at that
1372		community center.
1373	01:03:01	MS. JACKSON: Now you're talking
1374		about the head start children?
1375		INTERVIEWER: Start with the head

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1376		start children and talk about the
1377		children from your community center.
1378	01:03:13	Were there any that--?
1379		MS. JACKSON: No, nothing that really
1380		stood out.
1381		INTERVIEWER: Nobody that touched
1382		your heart in a special way because
1383		they...?
1384		MS. JACKSON: Well, I tell you, I
1385		just thought about this little boy.
1386		He's a twin and in head start he was
1387		so disrupted. You know when you get
1388	01:03:34	upset, he would get up and go around
1389		and seat--we sit in a circle, like
1390		semicircle. He'd get up and go
1391		around and tap everybody on the head,
1392		hit them and what I want to get to--
1393		he'd get upset and he'd go around and
1394		knock the work off the wall. But it
1395		came to, we found out that he wasn't
1396		coming from a comfortable home. We
1397		think that was part of it and so,
1398	01:03:58	like when I would take him for field
1399		trips, take him for a walk and stuff
1400		like that to cool him off, and so

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1401		that's about--I'd get his name. He's
1402		someone that really stood out, and we
1403	01:04:14	had to visit, do home visits and we
1404		found out--and talked to the parents,
1405		so... We had him two years because if
1406		you come at 4, you could be there two
1407		years. And that's about it.
1408		MALE VOICE 1: Stop for a moment.
1409		INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.
1410		MS. JACKSON: That one.
1411		FEMALE VOICE 1: - -
1412		MS. JACKSON: See, I thought I better
1413	01:04:45	bring somebody. Okay, I used to--
1414		like you said, picking up children
1415		and one family lived on this white
1416		man's place and I had to go down like
1417		a little road to get to it, a little
1418		turn road, and I'd go there and pick
1419		up, so one day I went to pick her up
1420		and she'd have met me out on the
1421		highway with her little boy. I said,
1422		what are you doing out here? Our
1423	01:05:11	boss told us--the man's place they
1424		stay on--our boss told us to tell
1425		that lady that's driving that white

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1426		station wagon to stay off his place
1427		because I don't want nobody on my
1428	01:05:28	place that has something to do with
1429		that Martin Luther King. And so she
1430		said but don't worry, we're going to
1431		get off his place, and what impressed
1432		me was maybe in a little better than
1433		a year, it was better than a year,
1434		they had bought up and built their
1435		own house and it's good they got me
1436		off of that because after that, I
1437		was--moved to head start teacher,
1438	01:06:00	home start. That's where you go into
1439		the home and teach them. You do the
1440		same thing in the home that you did
1441		in school, and so I said now it's
1442		good they got off his place because
1443		when I got to be home start teacher,
1444		I had to take all my stuff with me
1445		and then once a month we'd have a
1446		parent meeting and all the houses
1447		would meet together in one house. I
1448	01:06:25	said it would have been some black
1449		folks moving out, going through the
1450		turn road to his field--I said, well,

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1451		they moved off just in time, so it
1452		was just great. Now, that's all I
1453	01:06:36	had--I really had forgotten about
1454		that one. And the other words, you
1455		know--
1456		MALE VOICE 1: - -
1457		FEMALE VOICE 1: But finish your
1458		thought.
1459		MS. JACKSON: Now, where was I? Now,
1460		I say it was good I moved off the
1461		place because from head start,
1462		picking up the children I had to do
1463	01:07:11	home start and that's where you go
1464		into the home and carry all your
1465		materials and do all the same things
1466		you do at school. I said now, if he
1467		hadn't put me off this place because
1468		like I think I had ten houses that
1469		I'd go to but once a month I was
1470		required to bring them all together
1471		and have a parent meeting, somebody
1472		from the main office would come down
1473	01:07:37	and do things and I said now, that
1474		would have been awful, had they still
1475		been on his place because he sure

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1476		wouldn't want all of us coming back
1477		there to a meeting. Even sometimes
1478	01:07:51	like at 12 o'clock, the men would
1479		come out to feed them. They'd just
1480		enjoy, to come out the field and
1481		where the head start was and see what
1482		we were doing, so we enjoyed--so TJ,
1483		I'm glad you made me think of it.
1484		INTERVIEWER: Yes, thank you, TJ. Do
1485		you have another one?
1486		MALE VOICE 1: No. It just comes up.
1487		INTERVIEWER: I want to go way back.
1488	01:08:19	Your father's birthplace fascinates
1489		me, where he chose--where was your
1490		father born?
1491		MS. JACKSON: In Arkansas.
1492		INTERVIEWER: Why did he leave
1493		Arkansas?
1494		MS. JACKSON: Heard that the grass is
1495		greener on the other side of the
1496		fence, you know, for a job went there
1497		and he worked at the commonwealth--
1498	01:08:45	what do you call it? Commonwealth...
1499		It was a factory that he worked at.
1500		They called it Commonwealth.

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1501		INTERVIEWER: So what was his life
1502		like here in Arkansas?
1503	01:09:00	MS. JACKSON: He was a farmer.
1504		INTERVIEWER: He was a farmer?
1505		MS. JACKSON: And someone, some of
1506		the people started going south and
1507		they told him about, you know, and he
1508		liked what they said, and he went up
1509		there to try it.
1510		INTERVIEWER: Okay. Your children
1511		and your children's children and
1512		everyone who knows them will know a
1513	01:09:28	little bit about the work that you
1514		and your husband did in the movement.
1515		MS. JACKSON: Right.
1516		INTERVIEWER: They'll know a little
1517		bit. They'll never know all of it,
1518		but what would you say would be the
1519		most important thing they need to
1520		know about the work you did in the
1521		movement?
1522		MS. JACKSON: Things that they would
1523	01:09:48	need to know? Except stand up for
1524		yourself, and you know... Get
1525		involved. If the need ever comes,

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1526		you know... I'd like to encourage
1527		them to make sure they go to PTA
1528	01:10:12	meetings and things like that because
1529		right now we have so many parents--
1530		it's not like it used to be, see,
1531		it's hard to get parents to attend
1532		the school system. And then--
1533		INTERVIEWER: We're going to have to
1534		wait.
1535		[background conversation]
1536		MS. JACKSON: And let me know when
1537		I'm doing something wrong, because if
1538	01:11:07	I hit the paper, I didn't know that
1539		was wrong, so let me know when.
1540		MALE VOICE 1: You're doing
1541		wonderfully.
1542		MS. JACKSON: Doing all right, okay.
1543		[background conversation]
1544		MALE VOICE 1: - - Okay. Okay, do
1545		you want to ask that question again?
1546		INTERVIEWER: We're going to ask the
1547		question again. You gave it a
1548	01:12:10	beautiful start, but we lost the end
1549		of it to the noise, so what would you
1550		like, not just your--

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1551		MS. JACKSON: Okay. Well, with the
1552		start, they were children, some had
1553	01:12:27	already gone off to school, like,
1554		well, like the four older ones had
1555		gone when the civil rights movement,
1556		and I just would like want to be
1557		involved, which most of them are
1558		doing, being involved with the
1559		schools and whatever.
1560		INTERVIEWER: All right, wonderful.
1561		Thank you so much. We are going to
1562		go over to your community center.
1563	01:12:53	MS. JACKSON: Okay, because I didn't
1564		know what to expect, because like
1565		I've been to places and I had to just
1566		talk, just tell them what I'd done
1567		and so when I had put together the
1568		different... Let me see if I missed
1569		anything that I had planned, but you
1570		- - right, so--
1571		INTERVIEWER: No.
1572		FEMALE VOICE 1: - - That's fine.
1573	01:13:17	[break in audio]
1574		MS. JACKSON: You all going to do it.
1575		Okay, I guess I'll sit straight

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1576		and...
1577		MALE VOICE 1: - - Okay.
1578	01:13:37	MS. JACKSON: School integration,
1579		when they wouldn't--when the school
1580		system was ordered to integrate and
1581		the integration was to be done, like,
1582		three years, the first year they were
1583		going to do it through the third
1584		grade. Then the next year they were
1585		going to take the grades four through
1586		eight. Now, they went on and obeyed
1587		the first year, the children, and I
1588	01:14:12	guess no more than ten or twelve
1589		children, black people--that was such
1590		an awful way to integrate, send you
1591		choose whether you want to go back to
1592		your school or go to the white
1593		school, that's what we had to choose.
1594		And so the next year it was going to
1595		be the fourth through the eighth, and
1596		that's when they--my husband called.
1597		That's when they balked, they
1598	01:14:35	decided, uh-uh, no way, we just can't
1599		go no further. And so the choice for
1600		them--if you don't get a choice for

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1601		them, don't go to school at all
1602		because first we had planned to
1603	01:14:50	march, take the children over there
1604		and okay, can I start over?
1605		INTERVIEWER: Sure.
1606		MS. JACKSON: Okay. Now, at a
1607		meeting one night, Myrtle decided
1608		that if we could just take our
1609		children over there, since they
1610		wouldn't send us the choice form.
1611		We'd just go anyway, and they had
1612		heard that we were coming, somebody
1613	01:15:17	leaked out of the meeting somehow,
1614		and got to the other folk and they
1615		were prepared for us. They covered
1616		their school, the whole block around
1617		the school with--it was cars, trucks
1618		were bumper to bumper, two, three men
1619		on each truck. You know these trucks
1620		have rifle racks on them, and so the
1621		lady said, they heard that you all
1622		are going to walk--you know, walk to
1623	01:15:48	school, going to come onto school
1624		this morning, and they were all
1625		prepared for you this morning,

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1626		prepared. And so my cousin, she was
1627		braver than I, crazier than I was,
1628	01:16:02	however you want to call it. But we
1629		said let's go and we drove around
1630		there and it was just like she said--
1631		from Irving garage [phonetic] all the
1632		way around to the bus shop, trucks
1633		were bumper to bumper with two, three
1634		men on each one of them, waiting for
1635		us when we come through the mud, and
1636		I don't know what they plan to do,
1637		but that's the way it was. And I
1638	01:16:32	would like say, when we were
1639		boycotting, we had the church--we met
1640		at my church. They set up a little
1641		library and bought books and things
1642		so we could do something while they
1643		were out of the school--the children
1644		would go down to the church and read
1645		books and things like that. That's
1646		all. Like Myrtle said now, the
1647		children got to have something while
1648	01:16:56	they're out of school, so we were out
1649		of school quite a few months there,
1650		so at least we can meet and read

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1651		books and whatever we know verbally.
1652		And I guess...
1653	01:17:16	MALE VOICE 1: Do you want to go
1654		further with that, the trucks waiting
1655		- - oh, okay. I'm just wondering
1656		what happened next.
1657		INTERVIEWER: We're going to have to
1658		continue that story, okay? We're
1659		going to talk about what happened
1660		next, and then how that--what
1661		happened next took us to the court
1662		action.
1663	01:17:36	MS. JACKSON: Right, okay. I guess I
1664		have to get... Okay, then Mr.
1665		Handelbaum said now, we agreed that
1666		we wanted to go to court. He said
1667		now, but we've got to have somebody
1668		that you know, can't send them all to
1669		school. We've got to have somebody.
1670		So my husband said, well, I'll do it,
1671		and that's how it got started with
1672		him, because you know, there wasn't
1673	01:18:03	anybody else that wanted to, was
1674		willing to go to court for the
1675		school, so he said he would do it.

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1676		INTERVIEWER: So describe some of the
1677		activity of the court. You went to
1678	01:18:21	the courtroom?
1679		MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm, we had to be
1680		there.
1681		INTERVIEWER: Yeah. What was that
1682		like?
1683		MS. JACKSON: It was interesting. It
1684		was neat. I could say this, we had a
1685		good judge that after a couple of
1686		days he ordered them to integrate.
1687		INTERVIEWER: And who was the judge?
1688	01:18:43	MS. JACKSON: Owen Harris [phonetic].
1689		Mm-hmm, because he'll be in some of
1690		those papers, but Owen Harris was the
1691		judge and once he decided, come made
1692		his decision, he ordered them to
1693		integrate and one thing he said,
1694		there will no longer be two buses
1695		riding down the same route, one bus
1696		will pick up white and black and the
1697		school board, they like to jump out
1698	01:19:15	of their seats and that's about it.
1699		John Walker [phonetic] was our
1700		lawyer.

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1701		INTERVIEWER: What was John Walker
1702		like?
1703	01:19:28	MS. JACKSON: Real nice. He was just
1704		coming, just had got his--and he had
1705		it together. He had just come out of
1706		college or law school or whatever,
1707		but he did good. He was doing great.
1708		INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what he
1709		would say in the courtroom during
1710		this case?
1711		MS. JACKSON: You know, I sure don't.
1712		INTERVIEWER: Okay.
1713	01:19:55	MS. JACKSON: Those things - - he
1714		would do things like, "Well, you
1715		know, the nigger" so the judge, then
1716		Walker would have him say it right
1717		instead of having him say nigger.
1718		That was just kind of funny to me.
1719		Every time they'd go out of place
1720		he'd correct them. But I really
1721		enjoyed the judge, because he ordered
1722		them--there would be no problem in
1723	01:20:29	Marvell. He said I'd go to any price
1724		to see that there would be no problem
1725		in Marvell.

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1726		INTERVIEWER: And what was the
1727		response in the courtroom from--?
1728	01:20:42	MS. JACKSON: It's just us and there
1729		wasn't any audience. But they like
1730		to jump out their seat--they jumped
1731		and looked at each other, and so when
1732		we went on back to school, the buses,
1733		they had to stop at them, because you
1734		see, maybe a white person living here
1735		and then a black person there would
1736		see that one bus would come through
1737		to pick up the whites and then
1738	01:21:08	there's a black bus and a white bus.
1739		And we used to watch for the school
1740		buses--let me know when the bus
1741		coming. They'd just say "the bus
1742		coming" and they'd say "white or
1743		black?" And one day my son said--
1744		[background noise]
1745		MS. JACKSON: What is that? One day
1746		my son says, when they say "the bus
1747		coming," "white or black?" he said
1748	01:21:33	"yellow."
1749		[applause]
1750		FEMALE VOICE 1: That was fabulous.

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1751		INTERVIEWER: Do we need to do that
1752		again?
1753	01:21:48	MALE VOICE 1: I think it's okay.
1754		INTERVIEWER: You think?
1755		MALE VOICE 1: Yeah.
1756		FEMALE VOICE 1: Because it was
1757		fabulous.
1758		MALE VOICE 1: I mean, she could tell
1759		it again. Why don't you have her
1760		tell it again?
1761		INTERVIEWER: Just for--can you do
1762		that last statement again, when your
1763	01:21:58	son said--
1764		MS. JACKSON: About the bus?
1765		INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.
1766		MS. JACKSON: Well it used to be, you
1767		know, like, two buses, one bus for
1768		the white children and one for the
1769		black children, and when we--
1770		somebody's always watching for the
1771		bus to let us know when it's coming
1772		and then they say "The bus coming."
1773	01:22:18	"White or black?" We kept up that a
1774		long time, so one day they ask him,
1775		"bus coming, white--which one?" He

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1801		still the place. Because it--
1802		[break in audio]
1803	01:23:06	REVEREND JEROME TURNER: --Poplar
1804		Grove, Arkansas, that's a few miles
1805		east of Marvell, Arkansas and it's
1806		located in the county of Phillips,
1807		Arkansas and it's close to the
1808		Mississippi River, close to Helena,
1809		West Helena area, and that's what I
1810		do here at BGACDC, and of course
1811		BGACDC stands for Boys Girls Adult
1812		Community Development Center. I am
1813	01:23:35	the youth and family director here at
1814		BGACDC.
1815		INTERVIEWER: And what kind of
1816		activities go on here in this--
1817		REVEREND TURNER: Well, we have
1818		three--four component areas in which
1819		we have activities here at BGACDC.
1820		Of course, those four component areas
1821		are we have youth and family
1822		services, we have an economic
1823	01:24:01	development area, and of course we
1824		have housing, and of course there's
1825		an administrative area, but in

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1826		housing we have what we call the
1827		BGACDC Manor which is a family
1828	01:24:17	dwelling. It's for low-income
1829		housing project, and at that location
1830		there are some one, two and three-
1831		bedroom units and it is our housing
1832		project for the city of Marvell. We
1833		also have some standalone housing,
1834		some units that are operated by the
1835		BGACDC and they are rental property
1836		housing at BGACDC, so one of our
1837		goals here is to provide decent and
1838	01:24:46	affordable housing for low-income
1839		families and so we do that through
1840		that dwelling of family housings that
1841		we have here. Then of course in our
1842		economic development part, we have
1843		here at BGACDC, we have what we call
1844		the best food in town--it's called
1845		the BFT, best food in town. It
1846		provides some employment for persons
1847		working in the cafeteria type setting
1848	01:25:14	and of course we do serve the best
1849		food in town. Economic development
1850		also we provide in the summertime

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1851		some jobs for youth in the summertime
1852		and for some middle-aged persons. We
1853	01:25:27	actually call it an intergenerational
1854		type of program in the summertime--we
1855		have college students and we have
1856		some youth that are still in high
1857		school who are 16 and maybe older,
1858		they work a summer program here at
1859		BGACDC, so those are some of our
1860		economic development type programs.
1861		Here in the youth and family service
1862		type program, we offer afterschool
1863	01:25:54	tutorial programs--we call it our
1864		Delta Reach and Teach Program. Our
1865		Delta Reach and Teach Program is an
1866		afterschool program. It is also a -
1867		- program that we have and what we do
1868		there, we have some peer tutors and
1869		we have of course an - - that is a
1870		supervisor but we use high school
1871		students as peer tutors and we work
1872		with youth from ages of about 6 years
1873	01:26:17	old up to about 14, and so we have
1874		them come over after school in the
1875		evening time. Our program this year-

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1876		-in the past we've been operating at
1877		five days a week but we took a unique
1878	01:26:30	approach this year, we're only
1879		operating three days a week because
1880		we are partnering with the Marvell
1881		school, the Marvell-Elaine school
1882		district and they are operating after
1883		school tutorial type programs Mondays
1884		and Tuesdays, and we operate
1885		Wednesdays and Thursdays, and so we
1886		took that approach that we might do a
1887		holistic approach to the students,
1888	01:26:51	and we call them scholars or the
1889		students to help them--we offer the
1890		same opportunities that they would
1891		have found in school. We have the
1892		same type of programs that we do in
1893		the afternoon that they would also go
1894		through at the school site. So
1895		that's part of what we do in the
1896		youth and family services, and youth
1897		and family services also, we offer in
1898	01:27:15	the summertime, we're partnered with
1899		a couple of partners--USDA and FDA,
1900		we're partnered to do what we call

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1901		the Delta Obesity Research Project,
1902		and the Delta Obesity Research
1903	01:27:27	Project, it is a project with some
1904		scholars or students and with their
1905		parents who--it's a volunteer-type
1906		project, and we have them assigned up
1907		and we are finding out some things
1908		about those of us who live here in
1909		the delta. We have also found in our
1910		Delta Research Project, we've found
1911		out that we're deficient in vitamin
1912		D. Even though we have plenty of
1913	01:27:52	sunlight, but it appears that either
1914		we are not getting out in sunlight or
1915		we're staying in the house more, or
1916		we're not drinking that fortified
1917		milk with vitamin D in it, and so
1918		through our research project we have
1919		found out that in our area here, that
1920		vitamin D is one of our deficiencies
1921		so we'll work in our Delta Research
1922		Project trying to improve that by
1923	01:28:14	offering a program in the summertime
1924		where we offer kids some holistic
1925		meals, some nutrition-full meals,

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1926		snacks, and of course some milk and
1927		things that have more vitamin D in
1928	01:28:25	it. That's one of our research
1929		projects. Go ahead.
1930		INTERVIEWER: From where you sit,
1931		you've been here for how long--
1932		REVEREND TURNER: Six years.
1933		INTERVIEWER: Six years?
1934		REVEREND TURNER: Mm-hmm.
1935		INTERVIEWER: Would you say that
1936		there's one person who played a key
1937		role in making this happen, getting
1938	01:28:45	this started?
1939		REVEREND TURNER: There is. There is
1940		one person who is still with us who
1941		we call our ambassador, and that is
1942		Mrs. Gertrude Jackson. She is up in
1943		age, and I'm not going to tell you
1944		how old she is--I hope you don't film
1945		that, because I think I've really
1946		forgotten what actually her age is,
1947		but I know for sure she is in her
1948	01:29:08	80s, for sure, and she has been here
1949		with us since the '70s, actually
1950		since about '78, '77 timeframe.

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1951		She's been here the whole time
1952		working with us trying to make this
1953	01:29:22	community development center here,
1954		BGACDC, a viable part of the
1955		community and a necessity in the
1956		community. She has worked to do
1957		that. She is a person who goes out
1958		and presents BGACDC wherever her
1959		travels take her. She's one who's
1960		talking about BGACDC. She and a
1961		couple of other community persons,
1962		one of them being Mr. Gale Thrower,
1963	01:29:52	he's no longer with us, he's passed
1964		on--the two of them take it on
1965		themselves along with some other
1966		community persons to establish this
1967		place here because they were looking
1968		for an opportunity in providing
1969		things for boys and girls in our
1970		community, and then of course they
1971		also said that they wanted adults
1972		involved so that's how we came up
1973	01:30:15	with the name Boys Girls Adults
1974		Community Development Center, because
1975		they looked at not only do we want

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
1976		your boys and girls but we also want
1977		you as a parent to be involved also,
1978	01:30:25	and so they came up with that slogan,
1979		that name to name this place. At
1980		that time, they were just looking for
1981		an opportunity for persons in the
1982		community to have some place to go
1983		and something to do but as it
1984		developed and things began to
1985		progress, they began to take on more
1986		ideas, an idea of course having
1987		available affordable housing, an idea
1988	01:30:51	of also providing economic
1989		development for people in the
1990		community, so they began to develop
1991		and take on those ideas.
1992		INTERVIEWER: And what results do you
1993		see, what visible results?
1994		REVEREND TURNER: Over the last 20
1995		plus years, over the last 20 plus
1996		years this center has had a great
1997		impact in the lives of maybe some
1998	01:31:20	hundreds of young people and many of
1999		those young persons have went on from
2000		this place, some of them to become

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2001		entrepreneurs themselves, some of
2002		them to become lawyers and doctors
2003	01:31:32	and to do well and they will tell you
2004		that it is because they were involved
2005		in some type of either boys program
2006		or girls program here at the center.
2007		We have a program called Girls Are
2008		Girls. We have a program called Dad,
2009		which is dealing with boys, dealing
2010		with adolescent development, and
2011		those programs are programs that have
2012		been mentor programs that have helped
2013	01:31:53	some of those persons throughout
2014		their lives. And we had just here
2015		recently in our banquet that we had
2016		just the other day, it was on
2017		November the 10th--we had one of our
2018		young persons who had grown up here
2019		at the BGACDC, to come back--Marcus
2020		Thrower. He is of course the son of
2021		Mr. Gale Thrower, but he is in
2022		Atlanta now and he is an investment
2023	01:32:20	consultant, so that's the type of
2024		quality of persons who have come
2025		through this place. We have several

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2026		lawyers and maybe even a doctor that
2027		has come through this place. Our
2028	01:32:34	executive director, one of her
2029		daughters is a lawyer who has come
2030		through BGACDC right here, so those
2031		are some of the positive things that
2032		this center has done, and even though
2033		those who may not have achieved that
2034		level of being a lawyer or a doctor
2035		or an investment banker and things of
2036		that nature, we have several
2037		educators who have traveled these
2038	01:32:57	halls here that we have here.
2039		INTERVIEWER: Mrs. Jackson is quite a
2040		dynamo and quite a source of
2041		inspiration. Can you remember
2042		specific times when she actually
2043		picked you up, brushed you off and
2044		moved you along?
2045		REVEREND TURNER: Well, Mrs. Jackson
2046		likes to tell the story that she seen
2047		me speaking at a - - meeting one day
2048	01:33:20	and that she knew then that she had
2049		plans that I would become a person of
2050		interest to her, that she would have

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2051		me working here at the BGACDC. Now,
2052		I say then, I said now, well, maybe I
2053	01:33:36	shouldn't have been up speaking so
2054		loud, she wouldn't have tried to put
2055		this here, this, the weight of doing
2056		this business on me, but I appreciate
2057		her having confidence in me and
2058		knowing that perhaps she could trust
2059		what she and other seniors had
2060		started some years ago, that she
2061		would look to say that she would want
2062		to trust that to a person like me.
2063	01:34:00	INTERVIEWER: What makes her so
2064		wonderful?
2065		REVEREND TURNER: Well, I think it's
2066		her willingness to give 100% in
2067		whatever she's doing, and that she
2068		looks and sees the good in people and
2069		not necessarily the bad. I think
2070		that makes her a wonderful person.
2071		She can always find good in every
2072		person and believes that each
2073	01:34:23	individual has some good in them.
2074		INTERVIEWER: I think that's a wrap.
2075		REVEREND TURNER: Okay.

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2076		[applause]
2077		[break in audio]
2078	01:34:35	MALE VOICE 1: Okay.
2079		INTERVIEWER: We're ready.
2080		MS. JACKSON: I just wanted to tell
2081		you all how when I first saw Reverend
2082		Turner, he's a little old boy--he
2083		looked like he'd just come out of
2084		college and he was at this meeting
2085		and he caught my eye. I went back
2086		home and told my husband, I said
2087		there was a young man at the meeting
2088	01:34:59	tonight and I didn't see him anymore
2089		until about 10 or 15 years later,
2090		right? And I said that's the man--
2091		that's the same one I saw at the
2092		meeting that night, and it turned out
2093		to be him and I knew he was going to
2094		be great. I told him, I said, I
2095		guess - - you stood out that night
2096		and I just couldn't forget him.
2097		That's the man and I said I know he's
2098	01:35:29	good for us because God just put him
2099		in my eyesight because I don't know
2100		if I would have taken that much time

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2101		just seeing people, a first
2102		impression when he was young and then
2103	01:35:42	I could just see something in him,
2104		and didn't see him no more until
2105		about 15 years later, he just got
2106		grown then. Okay, and that's all I
2107		wanted to say about Reverend Turner.
2108		And he just--and we're trying to get
2109		him to become, our director has
2110		gotten tired, she's just holding on,
2111		trying to get him to accept but he's
2112		doing fine. He's not sure he wants
2113	01:36:06	to take it all over and I wish I'd
2114		thought about it--I showed you our
2115		housing project. We came right back.
2116		Okay, so that's about it.
2117		INTERVIEWER: All right. Thank you
2118		so much.
2119		[break in audio]
2120		INTERVIEWER: We're just down the
2121		street from you. Tell us a little
2122		bit about how that came to be.
2123	01:36:25	MS. JACKSON: Well, when we got
2124		started, Mrs. Beatrice wanted
2125		housing. There were lots of little

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2126		raggedy houses around her and Bea,
2127		that was the first thing she wanted,
2128	01:26:35	housing, and so we just went to work.
2129		They went to work on housing and went
2130		to FHA and that's who built them,
2131		FHA, and when we got it all set up,
2132		it took a long time, and once we got
2133		it, then you have to have open house,
2134		you know, let the community know what
2135		you're doing, and so that day there
2136		was packed out around here, and I
2137		come in that morning and all these
2138	01:37:07	white folks are there. They came in
2139		to stop it. They said they didn't
2140		want no housing project here because
2141		it brings drugs in the community, and
2142		so the mayor was a sweet little white
2143		lady--in other words, I won't go
2144		there, though. But anyway, we had to
2145		overcome that. They were trying to
2146		stop it because a housing project
2147		wasn't good for a community, they
2148	01:37:34	say, but we wanted it. The first
2149		place we planned to put it, they
2150		weren't selling and so when the white

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2151		folks decided to let us have it, it
2152		was way down on country road, back
2153	01:37:53	some woods, and FHA said no, we don't
2154		want to have a--they wanted it back
2155		and we wanted it on the highway where
2156		people can see it and that's how we
2157		got it, and that's about the gist of
2158		it, that we had to really fight to
2159		get to build it.
2160		INTERVIEWER: So how many years has
2161		it been in existence?
2162		MS. JACKSON: Right at when we about,
2163	01:38:17	about two years after we started, I
2164		think maybe, you know--I don't
2165		remember. It may be up--no, up there
2166		is when we started.
2167		INTERVIEWER: And this is housing for
2168		how many families?
2169		MS. JACKSON: I think it's 39 units.
2170		And I think we have 20 some units
2171		across town, you know. Okay, that's
2172		it.
2173	01:38:41	INTERVIEWER: Okay, thank you.
2174		MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.
2175		[break in audio]

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2176		FEMALE VOICE 1: Let me know when you
2177		start and stop.
2178	01:38:51	MALE VOICE 1: We're stopping. I
2179		can't--what did you say?
2180		INTERVIEWER: We're starting.
2181		MALE VOICE 1: Okay, we're starting.
2182		INTERVIEWER: Okay, TJ, please tell
2183		us your name, who you are, where you
2184		live, what you do.
2185		MR. THEODORE ELDRIDGE CHILLING:
2186		Theodore Eldridge Chilling [phonetic]
2187		here and I'm a grandson of Miss
2188	01:39:08	Gertrude Jackson. Her oldest
2189		daughter, Juanita, is my mother. I
2190		work for a USDA farm service agency
2191		now, and I actually work with all the
2192		farm commodity programs, disaster
2193		programs throughout Phillips County
2194		which is, since Miss Gertrude is a
2195		landowner, farmer out--I kind of
2196		oversee her land for the government
2197		as well. But it's kind of--I don't
2198	01:39:42	know what word I'm actually wanting
2199		right now, but my grandfather used to
2200		farm here and his brother, I guess at

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2201		the age of 11, I was helping farm,
2202		per se. It was more of a hobby for
2203	01:39:54	me, fun, because I got to drive
2204		tractors at a very young age and we
2205		spent a lot of time with my
2206		grandmother and grandfather spending
2207		the night, be at work, be ready to go
2208		like 5:30 in the morning, so I've
2209		been around farming a long time.
2210		INTERVIEWER: And say a little bit
2211		more about what it was like to be out
2212		working with your elders in the
2213	01:40:25	earth.
2214		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: Yeah, I guess
2215		the main thing I can remember now--
2216		they were all great storytellers that
2217		kind of the reason I've heard a lot
2218		of the stories that Miss Gertrude has
2219		shared, I've heard variations or
2220		something about it, a lot of new
2221		stories also, but they were great
2222		storytellers and it never came off
2223	01:40:48	negative or someone did this or to me
2224		or we're victims. It was more like,
2225		this is just what happened. We woke

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
2226		up one day, this had happened and
2227		this is what we did to get over that,
2228	01:41:02	but it wasn't anything ugly or nasty
2229		about the stories that I heard as far
2230		as retaliation. That had just come
2231		with the times, so I kind of got
2232		their perspective as far as just
2233		another day.
2234		INTERVIEWER: So how do you think
2235		those stories shaped you, who you are
2236		and how you live your life?
2237		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: Well, you
2238	01:41:29	know, not being a victim--you just go
2239		out and whatever you want, you make
2240		your own way. You ask anybody you
2241		think you need to for help, but you
2242		know, you're not really--or I don't
2243		per se wait or require any help, but
2244		I don't look at it as I can go talk
2245		to one person; I can't go talk to
2246		this group or that person. It's
2247		just, you get up, this is what you
2248	01:41:56	want to do, you go about it the best
2249		way you know how and whatever
2250		obstacle may get in your way, you

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
2251		just find your way around it. It's
2252		nothing to dwell on, per se.
2253	01:42:08	INTERVIEWER: What impact would you
2254		say your grandmother has had on this
2255		community?
2256		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: Well, it's
2257		funny but I guess the awareness, per
2258		se, and the opportunity from the way
2259		she describes it nonchalantly, I had
2260		a thought to help kids but in that
2261		it's been hundreds and hundreds of
2262		kids and families that she's affected
2263	01:42:35	just from having the idea and then
2264		maybe someone taking her idea and
2265		building a wall, making it concrete,
2266		something that people can come to and
2267		anyone from the Marvell area that
2268		wants, you know, they might ask who
2269		am I and who's my family, so I can
2270		say well, my other--on my father's
2271		side, I'm an Eldridge, they may or
2272		may not know, but if I say I'm a
2273	01:43:01	Jackson, Gertrude Jackson--oh, yeah,
2274		we know her. That's from the police,
2275		the mayor, state representatives all

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
2276		the way down, they know her and the
2277		family, and so just an awareness of
2278	01:43:17	:what she's done or been behind as
2279		far as community, everybody's aware
2280		of that.
2281		[background noise]
2282		INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.
2283		MS. JACKSON: What I want to say
2284		about the center--it's a meeting
2285		place. This meeting place we have
2286		here, like we passed - - the families
2287		come here and they have all the
2288	01:43:42	recreation here, just every holiday,
2289		it's just the only place and it'll be
2290		packed out, and our little ladies--
2291		you should have seen the decoration
2292		for, what's the night, Halloween?
2293		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: Yeah.
2294		MS. JACKSON: Boy, they had the hair-
2295		-but it was great and they wouldn't
2296		wait until night, they wanted to get
2297		it over at night before night, but it
2298	01:44:05	was just better--I wish they could
2299		have taken a picture of that. And
2300		every time they have different

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
2301		things, they decorate it different to
2302		meet the occasion but the only place
2303	01:44:15	we had a meeting, so I just wanted to
2304		say that it would be packed all
2305		around.
2306		INTERVIEWER: So without this place--
2307		MS. JACKSON: Oh, we wouldn't have
2308		any place to go.
2309		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: No.
2310		MS. JACKSON: The only place.
2311		INTERVIEWER: And why is it so
2312		important for this community to have
2313	01:44:33	such a place?
2314		MS. JACKSON: Very important, because
2315		we wouldn't have anywhere except a
2316		school--then you have to pay to use
2317		the--because it was growing so until-
2318		-and then, okay, let me tell this.
2319		They wouldn't have any parking place.
2320		We used to have parking place, but
2321		after the highway came through,
2322		couldn't park at all, couldn't but
2323	01:44:55	one car get out there, and so they
2324		just have all--I lost that thought,
2325		what I was going to say before that.

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
2326		But anyway, it's just a meeting place
2327		we have that wouldn't--we just
2328	01:45:09	wouldn't have places to meet. Didn't
2329		it seem like you started to ask me
2330		something?
2331		INTERVIEWER: How tight a community
2332		is this?
2333		MS. JACKSON: - - Turn in here.
2334		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: It's not as
2335		tight as it needs to be, but this
2336		center is an example of when the
2337		community was tight and from Miss
2338	01:45:33	Gertrude having been one of the
2339		founders or one of the primary
2340		responsible parties for getting this
2341		center up, since everything that the
2342		minorities did had to come through
2343		here, there's the only place--they
2344		associate this place with her. But
2345		the community was tight as far as
2346		this is one example of when they came
2347		together and did something for
2348	01:46:01	themselves by themselves and it's
2349		still standing. I think because it's
2350		not--we're not tight now, we don't

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
2351		have any other place to go, this is
2352		still here and so it just shows us
2353	01:46:17	that we have a lot more work to do.
2354		INTERVIEWER: Okay.
2355		[background noise]
2356		MALE VOICE 1: - -
2357		INTERVIEWER: Good question. My
2358		colleague here is wondering is this
2359		community center played a role in
2360		starting community centers in other
2361		communities across and nearby.
2362		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: I don't know.
2363	01:46:51	I don't know.
2364		INTERVIEWER: All right.
2365		MS. JACKSON: No, we don't have any
2366		other.
2367		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: No, the West
2368		Helena area has a Boys & Girls Club,
2369		but it's maybe less than five years
2370		old, so this was the only center of
2371		its kind, per se--maybe a 25, even 50
2372		mile radius. So I don't know how
2373	01:47:17	many of those cities actually came
2374		here, but the smaller communities,
2375		which used to be quite a nice

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
2376		population, they would all come here
2377		and especially like she say, when
2378	01:47:31	funerals, you've got reunions and
2379		everybody come back home, they come
2380		to the center.
2381		MS. JACKSON: Family reunions,
2382		whatever.
2383		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: Yeah, so...
2384		INTERVIEWER: Okay, my friends.
2385		FEMALE VOICE 1: Reverend Turner has
2386		something to say.
2387		[background noise]
2388	01:47:52	REVEREND TURNER: We could probably
2389		add to that question that you asked
2390		about us starting or being
2391		instrumental in other communities.
2392		And...
2393		[background noise]
2394		INTERVIEWER: Before we bring you up
2395		to take the mike, are there any
2396		questions you would like to pose to
2397		your grandmother about her specific,
2398	01:48:30	her personal work in the civil rights
2399		movement?
2400		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: Well, did you

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
2401		enjoy it?
2402		MS. JACKSON: I really did.
2403	01:48:38	MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: Yeah.
2404		MS. JACKSON: It was just kind of
2405		like--I can't find the word, but it's
2406		just like, just out there, just in
2407		action--I enjoyed it. What's the
2408		word for that? It wasn't fear. I
2409		guess that's the most thing I could
2410		say--I would never fear for a friend.
2411		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: I can
2412		personally say that I have never
2413	01:49:01	heard a negative story or anything
2414		about fear, it was almost like an
2415		afterthought because when you read
2416		your history books and because this
2417		story wasn't publicized in the area--
2418		I went to the Helena school district
2419		20 miles away, we read in the history
2420		books. I'm like, my family went
2421		through that but it was an
2422		afterthought. I didn't know how
2423	01:49:29	serious it was because it wasn't
2424		talked to in the way that we have to
2425		be careful or this is what happened

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
2426		or you know, don't tell people who
2427		you are because of so-and-so. We
2428	01:49:43	started the center and we helped
2429		people and you know, you don't get
2430		the gist of it, but this is going on
2431		when Martin Luther King and other
2432		people are dying for the very same
2433		things that they're going through but
2434		it just doesn't hit home as being
2435		nothing to fear or even worry about,
2436		per se. Just get up and go to the
2437		center.
2438	01:50:09	MS. JACKSON: Kind of like a
2439		fairytale.
2440		MR. ELDRIDGE CHILLING: Yeah, it was
2441		like a fairytale.
2442		INTERVIEWER: Okay. All right, thank
2443		you for that. Thank you so much.
2444		REVEREND TURNER: I'm not ready that-
2445		-to be taped.
2446		INTERVIEWER: You had a point that
2447		you wanted to make.
2448	01:50:27	FEMALE VOICE 1: The boys and girls
2449		club, or the community center that
2450		came out of or was influenced by this

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
2451		center.
2452		REVEREND TURNER: Yeah. Well, yes, I
2453	01:50:37	do think that there are other centers
2454		that have been influenced from
2455		BGACDC. You have in Marianna,
2456		Arkansas, it's a center there and
2457		it's called the Lee County Community
2458		Development Center, I think it is, in
2459		Marianna. They were influenced and
2460		what I mean by influenced is because
2461		Mrs. Beatrice Shelby, executive
2462		director and Mrs. Gertrude Jackson
2463	01:51:01	have been influenced, have been some
2464		influential women in our community
2465		that other women in other communities
2466		have seen the things that they
2467		produced here in Marvell, and have
2468		begun to work in their communities to
2469		the same, and I would say that
2470		Marianna area which is in Lee County
2471		here in Arkansas, and then there are
2472		several areas over in Mississippi.
2473	01:51:25	We were part of an Arkansas,
2474		Mississippi and a Louisiana
2475		collaborative one time, part of the

Civil Rights History Project

Line#	Timecode	Quote
2476		Foundation of Midsouth, and so there
2477		were several other communities that
2478	01:51:38	were influenced by the things that
2479		had transpired right here in Marvell,
2480		Arkansas. Here in our recent, just a
2481		couple of years ago, our school
2482		system partnered--well, our school
2483		system had to take on another
2484		community. It used to just be the
2485		Marvell community and now it's the
2486		Marvell-Elaine community and so there
2487		are persons in Elaine now thinking
2488	01:52:01	about how they can have a community
2489		development center or some type of
2490		community center there in the Marvell
2491		area, so I would say that there are
2492		plenty of places that we have
2493		traveled around Arkansas and
2494		Louisiana and Mississippi and even
2495		maybe even in some other areas who
2496		have taken their thoughts from what
2497		we do right here at BGACDC. And it's
2498	01:52:24	all because, like I say, we have a
2499		great ambassador in Mrs. Jackson and
2500		of course our executive director--

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Line#	Timecode	Quote
2501		when they go places they're always
2502		talking about BGACDC.
2503	01:52:37	INTERVIEWER: Wonderful. That's very
2504		helpful. Thank you.
2505		MS. JACKSON: Now you all see what
2506		the lord showed him to me when I was
2507		young. That boy is going to grow up
2508		and we're going to be...
2509		[break in audio]
2510		[background noise]
2511		[break in audio]
2512		[background noise]
2513	01:58:19	[audio ends abruptly]
2514		[END afc2010039_crhp0004_mv2.wmv]