

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Freya Rivers

COLLECTION: 4700.0335

IDENTIFICATION: Civil rights activist and LSU alumna, party to desegregation lawsuit

INTERVIEWER: Maxine Crump

SERIES: University History - Integration and the African American Experience

INTERVIEW DATES: July 16, 1993; July 17, 1993

FOCUS DATES: 1700's -1990's

ABSTRACT:

Tape 474

Rivers traces her genealogy from 1736 to present; recounts her father's experiences in World War II; describes father's influence in her life, especially concerning civil rights; struggles to keep clothing business solvent without support from Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce; discusses lack of civil rights action among middle-class blacks and reasons for it; Rivers profoundly affected by her father's efforts to integrate Baton Rouge; remembers the walk at Southern; decides to integrate and attend Lee High; convinces her friends to do the same; despised by white students and teachers at Lee High School; discusses the initial reaction and results of integration in Baton Rouge.

Tape 475

Discusses the desegregation suit; attends LSU and is committed to provide equality; comments on racism at LSU; organizes clinics to prepare voters to register; relationships with professors and students at LSU; transfers to Howard University; marries and returns to LSU in '67-'68; encounters David Duke in Free Speech Alley; experiences racism in Speech and Hearing Department; leaves Speech Therapy and graduates in General Studies in 1971; discusses how the participation in civil rights and integration movements has changed her life; racism as it is played out at LSU and Michigan State in 1996; students' attitudes today toward social causes; teaching from an Afro-centric perspective to inner-city kids; comments on the influence she has had on inner-city kids.

Tape 476

Proudly speaks of "Showoffs," a youth program in Baton Rouge that provided an outlet for kids on the weekends; discusses the reasons she ran for Secretary of State; voting behavior among African-Americans; Jesse Jackson's influence on Louisiana voters and on party platforms; assesses President and Mrs. Clinton; suggests reasons for the resurgent interest in Malcolm X; discussed the different challenges facing African-American males and females; comments about the future of race relations in America.

TAPES: 3 (T474, T475, T476)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 4 hours

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: Session I: 59 pages; Session II: 100 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None