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Interviewee (print) Interviewer (print)

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OFFICE RICHARD A Fleming Ft Mckellan AL

on the date(s) of 28 MAR 95

for the oral history collection being compiled by Dr. Marshall.

Joyce G. McKenzie

Interviewee's signature

Address 2010 Canterbury Square
ANNISTON AL 36207

Phone 835-5320

Date 28 Mar 95

Richard A. Fleming

Interviewer's signature

Address 605 MOUNTAIN ST N.E.
JACKSONVILLE AL 36265

Phone 435-2909

Date 28 Mar 95

INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: JOYCE G. McKENZIE M/F Female
 Address: 2010 CANTABURY SQUARE, ANNISTON AL 36207.
 Phone number(s): 205 835 5320
 Approximate age or date of birth: 52
 Mother's Name: IVY BLAKE GRAY
 Father's Name: STANLEY GRAY
 Places lived and when: NEW YORK 1967-1990
MONTIGO BAY Jamaica
 Education: BSN
 Religion: SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST
 Business, political and social memberships (past and present) _____
 Present occupation: OFFICER US ARMY
 Former occupations: Registered Nurse
 Special Skills: _____
 Major Accomplishments: _____
 National Events in which interviewee has participated: _____
 Local Events in which interviewee has participated: _____
 National born U.S. citizen? Yes No
 Naturalized Citizen: Yes No Date: 1979
 Country from which he/she emigrated: JAMAICA
 Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in the possession of the interviewee: _____
 Individuals recommended by the interviewee who might be candidates for an oral history interview: _____
 Additional information: _____

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Interviewee: Joyce G. McKenzie
Interviewer: Richard A. Fleming
28 March 95
Office of Richard A. Fleming
SUBJECT: Immigration and
Racial Discrimination

*Age - 52 years
born in Jamaica*

1. Subject matter dealing with the immigration -
 - A. Background information on why she wanted to immigrate
 - B. Obtaining a visa
 - C. Point of Entry into the United States
 - D. Citizenship process

2. Subject matter dealing with racial discrimination-
 - A. First encounter with discrimination upon arrival to U.S.
 - B. Who were the people discriminating against you
 - C. Dr. Martin Luther King

ORAL HISTORY

Rick Fleming
HY 202, Telecourse
Dr. Marshall

Joyce G. McKenzie, a black, 52 year old, Jamaican immigrant was interviewed by Richard A. Fleming at his office at Ft. McClellan, Alabama on 28 March 95. Mrs. McKenzie was interviewed on her immigration process, and racial discrimination she encountered after entering the United States during the 1960's and 1970's.

Mrs. McKenzie was born in Montigo Bay, Jamaica.. She was born to Stanley and Ivy Gray in 1943. Mrs. McKenzie immigrated to the United States in 1967. Her immigration to the United States was for educational and financial reasons. She attended college in Jamaica where she graduated as a diploma nurse or three year registered nurse (U.S. equivalent).

At the time Mrs McKenzie immigrated to the United States in 1967, the U.S. was at war in Vietnam. Mrs. McKenzie stated that the United States had an "open immigration policy where people with skills could apply for a visa at the immigration office". She applied at the American embassy in Jamaica and received a permanent visa. She stated that "within 3 months I had my visa". Mrs. McKenzie stated that because of the Vietnam war a lot of U.S. skilled professionals that had been sent to Vietnam. Due to the war there was a need for skilled professionals in the United States and therefore obtaining a visa was made easier to obtain. She goes on to say that while the process of obtaining a visa was made easier the United States still did finger printing and did background checks. McKenzie said, " ...they (U.S.) did want anybody there who was a criminal~~s~~ and such and if you had a record you couldn't come"..."they (U.S.) wanted to make sure that when you came here that you would get employment and you would not be a

responsibility to the United States Government." Under this "war time" policy, Mrs. McKenzie, who was a nurse encountered no problems in obtaining a visa to the United States.

To become a citizen of the United States, Mrs. McKenzie had to live in the United States for wait a period of five years. Joyce stated that she waited a long time to become a U.S. citizen because she did not want to give up her citizenship of her native Jamaica. The main reason for her becoming a U.S. citizen was that she had a brother who had immigrated to Canada and wanted to come to the United States and the only way he could do that was for her to become a U.S. citizen and then sponsor him into the United States.

Joyce's journey to the United States was scary in the fact that she was traveling to a new country alone and ~~it~~ was the first time she had ever flown. She landed in New York, JFK airport, where she was processed for immigration to the United States. Joyce never went to or processed through Ellis Island like so many other immigrants. At the airport all immigration papers were collected and her passport stamped. She had very little problems processing through immigration but encountered some difficulties during customs. She was trying to smuggle in native foods from Jamaica and customs was trying to take they food away, but as she said " I out smart them (Customs), and I was able to keep my mangos." Joyce was met at the airport by her sponsor, another brother who had immigrated to the U.S. before ^{she} her. Her sister in law got Joyce a job at Memundays Hospital where she got a permit from Albany to work in New York as a Registered Nurse.

When Joyce was asked if she had to attend citizenship classes she said "No". When she went to become a U.S. citizen she stated that they asked a few questions like, " Who is the President of the United States?, who is the governor of New York?" and some other social questions. She did not have to attend any formal classes or training on American history. Joyce

did not have to know practically anything about the United States to become a citizen. She did have to have her finger prints, photo done again and renounce her Jamaican citizenship. Joyce stated that because of the war in Vietnam the citizenship process was fairly simple. This again was due to shortages of skilled personnel due to the war in Vietnam. Mrs. McKenzie said "I feel terrible" when asked if she had to renounce her Jamaican citizenship. She explained that Jamaica does not grant a dual citizenship like some other countries and therefore when she travels back to Jamaica she is treated by the Jamaican government as a tourist in her native country.

Mrs. McKenzie first settled in the Brooklyn area of New York city. Her neighborhood was primarily black. She stated that there were a few other West Indies people ^{who} that lived in the neighborhood. There were ¹ specialty in the area so that she could enjoy foods of her native Jamaica. She lived in an apartment, ¹ this was not something she was used to since she had always lived in a house in Jamaica. Her new home in Brooklyn was far less desirable than her Jamaican home due to the rodent infested apartment and the Jewry that surrounded her neighborhood. She stated that there ^{was} where other people in the neighborhood that ^{were} where from the West Indies and ^{as heard} there were no clashes with any type of culture. The only differences in the neighborhood that she could recall were with the Jewish people, more specifically the Hasidic Jews. These differences were due to the fact that the neighborhood was primarily black and the Hasidic Jews had their synagogues there and refused to move, as other non-Hasidic Jews had. Joyce said "The Jewish people always feel that they own the area and they have a right to certain things and blacks had no rights".

Joyce G. McKenzie like other immigrants was faced with many challenges that the United States puts to its new citizens. The process of obtaining a visa, passage to America, renouncing your native citizenship, inter city life, and cultural diversity. These are all new and

unfamiliar surroundings for the immigrant. Joyce's experience with the immigration process may have been eased due to the Vietnam war but the life she began was unlike that of her home country Jamaica. First and foremost is that Jamaica is primarily black, has different values and cultural lifestyles, and the overcrowding city is not something she was accustomed to.

There was something else Joyce was not accustomed to, discrimination. Her first recollection of being discriminated was by the Jew^s when she was living in Brooklyn. She talks about a rivalry between the blacks and Jews. Mrs. McKenzie recalls how the Jews always congregated together in their community and had look out people whom she called "whistle blowers". Whistle blowers were, as she described, just that, people armed with whistles on the lookout for blacks who may be entering the Jew^{ry}. ^{in neighborhood} Once a whistle was blown, Jewish men would come out in their "hats" and run the black(s) out of the neighborhood. ^{Wow!}

The apartment that she was living in was owned by a Jew and, according to Joyce, ^{she} did not want to fix up the building because blacks were living there. She recalls having spent winters without heat, roaches, rats and other vermin primarily due to her and others being black. Taking the owner to court was sometimes the only recourse to get basic human facilities. She recalls that even the police were blind to crime in the black communities unless there was a murder. The Jewry, according to Mrs. McKenzie was the merchants inside the black community, but at the same time they were taking the blacks' money there was hatred towards the blacks.

Mrs. McKenzie lived in Brooklyn for 10 years and during this time got married to her present husband also a Jamaican immigrant and had children. To provide her children with a better place to grow up in, Joyce and her family moved to Queens district. The neighborhood that she moved into had less crime, but racism was still abundant. She recalls that ^{she} herself and another Jamaican girl were the first blacks to move into a predominantly Italian neighborhood. Joyce got

up one morning shortly after she moved into the neighborhood to find her house had eggs thrown at it. Shortly thereafter the neighbors started to move out of the neighborhood. One woman^u sold her house and moved only four to five blocks away to a predominantly Italian neighborhood. Joyce recalled that right up until the time she left Queens that there was one block that no blacks were able to move into. Mrs. McKenzie sent her children to a predominantly white school or more specifically the children were "bused" in to the school. She remembers going to a school meeting and as she got off the bus someone called her a "nigger". As the neighbors moved out of the neighborhood, other West Indies people started to move in. She said that "I felt better when they (Italians) moved out".

When Mrs. McKenzie immigrated to the United States she did not know anything about Martin Luther King. Since Jamaica did not have the racial problems that the United States had, Martin Luther King was unknown in Jamaica. Her first recollection of M.L.K. was that of the civil right marches in the south. It was shortly after she arrived in the United States that Martin Luther King was killed. Due to this she never was a follower of Dr. King. She did know about Malcolm X since she went to a black college since his wife was a chairperson of the college. Mrs. McKenzie was not a follower of the black leaders during the 60's and 70's.

Joyce McKenzie like many other immigrants maintains her native culture through the rearing of her children. She has taken her family back to Jamaica many times, regularly cooks native Jamaican food and fosters her Jamaican culture through her children. Joyce joined the United States Army because she admired the uniforms and parades. Her being in the military is an opportunity that she would never have had in Jamaica since women are not allowed in the military.

When did she join? After the children grew up?

Mrs. McKenzie still has a Jamaican accent and is still very much Jamaican regardless of

what the United States and Jamaican governments claim. She would like to move back to Jamaica but because of finances would be unable to maintain a home there. Through the 28 years of living in America, trials and tribulations and the discrimination she has encountered, she is not only Jamaican but a very sweet human being.

Very good, informative
interview & paper
- Was a unity -
- smooth at sentence
- structure
- grammar
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