

Interview with Mrs. Janise Clay

April 22, 2010

Interviewers: Stephen Antalis, Sterling Hill, and Sharpe Sablon

Stephen: How long have you been attending Macedonia?

Mrs. Clay: I've been here fifty-one years.

Stephen: How has the atmosphere of the church changed since you've arrived?

Mrs. Clay: Well, we've taken in a lot more members down through the years. When the church was on Anthony Rd., we were closer and more as a family. You know so now we have two services. One service is early morning service, it's closer to me in spirit than the second service, the larger congregation.

Stephen: What was the church's stance would you say during the Civil Rights Movement?

Mrs. Clay: Ok, it was a place of a safe haven for the black community. It was a place where blacks would come together to gain strength from each other by prayer and fellowship with one another.

Stephen: What did the church do during the Civil Rights Movement? Did it coordinate marches or anything?

Mrs. Clay: Yes, and our pastor E.S. Evans was one of those people that was in the marches as far as coordinating them and marching in them himself. He was also jailed on several occasions back in the early part of the segregation.

Stephen: Did you participate in the marches yourself?

Mrs. Clay: No.

Stephen: Did you agree with him?

Mrs. Clay: Some of them, the peaceful marches, some of the things that the blacks wanted just the same rights and the same privileges as any other human being would want so for the most part yes.

Stephen: Why didn't you agree with some?

Mrs. Clay: Well, it got to the point where they were violent or they were not including all people, all black people. Then those was some of the things that I would say I have problems with and not be a part of.

Stephen: You didn't march, right?

Mrs. Clay: Right .

Stephen: Did you actually try and affiliate yourself with the coordination with things like supporting in any manner?

Mrs. Clay: Well, when it first started out I was rather young. The marching, and I do remember sitting in the back of the buses, and I remember the white and colored water fountains, those kinds of things that at restaurants we had to go around to the back or in the back part to order, I remember those kinds of things, but just as a participant in a march, no.

Stephen: What could you tell us about your life during this time?

Mrs. Clay: Well, it was pretty peaceful. I went to an all black school cause integration had not taken place at that time, and I didn't know much about the mixing until later on in my work experience, where we were working together white and black working together. But when I went to school there was black schools and white schools. So my high school was ----- and it was totally black it wasn't integrated until later in sixty five or sixty six I think.

Stephen: You said originally when you were young, you didn't really get involved. Did you do stuff when you grew up? Or when you got to about teenage years? Or do you remember any of your friends doing things?

Mrs. Clay: No, cause at that time we were...there were some young younger children that seventeen, eighteen, nineteen that participated in some of the marches, the march on Washington that I heard about but taking place myself in the marches, no.

Stephen: What were some of the stories you heard about them?

Mrs. Clay: About the marching?

Stephen: Yes ma'am.

Mrs. Clay: Well there were marches where they went to different places to try to integrate, try to get civil rights for everybody. Where water hoses were thrown on, dogs was after them, those kinds of stories, and there were some that were beat and had to be hospitalized in that era, but those were the kinds of things that went on. It's unfair treatment to the blacks.

Stephen: Did your parents have any major involvements during this time?

Mrs. Clay: I don't remember any stories of my uh, there was a boycott one time. I remember my mother talking about they didn't ride the bus for a certain number of days or a certain time, and they were either being boycotted, I mean bused, I mean carpooled to jobs and those kinds of things, but they just refused to ride the bus because of that.

Sharpe: Do you think the church's involvement was at the level that it should have been during this time? Do you think they did enough towards civil rights? Or do you think they could have done more?

Mrs. Clay: I think they was involved to a certain extent because there was the bigger churches, if you would call them bigger churches, that was involved and the pastors was involved, so they went to the meetings they went to support. They supported financially and those kinds of things, but I'm not sure how much more they could have done. The churches, other than financial support and just supporting the marches or involvement at that time.

Stephen: Do you remember if any of that actually began at the church or was coordinated at the church first?

Mrs. Clay: It was coordinated first at the church. Well, I heard it was coordinated first at the church because a group of church people got together and decided that something needed to be done about fair treatment for all people. And due to the fact of Martin Luther King being a nonviolent person wanting fair treatment for everybody. That's when the ministers got involved and it was started at the church, at one of the churches the black churches.

Stephen: What did the ministers do when it started to become violent?

Mrs. Clay: I'm not sure about that involvement other than there were times that they would have special prayer meetings. They would have special fellowships for to gain support or just to gain some guidance from God and how to direct them and what matters they needed to take care of.

Stephen: Did they agree with any of the violence at all, or was it all just preaching nonviolence?

Mrs. Clay: Well, they was preaching the main verse of it was nonviolence but then there were, I'm sure as in all rallies, there were some ministers that didn't take hardly to the nonviolent approach in whatever and during the rallies and marches.

Sharpe: You said you disagreed with some of the marches and such. Did it have to do with who they allowed to march? In Macon were there whites that weren't allowed to march?

Mrs. Clay: Everybody was allowed to march. And there were marches that were white. That marched along with aside the preachers or Rev. Mallone, Rev. E.S. Evans, and there were whites that stood right beside them.

Sterling: Do you think young people today tend to miss out on the importance of the Civil Rights Movement?

Mrs. Clay: I tell my grandchildren all the time that they miss out on a lot of things, a lot of benefits now that they are getting or that they received now that they weren't always free for us as a black people. So I think that yeah young people do miss out on a lot of the history cause it's not in your history books. It's not, you know, it's something that your gonna have to take a interest in yourself and just to find and dig that history that all people not only blacks need to be aware and need to know about.

Sharpe: Do you think it's taken for granted now?

Mrs. Clay: I think it's taken for granted, yes.

Stephen: What would you suggest to fix it?

Mrs. Clay: To as young people take it for granted now? I think they need to be taught more in the schools, and I think it needs to be in, maybe, the churches could take a role in observing black history and then telling the stories that grandmamma told and let the young people know what actually happened. What lessons they have now of the things that they have received that was not...we could not always take part in that.