

560123-007

DATE: January 23, 1956
 PLACE: 1405 Marguarite Street
 Age: 55-60
 SEX: Female
 Occup: Music Instructor

INTERVIEWER: Willie M. Lee
 RESPONDENT: Mrs. Edna King

Interviewer: I'm Willie Lee, and I came from Nashville to study this bus protest since newspaper reports are not always reliable. I go into different neighborhoods and ask persons about the protest. In this block I chose your house, so I'd appreciate it if you'd tell me all about the protest. . . . What has happened and what is happening now.

Respondent: "I know very little about it except what I've read in the papers, however, I can tell you how I feel about it. I don't think the people know what they are doing. They went about this thing in the wrong way and secondly, they asked for too much. They know the southern tradition and, they should have asked for one thing instead of being like the dog with a bone and his shadow. He was so greedy that he tried to get the bone his shadow had and he ended up with out a bone. I said that to say, Miss, asking for three things they are not going to get anything.

Interviewer: What three things did they ask for?

Respondent: "Oh, they want first come, first serve. Negro bus drivers and more courteous white drivers."

Interviewer: Which do you think they should have asked for?

Respondent: "I think first come, first serve is all they should have asked for. I'm for that if they do it in the right way. I was embarrassed once on the bus. Two white men asked me to get up, and I didn't move, then the bus driver asked me up. I got off the bus, went down to the bus company and reported the driver, and I asked the manager where were colored people suppose to sit. He was very nice and that driver was taken off the Jackson Street line. And since this mess started, I started through Oak Parks and the policeman yelled 'Good Lord, don't come through here.' If my daughters had no pleaded so I would have kept on through. When I got home I called Sellers and his secretary told me- that he did not handle that information, so she gave me the name of the person to see. When he first started talking he said:

'Yes man, no, Man;'

But when I said, I'm a colored citizen: his tone became very indignant. I told him I was a good citizen. I owned almost a block out here, have been living here all my life and have been going through "Oak's Park". I pay taxes just like white citizens, and I wanted to know why? I wouldn't go through that Park

He said: 'Niggers can go through that park'.

"I asked him to repeat what he said, and he said the same thing again. I was really angry by then, so I told him that I am not a nigger and that he was acting more like a nigger. Then he apologized saying that he said Negro and I must have misunderstood him. I haven't had any more trouble coming through the Park since then."

- 2 -

Interviewer: You have mentioned several times that the people did not go about this thing in the right way. What do you suggest they should have done?

Respondent: "Well, in the first place the ministers have no business in this and turning the church into a political organization. Some academic building over on the Campus (Alabama State Teachers College) should be used for meetings and the white and colored intelligentsia should decide this thing. These poor white folks and some of these ministers don't know what they are doing. The principals and teachers should run it. They should get together discuss it then vote on it and do what ever the majority says. I sure wish it would end? I'm tired of it. I've lost about half of my music students. And other business people I've talked to are losing too. I bet the minister wouldn't want the members of their churches to do to them what they are doing to the bus company. I wonder how they would feel if their member refuse to come to church and to pay dues. They wouldn't like it at all. And the people are only holding themselves down by not riding the buses. They should go on and end this thing, I'm sick of it. I'm loosing money everyday.

"These minister should stop telling people what to do. They should let the buses run and let these ride who want to. The first day they struck, my boy was fixing to get on a bus and a lady dared him to get on, she said that she would cut him if he did. Way out on the out-skirts of town, I have heard that quite a few folks have been beaten up, but I don't know how true it is. I just don't believe in telling people what to do. I think for myself, and if I want to ride a bus, I ride. That's why I don't go to any of the meetings because I'll speak my mind. You know I'm a member of Rev. King's church. I play the organ. One of my friends told me that if I went to a meeting and told them how I felt, that they would throw me out. So I take no part in it. This is a democratic country and I have a right to say what I want to. If the people could hear me now, I know they'd crucify me, but I've always thought for myself and I teach my children to think for themselves. My daughters came home one day and said;

(Mother I'm never going to buy from the Fair (Montgomery Fair Department Store) again. The people are going to boy-cott it because they fired Mrs. Parks.)

"I told her not to be a fool, that if she wanted something, don't let a group of people tell you where to buy it. Its more to buy from the Fair than it is to sit in the back of shoe stores and drink water out of segregated fountains in other stores. I'm no "Uncle Tom" woman, but I believe there is a way to do anything. I've had people tell me that I'm thinking Ante-bellum time."

Interviewer: Do you think this is favorable to the Colored people at all?

Respondent: "Well, yes, it is. For one thing it shows that they can stick together. What ever they want I'm for them because it's my race however, like I said, I would have done things differently. My church, Dexter Avenue Baptist and most of the clubs play big parts

- 3 -

and I don't argue with them. They can do just what they want to, but I'm loosing money and I sure wish the're start the buses back."

Interviewer: What do you think the accomplishments will be?

Respondent: "There won't be any. Sellers hates Negroes and he'll never give in. What the Negroes in Montgomery should do is vote. About 45,000 people here are colored and only 2 or 3 thousands, if not that many bove. A man in office don't have to worry about colored votes, because there are not enough voting. If they use their voting power, they can get almost anything."

Interviewer: I see. Well tell me this, how do whites in stores and various place treat you since this thing started?

Respondent: "They all treat me very nice same as the always did. I haven't been downtown very many times, but thos few times I did to, the clerks treated me the same."

Interviewer: It has been a pleasure talking with you, Mam, and I appreciate you helpfulness. Thank you very much.