

Lorraine James 1-6-16, née Jones, b. 1936

The interview takes place at 10:00 AM on January 6th.

Introduction

Lorraine James seems to be a naturally polite, caring, and community-minded person, hesitant to disturb others by emphasizing her own hardships and sorrows, or those of those she knows: She emphasizes that she looks on those things as a natural part of life. Often, when she realizes she has said something that might be taken in a negative way, she will mitigate it by explaining the brighter side that she always seems to be able to see.

At the beginning she takes a fairly passive role, waiting for questions and then answering them to the best of her knowledge, although for a while (like all of us!) she is a little slow to come up with the names of people she may not have thought about or seen for decades. As she settles into the situation, however, memories start to flood back, and she takes a more active role. [sbh wished several times that Mrs. James had been given her choice of direction or asked probing questions rather than questions on new topics.]

About 45 minutes in, the interviewer poses a question about segregation in Orange, and at this point Mrs. James finds herself talking about a part of life she has apparently thought deeply about. As she describe the differences between life under the segregated system of earlier decades and life now, she reveals something that none of the other participants have quite spelled out, perhaps through an excess of delicacy in front of a white interlocutor: the pain, or deep discomfort, caused by the anger and hatred that is being bandied about right now, today, and directed at African Americans. She experiences that as something new and unfamiliar, and becomes quite vehement when she thinks about bigoted efforts to block the current administration.

She did not feel the object of hatred earlier on, she explains, and, having grown up in a segregated system, had accustomed herself to it. She seems to feel that most people accepted the system. She felt comfortable negotiating her life within the boundaries that had been set, and those boundaries did not prevent her from socializing with white people. She specifically mentions hosting a party that white people attended along with her other friends. This is not to say that segregation was 'better,' but that, despite the hard work of so many people, the mindset is still there, too many people do not see the need to keep pushing ahead, and the current backlash is difficult to endure.

Early years and life in the community

Except for a couple of years in East Orange, Mrs. James grew up in Orange, starting on Burnside Street. (See below.)

In 1948 her family moved to Prince Street, which "90% of the people [who] live in Orange don't know where Prince Street is." She explains that her house was on the

corner, "right across from our church." The interviewer asks, "Just before Oakwood?" and she says, "Yes, exactly."

[Mrs. James seems to say that her street is just at the end of the (?)military park(?), but I (sbh) cannot locate that. Prince is a short dead end street parallel to Oakwood and a block west of it. The eastern side of Prince is largely taken up by the First Fellowship Cathedral, which sits at 70 Main Street where South Main and Main converge, about 8 buildings down from the current location of Cotton's Funeral Home. This is not the church Mrs. James attends, however, because later on she will identify another church, the Church of the Epiphany, at 105 Main, as hers. This church seems to serve two congregations. It sits on the other side of Main Street from Prince, but halfway down the block toward the west, between Hillyer (Oakwood) and Park.]

"So when you talk about community, we always, were a part of the community, but [because of the hidden location of the street], you're kind of disconnected from day one." [00:01:00] She liked living there: "It was quiet, private." Her family was the first African American family to move there, but others moved in over the years.

"That's when we started going to the Center," which she explains was a recreation center on Parrow whose name has escaped her for the moment, but she recalls that Jesse Miles and Garnet Henderson ran the activities. She doesn't know who built it, as it was already in operation when she moved to Prince Street. [In the Oakwood Avenue interview, Tom Puryear and Gordon Roberts explain that the Friendship House was a city-run recreation center involving Jesse Miles and a Miss Henderson.]

"That's how I started getting, ahm, used to, being on that [Oakwood] side of town [away from her former Burnside neighborhood]." [00:02:29]

At this point, she again mentions Burnside Street, explaining that it was close to the border with West Orange, and to get there you would proceed on Day Street "as far as it goes" and take a left and another left at the light, adding that it was in the neighborhood of the Rosedale Cemetery.

[Burnside Street runs NE from Washington Street and runs roughly parallel to Watchung Avenue, but two blocks to the SE. It proceeds in a northeasterly direction to Burnside Place, where it is now closed to vehicular traffic at an underpass running beneath a road connecting two sections of Rosedale Cemetery. On the other side of the closed portion, the road runs along the edge of the cemetery, turning east to continue doing that, and finally ends (or takes the name 'Walsh Avenue') about a block after passing across Thomas Street. On a historical map Burnside seems to continue out of the Fifth Ward to end at North Park Street (which at that time ran into Ridge Street) in the First Ward.]

Mrs. James did not attend Oakwood Avenue School, "I guess because I was so involved in Cleveland Street School, and I only had another year and a half, to go." Because she was so close to finishing, "Mr. Bunce and company" were kind enough to

let her and a cousin stay on, so they would walk up to Day and take the No. 20 bus, a very slow one. as she recalls. [00:03:53]

Mrs. James and the interviewer briefly discuss a current bus route, they think it might be the 93 bus, and where it goes.

Her younger brother went to Oakwood Avenue. Asked if she noticed any major differences between the two schools, she is stumped, but compares the two neighborhoods by saying there was no recreation center near her old neighborhood, although they had a playground: "But we didn't have, the closeness of, being under, one roof, you know, with your neighbors, or, your school chums, or anything like that." She did nevertheless make friends in her old neighborhood that she still has. [00:05:19]

Friends and associates from old times

These include Maxie McRimmon and his wife Otris Smith McRimmon, now at 192 Reynold Street, right down the street from the former Peppermint Lounge, in a house built by McRimmon's father; he and his father also built another house on the same street. Mr. McRimmon should know a lot about the history of Orange, she says. The father, "Mr. Mac," was a contractor, and the son worked with him until he went away to West Virginia State. [00:07:21]

The younger Mr. McRimmon, in his eighties now, was a code enforcement officer fifteen or twenty years back, she adds, and exclaims, "He knows Pat!" apparently referring to a conversation that took place before the tape begins. The interviewer suggests that Mr. McRimmon may have been one of the first people in Orange to work in that capacity.

The McRimmons were also responsible for a building (now gone) at the corner of Main and Hillyer; it was built for the Metropolitan Insurance Company; a laundromat occupies that corner today. [This must be the Sudzy Laundromat, at approximately 50 Main; a parking lot takes up the actual corner space.] [00:08:09]

The interviewer states that he spoke with Paul Ray, who said his Dad used to lay streets and do other similar public works. Mrs. James says she and Paul were in the same class, and graduated from Orange High School together in 1954. She does not have a yearbook "here;" it is in Asbury Park, but she can get one and bring it next week if it would be helpful.

"But you got to sign in blood for it!" she says. (Laughter) The interviewer says (still laughing) maybe he'll get Chris M to do that. [00:08:09]

In 1954 OHS was still on Central Avenue, where the middle school is now. The interviewer says you can still see "Orange High School" carved into the stone of the building and Mrs. James agrees. He asks if the school was big, and she says, laughing, "Well, we felt like it was." Her graduating class had more than 200 students. [00:09:44]

Her family remained at 27 Prince Street, and the Prince Street house is still in family

hands, as it has been since 1948. That's where she parks now when she comes up to Orange from Asbury Park, her current home ever since, in 1977, she inherited a business closer to that town. Mrs. James knew the grandmother of the next door neighbor, Diane Reynolds, at 21 or 23 Prince Street, who is now a grandmother herself, and has also been there "quite a long time." [00:10:55]

Political Activities

In response to a question about political activities, Mrs. James says she was involved in CRG, Citizens for Representative Government, something she has not thought about for years. CRG worked on getting John Alexander onto the Board of Education, "because we had nobody who looked like us—anywhere." They also worked to get Jones elected as a councilman. The interviewer states that he is reading a book that describes a lot of the "tenseness" of that time, and the fact that it was hard to get work other than cleaning and similar menial jobs. "You didn't work in the office, you cleaned it," he says, as she states, "That was about it. That was about it. Yep. It was poor pickings,—" [00:12:27]

"And we worked *really* hard, and Ern Thompson was a major, major, contributor, leader, in the whole effort. I mean, he just—If you didn't do what he said, or described, then, you know, it wasn't going to work, it just wasn't, he just was so knowledgeable, and I never really knew where he got all the knowledge (inaudible) union connected. And, um, he just, he was brilliant." Later on she adds that he knew a lot of people, and his wife was helpful too.

Answering a question about a most memorable moment, Mrs. James recalls an odd gesture or position Thompson would take with one of his hands when he was seated, and she never knew if that hand hurt or bothered him for some reason. She then goes on to say that if you listen you will learn, and everyone listened to him. She names people like Dr. Kingslow and Dr. Alexander, adding that she can picture others but the names are not coming immediately to mind. She was in her twenties or thirties at the time, "and everybody else was older." [00:14:10]

She recalls that Becky worked with two other groups trying for a similar goal [apparently to get Jones onto the council]. Her own group, CRG, often met at Ben Jones' home, at ~153 Central Place, a couple of doors from her in-laws. Jones had an office on Central Avenue, between Hickory and Oakwood.

Historic places in Orange

The interviewer describes a plan for highlighting some of the significant historic places in Orange so that passersby would get a good sense of the way certain efforts and events in the past produced the present of today, and explains that the term being used for these "rallying points" is 'anchor institutions.' He also suggests organizing a "day of recognition," for some of those places.

Mrs. James responds that the ice cream parlor, maybe Whitlock's, on the corner of Parrow next to the pool hall, was taken down during the construction of the new housing

there. In response to a question about places that still exist, she says most everything is gone: the [recreation] Center, the "Ys"—all four "Ys," explaining that "the one for *us*, was on Oakwood Avenue." She then says that the "Y" on Main Street next to the church was for the white boys, and there was a similar girls' "Y" [location not clear] and she's not sure if "we" ever went up to one of those facilities, but she doesn't think so, and adds that once the center was gone, and the "Ys," there was no place to go, nothing to do, but "it [the center] was at Oakwood School for a while, but I don't know what happened to that." [00:20:00]

The interviewer mentions the Friendship House, and Mrs. James agrees that "We used to do a lot there as kids....Girl Scouts...dancing classes" and have outings like hayrides, although she had to convince her father to let her go on a hayride and she also had to sit through "a lecture first." She says her father "could lecture about anything....all the dos and don'ts." [00:21:17]

The interviewer says he is still trying to identify some historical locations, and she asks if he means mainly locations lost to 280, or any historical locations. He says both, but primarily "locations that 280 wiped away." Mrs. James comes up with Shorty's barber shop, which "had to move to the corner of Pierson Street for a while." [Shorty Thomas's barber shop is mentioned in the Roberts, Doggett, and Harris interviews, and Gordon Roberts also says Shorty moved from Hickory to Pierson.]

More old acquaintances

About Mr. Thomas himself, she says "He's around," and she "just saw him the other day." [00:22:10]

The interviewer says Paul [Ray] told him Shorty lives "in the building at the far end" of the senior housing, and Mrs. James says that he is at 400, and would be a good source "because he's always been politically connected to somebody." She adds that he worked with Becky and another man whose name Becky will remember. They were promoting him as a council person but she doesn't know if he ever got to be one. [00:23:00]

The interviewer asks if she recalls Cornell Aarons, and she says she was in school with him, but not in the same class that she recalls. The interviewer says Aarons is a first cousin to Condoleezza Rice and Rice's grandfather is a brother of Paul Ray. In response to a question about family relationships in Orange, she agrees that a lot of people are related, mentioning family reunions, and the fact that she and a friend both trace back to Alabama. The interviewer states that a number of Orange families came from either the Carolinas or Virginia, although he's not sure which, but his grandmother is from LaFayette, Georgia. Mrs. James adds that she used to think all the people in North Carolina came to NJ, because she met so many from that state. [00:25:28]

Mrs. James now mentions another person named Ann Ray, whose father Mr. Hardy had a tailor shop, Hardy's Tailor, that was taken by 280. The interviewer concludes that there must have been two tailors in the Oakwood Avenue neighborhood, and Mrs. James

responds that Hardy [unlike her father] did not do cleaning.

The interviewer mentions a Triangle [tailor], and Mrs. James says that was her father, Ben Jones, who was not related to Ben Jones the councilman.

[This clears up a misunderstanding on the Oakwood Avenue interview, where Susan Ray mumbles something about a Triangle Tailor, which, as can be seen here, was not her father's establishment, but a separate one. Gordon Roberts mentions a third tailor named Fitchett, and Walter Preston refers to Fitchett's as a cleaner/tailor.]

Her father and Jesse Miles were best friends, and "used to support the teams...." by renting places and buying equipment. "They would have, ahm, the basketball game, and then followed by the dance, you know. Yeah. I couldn't wait to get old enough to go, and that time they didn't have them anymore." (Rueful laughter.)

[On Jesse Miles, see above on the Friendship House, and the Gordon Roberts interview, where he is described as a four sport athlete who later coached the Orange Triangles.] [27:30]

The interviewer says that he only recently realized that the high school gym was named for Jesse Miles. Mrs. James says "That was a big thing," and recalls giving her sister (visiting from North Carolina) a ride home from church and telling her about it.

The interviewer suggest that it would be a good to share the story of the gym with today's high school students. Mrs. James agrees, saying that Jesse was "a wonderful guy, and into sports with the kids, and—very *quiet*. You never heard—I, I knew him a long time, never heard him speak out in anger, never heard him raise his voice. I mean, he was just a, calm, man." She also recalls that he lived a long life. [29:11]

The interviewer asks if Jesse Miles and her father lost property to 280, and she points to the Center. Asked "So what did he do?" she responds that she's not sure, but does recall competitive sport events like track, with trophies, etc., in Central Playground. The interviewer mentions a photo of Central Playground in which the gate is not there, and comments that, without the gate and a fence around it, the park seems much bigger. Mrs. James mentions an additional fence, "that big high fence" that she thinks must be to catch baseballs, and the interviewer agrees.

Construction of 280 and the Orange that was

Asked if she "was around" during the construction of 280, Mrs. James asks him to remind her of the years involved. She says that in the late sixties she was "probably around, but not paying that much attention." She was in the middle of a divorce at the time. [31:33]

To jog her memory, the interviewer, perhaps forgetting that Prince Street runs off Main Street, asks if she recalls having to take a long detour just to get to Main Street. She then recalls that in 1967/68 she lived on Ward Street [which is parallel to Main Street but

two blocks farther from the freeway.] She does not say where she lived in 1965, when she was in the process of getting a divorce, but does mention William Street, and explains that if you go across Park Street William is the first block, Ward the second, a couple of blocks "over" from MacDonalds. [All of these places are on the far side of the freeway.]

In 1970 she moved to a corner building at 232 Ivy Court, "off South Center a block back from Central Avenue." [Ivy Court is south of the freeway, and "back" here means back toward the freeway and the several streets on the far side of the freeway where she had lived.] Now recalling her life at the time, she suggests she does not remember going back and forth because she worked "downtown," and she's "not a shopper." She does recall going up and down Central Avenue going to work. **[33:41]**

She and the interviewer agree that Central Avenue was "definitely upscale" at that time. She mentions 'Footnotes,' a shoe store she loved, although she is not absolutely sure of the name, and Franklin Simon. At that time you could window shop in the literal sense. [Today, many storefronts on Central Avenue make use of metal roll down security shutters.] **[34:55]**

The interviewer asks about movie theaters, and she mentions the Palace in Orange or East Orange, and the Embassy and "one up there by, uh—actually down the street, in the area where MacDonalds is here, and down a bit." The interviewer asks if it was called (?) "Pic" (?) and she thinks it was, adding that the Hollywood reopened for a short period, but "I think a lot of people didn't know it." She went there a couple of times, but when she mentioned it to other people they hadn't even heard of it. **[36:00]**

Mrs. James comments that movie snacks are a lot more expensive nowadays, but the refurbished theater was still nice. The interviewer says that he hadn't heard of the reopened Hollywood either, but now people have to go to Newark or West Orange to go to the movies because there are no theaters still open in Orange.

The interviewer says he has been hearing that Orange used to have so many things that people didn't used to have to leave the city to find what they needed: "What was it? Two hospitals and a number of different medical centers?" Mrs. James agrees, saying she was born in one of the two hospitals, Orange Memorial. There also used to be places to eat, but now she cannot think of any in Orange, although she admits that there may be some that she does not know about, and the interviewer says there are "up and down Main Street," and in the Valley. That reminds Mrs. James of (?) Reddie's (?) where she has eaten, and the Hat City Kitchen, which she refers to as "The Hat.," where she has not. **[37:40]**

He mentions jobs and the fact that small businesses provided them, and Mrs. James is quick to agree that "There were many more small businesses then," and mentions Clyde Golden who "had a lot of different things," with a store located across from Triangle Tailors. She is not sure what to call the operation, perhaps a "convenience store." He stocked "the Country Club ice cream which was absolutely *the best*."

Hershey's Ice Cream was available too, but "you couldn't touch" Country Club. [38:48]

[Paterson's Country Club Ice Cream must have had an appealing freshness because it was made locally, and Ice cream does not ship well without elaborate precautions.]

Golden also sold heating oil, Mrs. James adds, and he lived on Pierson Street, and kept his trucks there because there was a bar on one side of his store, but she doesn't remember what else was "across the street," apparently meaning next to the shop, and across from her father's tailoring establishment. [39:20]

[For Golden, see the Hicks interview: "Clyde Golden's General Store in the middle of the block on Hickory and South sold coal and oil as well as food and dry goods. People preferred to shop there rather than at the A&P, which gave black people a hard time. Golden and his wife Vi[olet], who were black, raised their three kids in the store: Clyde, Jr.; Pumpkin, and Carol."]

The interviewer asks if she has ever heard of a bar called "Bucket of Blood," and Mrs. James laughs, saying it was on South Street. She says she doesn't remember what the actual name of the place was, as 'Bucket of Blood' was a nickname, and "They didn't put that up in lights!" She never actually entered that particular bar, but recalls one on Parrow that is now a church. It is on the righthand side, she says, as you go up Parrow; it has a gate around it, and she's been in there.

[She is probably referring to the Alpha Omega Fellowship at 175 Parrow, located in an interesting looking little building that sits in the middle of a large surfaced lot and is surrounded by a fence with separate gates for vehicles and pedestrians.]

"We had a lot of bars," she adds, "because one, one was taken...with 280." She is not sure if that was Joe's or had another name. Also taken was the house of one of her school friends. [41:15]

The interviewer asks about the land now under the highway, if it was primarily commercial or residential, and she replies, "Combination of both. After the, ah, the Friendship House, there was some kind of store in there, but, it was, ah, houses, two story houses with, the Barnetts lived in, and then next to that was this other bar, and then houses." Maxie McRimmon, she adds, "he, lived right where I'm talking about," where 280 took all the buildings, and reminds the interviewer that he moved to 192 Reynold Street, where he is now. [42:09]

More possible contacts

When the interviewer, listing the McRimmons and Shorty, comments that a number of the people displaced by 280 are still here, Mrs. James agrees, adding, "And if they're not in Orange, they're not far." She doesn't know about the Youngs, where they are. Her contact, whose maiden name was Ruby Young, used to work for the city, and Mrs. James wonders if she might be in Montclair now. She thinks the woman lived on Central Place or Wilson Place when she first met her, and does not know where she lived

before that, but "She knows a lot about Orange." She just happened to see her lately, and thinks Mr. McRimmon might know where she lives. [43:52]

Mrs. James now thinks of 'Pat,' who now lives in Georgia, but she could share her phone number. Pat once lived on Parrow right across from the bar that is now a church. She thinks Pat's building, with apartments on both sides, is still there. [This is most likely 176 Parrow.] Explaining why her friend might have moved south, she explains, "You know, when you get to be eighty plus—I haven't gotten there yet, but I got, five more months!" She says she'll "Take it" when offered an early birthday congratulation, and adds that she is "trying to figure out how to, live every day like it's the last, but, you know, not be focusing, that, it might be the last!" (Laughter.) [45:16]

Living with segregation then and now

At this point, after a little hesitation, the interviewer introduces the topic of segregation and its effect on life in Orange, saying he had been told that, despite the fact that it is still a fairly segregated town, back then "It was pretty rough," although it was also "kind of nice." Mrs. James agrees that the town definitely was segregated but does not go along with the "rough" description. She responds slowly and thoughtfully but with great force:

"I really, you know, it, it was segregated, because that was the time, that we had to, you know, getting out of the slavery thing, and the mindset, and all that. [45:50] But I really feel, personally, I feel, that those were good days. I know we still had to fight for rights, and positions, and things like that, but everybody, in my situation, we all respected each other, I had interracial parties, I mean kids who were black kids, white kids, whatever kind of kids, at my house. We, we knew who we were, we knew who we wanted to get to be some other *places*, but it wasn't anything like it is today, today, today's just, it's —" [46:41]

Her words are emphasized here by what sounds like the strike of a cane on the floor or a pencil on a table near the recorder, but she is interrupted by the interviewer who asks what she would point to as the "major difference," because he is "trying to put this together, and it's, it's like, okay, there was racism, but it was just such a great time, and now, fast forward (another emphatic rap in the background, and these are heard off and on throughout the interview), well, there's still racism, but it's just not overt, but now the times are terrible, so what—" [47:00]

Here Mrs. James brings up the possible objection that her age may have something to do with her attitude but nevertheless she clearly recalls that "Years ago, I felt comfortable in the street, I felt comfortable at night walking the street(s), I respected people; people that I dealt with, you know, *acted* like they respected me. And today, it's just, very different. The *hate* that's there, and, ahm, if you watch—Did you see the President yesterday? Or did you see his speech? Ohhh (sadly). I cried the whole time. And he cried some himself; he was talking about using his executive orders to, make some changes...." [47:46]

As an illustration, she points out how easy it is for people (including felons) to buy weapons online. "And he was talking about how we've done nothing, since *all* these people getting killed, and *all* these, you know, families are hurting, and *nothing* can get *done*. That just seems to me so, unreal, that we have a system, you know, that's supposed to be taking care of us, and look at how (?)poor it is(?). And the people who could change it, don't. The people who we put in these positions to take care of us, or to make it better, they're not doing that, and it's h— you know, I don't know if I'm more [unclear: 'in page'? 'enraged'?] with the people or the President because he is in a position—supposedly—to fix it! But he can't fix it because he doesn't have the support." [48:54]

"And that's why I feel, you know, as an older person, that—Gee, you people just hate black people *so much* (clapping sound), that you're going to sacrifice all—*everything?* 'Because the leader's black, we don't want to make him look good.' How horrible is that, how horrible is that?" [49:20]

Having expressed herself quite forcefully, she now says, in a conciliatory tone, well, she's older, and she tries to be careful, watch where she goes, especially at night, but there was a time when she didn't think about things like looking back to see who might be following you. She ends by saying, "Today is just different. You know, different. And we have to try harder....But, we keep trying, we don't give up....Got to get better, got to get better." [49:51]

What is needed in order to move forward with jobs

Now Mrs. James introduces a new topic, that when she was in school the message was "Got to go to college," and refines that statement by saying that you were expected to either go to college or to learn a trade. She describes an arrangement where 12th grade students would attend essential academic classes like Math and English in the morning, and spend the afternoons working at a trade. "But they were being *trained*, to *work*. We don't have that mindset today. You don't have it and we need it, because everybody can't—in the first place, everybody can't afford it....You have to learn how to do *something*." [50:53]

She points out that today's students not only need training that will enable them to get jobs, they also need the strength to resist the allure of the easy money that leads to jail sentences. The interviewer agrees, saying that there are "a lot of people just feeling that they don't have options."

Mrs. James begins to comment on something the churches are failing to do, but stops and repeats, "We have the power, but we don't use it." [51:30]

Depressing realities, including the need for food pantries

She feels sad that now, in 2016, people are still on the streets, still hungry. She brings up the food pantry at her church, the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, at 105 Main Street, and says "this group came," and the Interfaith Group Pantry got an award from HANDS in 2014. They had forty to fifty clients then, she says, but are now serving

125-150 on regular weeks, and over 200 at Thanksgiving and Christmas. She suggests coming by the church around 9:00 A.M. on a Wednesday (other than the first Wednesday) to see the lines, adding that, although the pantry does not open before 10:00 A.M., at Christmastime there were at least 50 people in line when she got there at 7:20 as the person responsible for letting them in. [52:56]

As she continues, Mrs. James adds that the pantry is also open on Saturdays, and they distribute toys too, but her real message is distress over the obvious need, and the suffering that makes people willing to stand out in the cold and the rain. Then she says, "It's the church's food pantry, which is a bit smaller," and she doesn't know "where these people get their donations, and sometimes they'll do clothes, or, toiletries, or, whatever they have to give away." it's not a government program but it's "very organized, they get a lot of volunteers, some school volunteers— They connect with schools, and then they let the kids come," to fulfill their community service graduation requirements. [54:10]

[Rude and insensitive sbh comment: It would be nice to know more about local community involvement and the relationship between the donation collecting group and the group doing the distribution, as Mrs. James seems to know a lot about it and is apparently trusted with keys. The church's web site talks about a food pantry that functions "[i]n conjunction with the Community FoodBank of New Jersey" and is staffed by a "A dedicated group of parishioners." <<http://christchurcheo.org/serve/outreach>> But talk about segregation — the Interfaith Food Pantry's own website, which lists 105 Main Street as the location of their pantry, features a page of [press clippings](#) that don't portray any of those helpful parishioners, and makes the group come across as an outside effort, however beneficial, organized by Junior League types and run out of Short Hills and South Orange. Is this the group that Mrs. James is referring to when she says, "This group came?"]

Her real fear, she says, is about the direction things are going: getting worse instead of better. She does admit that some of the people in line are there because they have a bad attitude [presumably toward the idea of doing for themselves], but says most of the recipients are appreciative and truly needy. After whispering something, she tries to add a brighter note by saying that the interviewer's questions have reminded her that there were hard times in the past too, and "We got through it," and she even "enjoyed it as a kid." [55:23]

She now remarks that when today's youths get up in the morning their facial expressions make them look like they hate the world, and compares that to her own youth, which she enjoyed, "although there were a lot of problems." The interviewer asks if she thinks that was because of "the simplicity of life then," and she tentatively agrees, but adds that she always had to work: "Go to school. Do your chores. Go to church. *After* that, you could play. (Laughter) So, you always had, always something to do—I don't know what the mindset is now, you know, a lot of TV, too much TV, I don't know." [56:06]

Mrs. James tries once again to conclude on a brighter note by commenting that "There

are good, there are good young people. I don't want to say there aren't. But I think people that are *not* good get most of the attention." Both agree that the few bad people give the entire group a bad name, and Mrs. James adds that "Hopefully we'll be doing some things at the church...."

In this connection, Mrs. James mentions a former librarian who "wrote to the pols" and got funding for an after school media program and bought computers, but died before being able to implement the actual program(s). Now someone else (name inaudible) is trying to do something, although she may make changes in the original plan. In response to a question about the kind(s) of media envisioned, she says she is not sure, "That's what he's calling it" but they do have a bunch of computers, so kids should be able to "do homework, and reading, or whatever." [57:18]

About her church, Epiphany

Apparently her church, Epiphany, used to be on Pierson, across from St. Mary's Hospital, where the Unity Church is today. She suggests that history would be worth looking into, including the story of "the black priest, or seminarian" who started it, and says "We came out of Grace Church, which was, the church that, was in the building that we are in, Grace Church: rich, white people." [58:07]

<<http://window-through-time.blogspot.com/2009/09/grace-episcopal-church-orange-nj.html>>

<<http://window-through-time.blogspot.com/2009/09/grace-episcopal-church-2-orange-nj.html>>

She adds that the [history of Epiphany](#) is all written down and she'll try to find it for the project, but essentially the pastor of Grace Church, at 105 Main, on retiring, suggested opening "a Sunday School for colored children." She corrects 'colored children' to "Negro children," and points out that the Sunday School was not to be in the [white] church at 105 Main, but in a separate building. She is not sure about the early days, whether or not people met in homes, and does not know what group built the church on Pierson Street.

[History of the Church of the Epiphany: <<https://www.facebook.com/notes/the-episcopal-church-of-the-epiphany/the-history-of-the-church-of-the-epiphany/184992628195439>>]

When Epiphany was first offered the opportunity to relocate from Pierson, where they were crowded and parking was difficult, to the present site at 105 Main, many parishioners resisted the move because people looking like them had not originally been welcome there. Mrs. James, who was on the Vestry at the time, demolished that argument by asking, "Who lived in your house before you did?" [59:34]

She now explains that Christ Church, which used to be at 422 Main in East Orange, "less than a mile away," was also welcomed into the building, and the two congregations are in the process of coming together, although they still exist as separate corporations.

The interviewer asks about the seminarian who founded Epiphany, and she says it was George Plaskett, a powerful man, and repeats that she will have to look for the history so she can share more details. She's not sure how long the congregation will stay, as the building, although beautiful, is old and has a number of problems but it's a large, with a third floor on the Parish Hall, and a balcony with seats, that was cleaned up but not refurbished after a fire: "We didn't put the walls back up." [1:02:48]

Got to keep going: Voter registration

She wonders about the future because ongoing efforts are essential, but is hopeful: "It's never, I don't think, life is about just sitting down and say, well now we're finished, we can just, life will just go on without us doing. It's all about effort, all about some kind of struggle." [1:03:15]

Mrs. Jones and the interviewer agree that it's important to appreciate "who people are," and what has already been accomplished, and, as for current efforts, "We're going to be doing, ahm, voter registration." Neither she nor the interviewer is sure of the earliest date [presumably for local elections], but she thinks it might be in May because "Orange has always had spring elections." [1:03:53]

Mrs. James says she usually does voter registration at the food pantries, and has found that many people do not know the regulations covering eligibility; that prevents a lot of people who should be voting from doing so. The interviewer asks about the impact the route of 280 had on voting in the black community, saying that he had heard there was a deliberate effort to curb that vote. She says, "Probably," although she doesn't know, but does know that "in our communities we haven't, we haven't, we haven't really gotten the message of, voting, and the importance of it, and, your vote does count," and points out that "if a hundred people say, my vote doesn't count, well, hey, you know, that's...." [1:04:57]

More notable people from Orange

She now brings up Tom Puryear, Maxie McRimmon's nephew (his sister's son), who is the **President of the NAACP [of the Oranges and Maplewood]**. The interviewer suggests that it's important for local pride for people to know about these influential people from the area. Mrs. James then adds that Mr. McRimmon's son Martin* is the head of Homeland Security.* He went to Northeastern University, she says, has always lived in Orange, and is now on Reynolds Street "down the street from his parents]." [See <<https://rehold.com/Orange+NJ/REYNOLDS+ST>>.] [1:07:38]

The interviewer comments that he now has a list of additional people he should interview, including Maxie McRimmon and his son. Reassured that the elder Mr. McRimmon is still living at the age of 80 or so, he muses that he he might be able to get them together for a group interview. Mrs. James says "(?)Marrie(?)", with two children in college, is still working at the General Services Administration (GSA) after 39 years, having participated in a work-study program at Northeastern.* She would like to go to NYC just to see his big office. [1:09:33]

[*Re: Martin McRimmon. A Martin McRimmon is mentioned in the course of a (somewhat hostile) congressional hearing: <<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111hhrg55247/pdf/CHRG-111hhrg55247.pdf>> back in 2009, and another, or the same, as a TSA employee involved with procurement for Explosive Detection Dog Services: <<https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=449900>>.]

Referring back to their comments about the importance of getting information about notable people from the area out there in order to build community pride, she now says it is not so much about bragging as about just knowing, and says that when "a young man" she knew died it was only at the funeral and that she "found out all the wonderful things he was doing in the recording business....and I said, I don't want to learn it then, I want to know before, and you know I want to be proud, and feel good....And they're all my children...." adding that she's been friends with Maxie since 1949. [1:10:30]

Summing up: The importance of community

She has no children, she says, and could go and live with her sister in North Carolina, but she feels blessed to be here among so many good friends, and mentions a friend now living in Georgia who phoned recently and was complaining about how lonely she felt there.

The interviewer asks about reunions or an Orange Day, and Mrs. James says they used to have some Orange reunions, but "They say it's a lot of work,...." so there hasn't been anything like that for several years. "That was really fun, you know, seeing people and all that," and discovering that people you didn't recognize had been high school classmates.

The interviewer mentions a group interview that included Walter Preston and Gordon Roberts (both of whom she says she knows), Monica Williams, and so on, and the participants had the same reaction to seeing old acquaintances they had not seen for a while. She says Walter told her he does a lot on Facebook, and also mentions a person named Kenneth (?)Ogilvie(?) whom she ran into recently, or saw at the reunion. She knew his parents well, but does not know where he lives now. [1:13:18]

She says "somebody has to do something," but she's pretty worn out herself, and most of her activities now center around the church, where she actually volunteered in the office on a daily basis for eighteen months or two years while the group was without a priest.

She shares her phone number again 732 306-5718 and the interviewer says that he's hoping there can be another group storytelling session in February, with a 'new' group of people who will again discover that they know one another already. This reminds Mrs. Jones of a favorite story of her own, about a dance recital where the girls had all bought toe shoes, and the dance mistress told them they couldn't be in the recital unless they were able to straighten their knees [presumably while wobbling around on those toe shoes]. She was crying herself to sleep because she was pretty sure she wasn't going to be able to be in the recital, but her mother said to her, "You will be in the recital. We

bought the shoes, we bought the costumes." Mrs. James finishes up by revealing that "I was in the recital—in the back row! (laughter)" **[1:16:18]**

Mrs. Jones and the interviewer comment on differences in attitudes, how it is now possible to laugh about old difficulties, and how technology has changed things also. The interviewer says a friend of his told him that he used to go down to Scotland Road just to watch the trains pass by, while another used to go up to a farm on Munn and steal chickens (more laughter).

She sums up by saying "I had a good life, so, no regrets, you know. And if I think I would have changed something, I probably would not have," and reiterates that Orange is still 'home' to her, even though she's been in Asbury Park since shortly after her Dad died in 1977. She plans to change her voting address back to Orange now that she's up here most of the time, but is not giving up her house down there, as there is a family living in it.

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