

Idessa Redden Early Childhood Development Center Staff

*Tom Gardner, Executive Director
Dennis Johnson, Director
W. W. Steele, Administrator
TaRhonda Wiggins, Supervisor
Beverly J. Toodle, Family Service Worker
Earnestine Hardie, Home Visitor/Trainer
Sherry Nettles, Combo*

0-12

*Linda Belser
Veronica Poole*

13-24

*Kristie Davis
Salina Washington*

25-30

*Audrey Campbell
Denise Whatley*

31-36

*Tameka Baker
Andrea Daniel*

Mobile Assistant
Peggy Judkins

Committees

Program

*Paulette Moncrief
Bonita Whitlow
TaRhonda Wiggins*

Publicity

*Wanda Jackson
Tracey Kendrick
Alice Terrell*

Decoration/Reception

*Lizzie Hardie
Juanita Henderson
Veronica Poole
Denise Whatley*

Hostesses - Early Head Start Caregivers

*DEDICATORY CEREMONIES
FOR*

IDESSA REDDEN

*EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT CENTER*



*Church of God Pentecostal
November 25, 2001
3:00 - 5:00 p.m.*

IDESSA WILLIAMS-REDDEN

Idessa Williams-Redden was born on November 27, 1912 in Montgomery, Alabama. She was reared by her grandparents, Julius and Louisa Harris.

Idessa attended St. Paul Methodist Church School, Loveless, St. John Catholic and State Normal High Schools. After high school, she began working at Reliance Manufacturing Company (The Shirt Factory). While working there, she attended Bethesda Beauty and Culture School, and in 1949, she opened "Idessa's Beauty Nook".

In 1938, Idessa married George Williams, a carpenter. Idessa became a registered voter in 1949, and there was no turning back for her commitment to the struggle. She joined Coach Rufus Lewis in the crusade for full voting rights as a "black captain" to encourage people to sign up for voting rights clinics.

Black youth gravitated to Idessa because her positive stance and fearless expression imbued them, especially the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

After her divorce in 1956, Idessa later married John Redden, Sr., a retiree who supported her unconditionally.

In 1970, Idessa began working as Family Service Worker with the Montgomery Community Action Agency. This program grew out of the federal government's response to correct the inequities that had festered in the Black community since slavery time. Idessa retired in 1998 at the age of 85, satisfied that she had honored her childhood vow to serve her people. "Working in the Civil/Voting Rights Movement was the greatest challenge of my life. I was in the Movement to help my people. I have dedicated my life to help uplift my fellowman," she said, upon her retirement.

*Idessa Redden Early Childhood Development Center
W. W. Steele, Presiding*

Payer Rev. Wesley Lewis

Amazing Grace Mr. Armon Robinson

Tribute Mrs. Linda Hampton

Individual Tributes (2 minute limit)

Medley of Songs Dr. Dorothy Riggins

Proclamation Mrs. Paulette Moncrief

Presentations

"Wind Beneath My Wings" . . . Dr. Dorothy Riggins

*Remarks Mrs. Idessa Redden, Honoree
Mr. Tom Gardner, Executive Director
Mr. Dennis Johnson, Director*

Unveiling of the sign (outside)

Compiled by: Dr. Gwen Patton, TSTC Archivist Reception Immediately Following in the Idessa Redden Early Childhood Center

MEMOIRS



IDESSA WILLIAMS-REDDEN

November 25, 2001

H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College Archives
Compiled by: Dr. Gwen Patton, TSTC Archivist

Biography

Idessa Williams-Redden became an avowed "freedom fighter," known as a "race person," at the tender age of 16 in 1928. It was during this period when she listened to a radio-talk show with influential White, racist politicians, who were laughing at the fact that Blacks were so poor until they could never be voters because they will never be able to pay poll taxes. As Idessa listened, she vowed that she would save money for the poll tax and will become a registered voter when she became 21 years old. The politicians were Tom Heflin, the father of future U.S. Senator Howel Heflin; E. C. "Bud" Boswell, who shepherded the passage of the "Boswell Amendment" that became law in 1945 to issue the "literacy test" as a pre-requisite to voters' registration and designed to keep Blacks off of the voting rolls.

Idessa Taylor was born November 27, 1912 in the city of Montgomery. Her mother passed when Idessa was 2 years old. Soon afterwards, her father moved out of town and abdicated all responsibility to his toddler daughter. Idessa was raised by her maternal great-grandparents, Julius and Lousa Harris. Her grandparents were born and lived a significant part of their lives as slaves. Important to note is that Idessa's grandmother died in 1925 at the age of 90+, meaning that she was born at least by 1835.

Idessa attended St. Paul Methodist Church School, Loveless, St. John Catholic and State Normal High Schools. After completing her high school requirements, she gained employment from 1934-1944) at the Reliance Manufacturing Company ("The Shirt Factory") making shirts for the United States Navy. While working at the "Shirt Factory," Idessa attended Bethesda Beauty and Culture School. She opened up her business, "Idessa's Beauty Nook" in 1949.

From listening to that racist, radio broadcast in 1928 until the late 1940s. Idessa, like all Black Montgomerians, was hogtied in the vicious grip of "Jim Crow," apartheid USA-southern style. Idessa had married George Williams in 1938. Williams was a carpenter and his work depended upon getting jobs with White construction companies. Blacks knew by custom that if they attempted to wrench from the grip of legal racism, it could be instant death by any White person to whip or kill any Black person who got "out of place."

However, change was on the horizon. A young, Black AMEZion minister and his family moved from North Carolina to Montgomery in 1948. Reverend Solomon s. Seay, Jr. was assigned the pastorate at Mt. Zion AMEZion Church, the site where the Montgomery Improvement Association (1955) was born to steer the Montgomery Bus Boycott Movement.

By 1949, Reverend Seay, a native Alabamian, was firmly entrenched, recognized and respected as a fearless and moral leader in the Black community. It surprised no one, though many feared for his life, when Reverend Seay took on the issue of rape of a Black woman, Gertrude Perkins, by police officers, who, of course, were White.

The White, power structure did nothing to correct this egregious injustice. Reverend Seay championed the cause for respect and dignity of Black womanhood. This voice to honor Black woman motivated Idessa to become a registered voter, no matter what the consequences.

After four attempts and exchanging terse words with the insulting registrars, Willis and Mulligan, Idessa finally became a registered voter in 1949. There was no turning back for Idessa's commitment to the "struggle." She immediately joined Coach Rufus Lewis in his crusade for full voting rights as a "block captain" to encourage people to sign up for voting rights clinic and as a "citizenship teacher" where she taught prospective Black voters how to fill out the "literacy test," the pre-

requisite to becoming a registered voter.

Black youth gravitated to Mrs. Williams-Redden because of her obvious conviction to gain first-class citizenship for Black people. This was most symbolized by the right to vote, free of all barriers. Her positive stance and fearless expression imbued youth, especially with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in their militant demand, "Freedom Now!"

Idessa was targeted by the Montgomery Police as one who should not be arrested and thrown in jail. The "Jim Crow" authorities feared she would be a "cause celebre," thus, swelling the ranks of the Movement, particularly with Black youth and Northern Whites who were joining the Movement in legions.

Idessa's involvement in the Movement placed a strain on her marriage. Her husband began to suffer reprisals by not being hired by White construction companies. Work was becoming scarce. The couple divorced in 1956, during the height of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Idessa later married John Redden, Sr., a retiree, who unconditionally supported all of Idessa's Movement activities. He passed on-----.

In 1970, Idessa served as a social services worker with Montgomery Community Action Program, a project that grew out of the Movement as a federal government response to begin to correct the inequities that had festered in the Black community since slavery time. Idessa retired in 1998 at the age of 85, satisfied that she had honored her childhood vow to serve her people. "Working in the Civil/Voting Rights Movement was the greatest challenge of my life. I was in the Movement to help my people. I have dedicated my life to help uplift my fellowman," she said upon her retirement.