

Put back in Green Books

October 20, 1975

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am a life long resident of Montgomery County. I come from a poor family. I attended St. John Catholic School and later Loveless Jr. High School where I completed the Ninth Grade. Being from a poor family I had to quit school and go to work.

I did domestic work for three months and was soon convinced this was not my future endeavor. I had been taught how to sew by my aunt and I applied for a job at a sewing factory. I worked there for ten years, during this period I was promoted to a supervisor. To help supplement my learning I took a course in Cosmetology and completed the course in six months. I worked in various beauty shops for a short time and later opened my own beauty shop.

The greatest turning point in my life was the experience I gained while working with the Civil Rights Movement. There are many things about the struggle I shall never forget. This period was the happiest part of my life because I was working for a worthy cause.

Long before the Civil Rights Movement became a reality in Montgomery I was considered a community worker and leader. I have done community work in Montgomery and Lowndes Counties. I supported the cause of brotherhood before I understood it to be Social Service work.

I am a catholic, one of the few catholic families that was in the city at the time Father Harold Purcell came to the city to try to get the City of St Jude started. I put in many hours of volunteer service for this cause.

Aside from this, there were very few black voters in Montgomery County. I started registration drives and voter education classes in my home. To aid my services I obligated myself to attend many workshops in various cities. I also worked with the Barrister Club-- the members were the local black lawyers of the city. I was chairman of Voter Registration for the Montgomery Improvement Association.

I April 1970, I started working with Montgomery Community Action after many hours of voluntary time to the cause I was hired as a teacher aide. In September of the same year I was transferred to the Social Service department. From 1970 to 1974 I visited 1,263 homes, counseled 811 individuals, transported 240, 688 visits were made to various agencies during this period, referred 10 people to vocational training. There were all Head Start families but I also worked with countless others that were not Head Start families.

I am grateful to the poverty program because it has been very beneficial to me. I have been given an opportunity to study for the G.E.D. test which I took and passed. It also gave me an opportunity to attend night typing classes which have been much help to me.

Idessa Williams
(Mrs.) Idessa Williams

ALABAMA CONFERENCE OF SOCIAL WORK

IDESSA WILLIAMS

Member

MAY 1973 - APRIL 1974

SISTER MARIE ANITA
Treasurer

VIRGINIA R. JONES
President

I was born in Montgomery County on November 27, 1921. My mother passed when I was 2 years of age. I was reared up by my mother's brother and his wife. I attended Loveless Public Jr. High School and completed 9th grade there. I had 2 years of high school training at what was formerly called State Normal high School. Since my guardians were unable to further my education, I was financially unable to obtain my high school diploma.

I did domestic work for about 3 months and saw readily that this was not my future endeavor for life. My aunt had taught me how to sew, and by knowing how to operate a sewing machine I placed an application at the Reliance Manufacturing Company. After being accepted I remained there for a period of 10 years, during which time I was promoted to a supervisory position. To help compensate my earnings I took a cosmetology course in 1942 and completed it in 9 months. I worked in beauty shops from 1942 to 45, and in later years opened one in my home which was very successful until the Urban Renewal changes. My husbands' occupation caused me to travel to various sections of the country working in sewing factories these places being; Cleveland, Ohio, Chicago, Ill., Jacksonville, Fla., Seattle, Wash., Montana and Wisconsin. I did not consider any of these places home because we returned here each winter.

On December 5, 1955 I began my participation in civil rights. I took part in every march that was staged in Montgomery, several in Birmingham, the 1957 and 1963 marches in Washington, D.C., the Meredith March in Jackson, Miss., the 1965 Selma March, and the 1967 marches in Prattville and Lowndes County. And would to this day continue to fight against injustice wherever it prevailed and stand fast until my death.

Before the Civil Rights struggle came about in Montgomery I was considered a agitator because I fought for better working conditions and wages and against injustice. Although being labeled a troublemaker I obtained results.

I am a member of the St. Jude Catholic Church and have been since the age of 9. I am a member of the Southern Leadership Conference, the Montgomery Improvement Assoc., the Women Political Caucus, and the St. Jude Social Service Committee. I was asked last month to chair the public relation committee for the NAACP (voluntary services) which I accepted.