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**An Oral History of Bowen Keiffer Jackson
Conducted by Richard Richardson**

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Abstract: Bowen Keiffer Jackson (1923–1995) was a civil rights activist and the executive secretary of the Baltimore Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The only son of Lillie May Carroll Jackson, he served in the United States Army from 1943 to 1946, after which he had careers in business administration, real estate, and property management. In this oral history interview, Jackson recounts his experiences growing up as a Black child and young man in Baltimore, as well as his time in the U.S. Army. He describes his mother's significance within the community and the civil rights movement, detailing her contributions to the NAACP, her church, and her family, and how she drew strength from her faith in God. Jackson also reflects on his father, Keiffer Jackson, and his unwavering support for his mother's endeavors. Additionally, Jackson discusses his mother's relationship with Governor Theodore R. McKeldin and their collaborative efforts, her perspective on Black militancy within the movement, and her optimism for future race relations.

Note on Oral History: Oral history is a methodology of gathering, preserving, and sharing the voices and memories of individuals and communities. As primary material, it documents personal reflections, commentary, and recollections, and is not intended to present a verified or “complete” history of events.

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Richardson: [00:00:04] This is an interview with Mr. Bowen Jackson for the McKeldin-Jackson Oral History Project. The interviewer is Richard Richardson. Today is August 15, 1977. Mr. Jackson, could you tell us a little bit about your life, childhood education, please?

Jackson: [00:00:28] Yes, I—I was the only one in the family, in fact, that was born here in Baltimore. And I was born on October 12, 1923. And of course, I was the last of the group and a boy. And I received my education—elementary education at Henry Highland Garnet Elementary School, one-o-three, and then, subsequently, went to Booker T. Washington Junior High School. And then, from there, to Frederick Douglass Senior High School, and I graduated from Frederick Douglass Senior High School, and then had two years of college—Hillsdale College, in Hillsdale, Michigan. Upon two years completion, I was inducted into the Army. And spent uh from 1943 to 1946 in the armed services, that of which two years were spent overseas—two and a half years, England, France, Belgium, and part of Germany.

Jackson: [00:01:45] And I married over there, I married in England. And that's—out of that marriage, I have four children, three girls and one boy. And subsequently, she came back to the United States, and we were reunited here, in May 1946. I stayed here [Baltimore], and subsequently, worked as executive secretary for the Baltimore Branch of the NAACP here, approximately about five to six years, and I and my family then left and went to California, in 1959. There I remained until my father died, in 19—1971. And then I returned back to Baltimore and have remained here since. That's briefly—

Richardson: [00:03:01] That's fine. How was it for a young Black in the armed forces during World War II, in your experience? [00:03:06][5.5]

Jackson: [00:03:07] (Talking at the same time) Well—Yes, well, at that time, there were separate facilities and it was segregated. We had public companies, and, in most instances, the colored companies in the army were um were headed by white officers. We had very few who, close to the end of the war, where you had colored offices running a colored company. But then you had white companies and white offices, and you had colored companies and white offices. So I found that in the armed services, particularly overseas, that segregation remained the same, like it was here in the United States, in the army, and it remained the same over there. And the white person who was in the armed forces, when he was overseas, he retained his prejudice, you know, with it. And he did not like to see the colored fella because naturally overseas you have—where the army is _____(??) they were all white. Whereas that you came in contact with—of course the white soldiers would not like to see colored soldiers and get along or be with them, of course there was friction and some skirmishes because of that. This was resolved in its own way. However, the prejudice remained. And—

Richardson: [00:04:56] Was it resolved militarily or unofficially?

Jackson: [00:04:58] It was resolved unofficially because the officers of each company just maintained discipline, throw the fella—through the MPs—or what the—throw the persons responsible into jail. Hold 'em there until the officer of a particular company came and sign them out. Provided whatever he was going to provide discipline for the situation.

Richardson: [00:05:30] With the Europeans themselves, were they—would they discriminate much or do they accept white soldiers and Black soldiers both?

Jackson: [00:05:36] Well, I think that my experience is that the white European accepted what the—what the yankee soldier—the white yankee soldier—brought to them because he felt that they had always, supposedly, represented themselves as being the true American. And they felt that whatever the white American was saying was right or was true. However, when the—in contrast to that, whenever the white American was gone from the scene, there was a ready communication between the existing parties, and if the Negroes remain there, then they got along fine. But as long as the white man were there, they heeded whatever the white man said, whatever his law was, they heeded that. And it was interesting because you find that he was king while he was there, and then when he left, there was still a situation, you know, during the war where the people in the foreign lands, they needed food, and they needed their supplies, and they were cripple, you know, because of the war. And, of course, naturally, they had to depend on, then, the colored American soldiers, and so they got along fine in relationships. But if it's made upon needs, it's need for need, and I suppose it's just survival of the fittest. And I suppose, if you are hungry, you don't care whether black hand gives you food or a white hand gives you food, (laughing) just so that you get the food. I think basically that said uh—

Richardson: [00:07:27] If we could back up a moment. How about during the thirties as a young Black teenager growing up in Baltimore, how was it? What was your feelings at the time? Was discrimination really blatant, or was it more—more subtle? Or did you actually—could you actually feel that you were being discriminated?

Jackson: [00:07:42] Well, I was brought up in a total situation where there was a colored society and a white society. And I seldom ever came in contact with the persons of the other race, except for the bill collectors, and when you went downtown to the stores, you had you came in contact with. But I was brought up in a total colored community. And, of course, I realized discrimination when—because we went to all colored schools, and naturally the church was all colored. The stores in your immediate area were all colored, so you dealt with entire colored personnel and people. The only time that I realized discrimination was when we'd downtown at that time—in those times—, you wanted to purchase something, and especially in some of the designer department stores, you couldn't try on anything at that time. And the only person that they would allow to really, at some of the well-known department stores, to come in and buy merchandise would be those persons who were the domestics for a wealthy white persons. And they would have to have a letter from their madam saying that they wanted to purchase.

Jackson: [00:09:11] So therefore, what I always knew, up to a certain time, is that I was in a totally colored perspective. And I would meet certain outstanding white persons because our family was civic. And Mrs. Mitchell, my sister, ran the City-Wide Young People's Forum here that had its meetings every Friday night at Bethlehem Church. And, of course, many of the speakers who would come to speak in the forum [unintelligible] this forum would be white persons, and you would have an opportunity to meet them as long—as well as other people who attended the meeting. But I always felt that I knew nothing but a total colored community, in contrast to some

others who had had an opportunity to live within an integrated situation from the beginning. Now, some of the younger kids that are coming along now enjoy that situation of living in an integrated community and knowing that no matter what station in life or what color the skin, it's—as long as you—what's inside of you, what type of person you are character-wise, the quality of you as an individual and not the color. And I think the children that are coming along now learn that.

Jackson: [00:10:54] Now, of course, I know that I had learned as a youngster coming up that the separate but equal adoption was really not—basically as sound as it was meant to sound. Because in no way that, in measuring the white education at the time, when we were coming along with the colored education, that it was similar. And of course, I think that as a result of integration, it has helped to bring the colored person up to a qualifying factor because it's evident nowadays, you know, because you had a lot of persons who here before wouldn't have been able to qualify for certain jobs can qualify now because they have been educated in an integrated situation, and have been able to absorb the same amount of knowledge and enjoy the same discussions between Negroes and whites in a class and be able to benefit from that type of thing. Because if you are in an area and you remain in that area continuously as an individual, you are never exposed to another side, is a certain type of limitation. You're limited, you know, because you're not exposed, but once you're exposed to the other side, there are certain things, other than books and so forth—in addition to books—that you learn through knowledge, and a person shares with you and you learn this. And so, I think the experience of integration brings—enters into the qualifying factor. And I'm sure that this is this is something that, out of my childhood, that I learned that I couldn't get from a (banging) colored society. (feedback)

Richardson: [00:13:04] When did you first realize that your mother is extraordinary? I mean, we often realize that our own mothers are extraordinary. I mean, in the civil rights field, you know, that she was not just, sitting back?

Jackson: [00:13:17] Well, I think as a youngster, now about the time—I guess I would say about when I was about twelve or—eleven or twelve years of age, I began to realize her force in the community. She used to—ah well, she was the backbone. We had a—during the thirties—the later thirties, we had—we were picketing on Pennsylvania Avenue, were picketing the Five and Dime, J. J. Brill(??), and other stores. And times were hard in those days, and my mother was in real estate business. And then I realized, then she used to provide food for the pickets and she used to provide money, you know, that she could she—and she just—she subsidized their expenses. And I realized then, at that time, that what she was doing, really, was taking out of her pocket to help a cause, which she thought was right. Then my experience as she became the president of the NAACP, we were all around in that life continuously, you know, because we grew up in it. And she began to bring about certain changes. And I used to hear about—I knew to a certain, certain respect, but I learned from mothers who used to say, well, Dr. Jackson would call downtown and talk with the man, she would talk with the chief of police, and this is one of the person's sons was in trouble and she would go to bat for em, and she'd go and see the judge. And so I learned through my own association and also through others who had the experience,

who used to come and say, your mother is—your mother can move mountains, she's dynamic, she's unusual.

Jackson: [00:15:52] And, of course, I also used to witness her going downtown, as a youngster, appearing before the judges, and appearing like the liquor board commission, and appearing before the zoning board, representing neighborhoods. And, of course, being in that I—when I went into the NAACP, I used to also represent churches and neighborhood organizations before the zoning board. But that this—as I began to realize her exceptional qualities in the area of leadership and, I think, with myself, during those years, you know, you seldom heard of female leadership and especially Negro, as being, or being a forceful sent. But then I began to realize that she was an exception if she could go and demand these things.

[00:17:08] But I learned that she could do this because she dared to sacrifice. And by, I mean, sacrifice, she would let her own business go in order to work for a cause that she thought was right. Not let it go completely, but she would give up for a time and not get paid for it. And the NAACP is a prime example because she built the NAACP Baltimore Branch to one of the largest in the country. And, of course, that takes time, and she was the president and the leader. And she seemed—somehow she was able to take care of her home life and take care of her responsibilities. And I think there, again, comes in the exceptionality of the situation. When you are able to operate your business, take care of your home, rise and meet your responsibilities, and then participate not just in a minority sense but in a major sense in a cause which you think is just. Because most the time, I began to realize I couldn't understand how she could devote, you know, because most people when they take time away, they're gonna have to be paid. I mean, she never received a penny. She would give up herself and give up her time. And I think this enters into the qualities of a leader regardless whether it's male or female, but particularly female because during those days, of course, we always thought of females as being in the home, you know, they're never out here fighting for a cause.

Jackson: [00:19:00] But I think this is—I began to realize, that basically when it started when she would—she was the backbone of the City-Wide Young People's Forum, we have the picketing, and then subsequently being the leader—the president and leader for The Baltimore Branch of the NAACP. Of course, I also realized that also when a group of businessmen, in 1935, could sit down and at Dr. Carl Murphy's office and decide that they wanted Dr. Jackson, who was a woman, to become the head of the Baltimore Branch. At that time, as I say again, it's an exceptional thing. And then, you look at it and see that these are men, all men, and are leaders in the Negro communities, and they sit down and decide on appointing a woman to head The Baltimore Branch of the NAACP. This within itself tells you that you have an exceptional mother and because they didn't select her because of her being a female, they selected her because of her qualities and because they felt that she would be the driving force that would mean success, which ultimately, it was. This is the gist of how I feel it, you know—

Richardson: [00:20:42] What do you see as the source of this concern, this commitment to civil rights that your mother had?

Jackson: [00:20:55] I think that primarily it was because she was a Christian woman and she taught us in the home. I think this is the basic fact. And we were always at church every Sunday, we were—Sunday mornings we were around the table. We were constantly aware of the fact that God was a must in our life and that without him, we couldn't succeed. And of course, many a time, she would always say that when problems would come up, you know, in a community and she would always say, "God will answer prayer." And she kept us aware that God—and I think this is where her strength—because she said this all, I think this the source of her strength was God and her relationship with him in whatever way he had, in prayer, or whenever she had problems, she would go to him in prayer. And whenever there were problems in the family, she'd go to him in prayer, and she felt that he always answered prayer. So I think this is the source of her—the dynamic power, from whence she received her strength, was through her relationship with Christ and being able to know that she could always go to him in prayer and the answer would be there. I think this is basically—

Richardson: [00:22:36] How about your relationship with your father? Sometimes, in a lot of the questions, we haven't—your father's been overlooked in a lot of this because he wasn't quite the leader that your that your mother was, but—(talking at the same time)

Jackson: [00:22:49] I think he recognized this. And when my father no longer—because moving pictures, you know, he used to have the ___(??) pictures, he used to go on the road. But when ___(??) pictures became few and far between, like the silent days were over and they began to have movie houses and more or less. And my father was not permitted to travel because it wasn't worthwhile then because it was just ___(??) going out. So, at that time, he began to relinquish the role to my mother, and he recognized the fact that he couldn't participate, in a sense, on a comparable level in her area, in her field. So he resigned himself to cooperating in whatever respect that he could, in helping her to succeed. And he recognized also that she was an unusual person. And I think that this is the way—a good way to look at it when you realize you can't compete or you can't compare, whatever you can do to cooperate, to make the situation a success, then that's what you do. Because regardless of what—to recognize the role, to, for example, to have a big car and to drive around a big car and not have a home, it's more or less, it sounds to me ridiculous because—so, in other words, when you say you have a home and you have a beat up car or don't have a car at all, at least the idea is, that you have something that's secure.

Jackson: [00:24:43] And I think this is what he was thinking in terms of that he would rather resign himself to being in the area of taking care of whatever responsibilities, like helping with the real estate, or taking care of the children, cooking for the children, whatever it was necessary to make things go, instead of wanting to be a top dog, you know. I think when you realize your limitations, I think it's good because then you can utilize your limitations in a successful manner, by using them to be to the utmost, you know. And you can accomplish something a lot more that way than you can by wanting to be on top and have nothing to back it up, and when you can fall through, you have nothing. But when you work with your limitations as best as your endeavor, it serves as a fundamental basis, and whatever comes it's sound. But you work the false thinking, and when the test comes, you would completely destroy because you've worked with what you didn't have.

Richardson: [00:26:03] What color person was your mother, in the sense of how did she get along with people? Was she abrasive, again, I didn't meet your mother, I'm using these questions not to—in a discouraging manner, but I'm just wondering what kind of—because we heard and when you do research and interview different people, you've heard different things, and from your point of view, what type of person personality—what I'm getting at, what kind of personality did she have.

Jackson: [00:26:33] Well, she had a personality that I think is—has reflected in the—in her heritage sense. The Doyles(??), myself, and their subsequent marriage. That _____(??) and knowing Dr. Jackson, when they came along as youngsters. They learned that she was the type of person that could sit down with leaders of high standing and yet be able to never lose the common touch, to be able to come back and sit down with some insignificant person and give them just as much time. And I think that this is where most of us have learned this, being able to do this—not holding—not becoming too swell-headed because of our ability to do certain things, so that you lose the common touch. And there, I think, basically was the reason why people love Dr. Lill, is because they knew that she was genuinely interested in their their rights, their well-being, and she never lost the common touch. Yet, she could go to the mayor, and go to the governor, and go to the police commissioner, and go to many other high levels, but she never lost that common touch. She could always come back and give to you the time and whatever was necessary to take care of your situation and solve your problem, or even if it meant just going into the churches. So I think we learned that from her, I think this is basically it, never lose the common touch, never let the people think that you out of reach.

Jackson: [00:28:38] And I think politically, I think Ms. Mitchell's sons have learned it, and they could learn it just by being Ms. Mitchell's son. I think they learned it, basically, from being around when they were younger, being around Dr. Jackson and seeing how—they couldn't help but see how she—by being around her all the time, how she operated, what she did. She was interested in the people, genuinely interested, and this has to rub off. And, of course, the same way with me, I was around it all the time, and I realized that this is the way of life and this is the way—this way, I see as she saw it, as is being honest with yourself, you know. You give up yourself to others, and you give of your time and effort. And not because of some particular gain or you've got something up your sleeve, but because you want to, because you honestly believe that you can help the situation, help to improve conditions, and help to do it. And in this manner, this is, I think the reward is in accomplishing. And I think Dr. Jackson's reward was that when she did these things, she made these sacrifices and worked late into the night on somebody's case, and she wasn't getting anything from it, but her reward was being able to know that she had accomplished all—she did what she could do. And knowing that she hadn't turned aside, the person that she had endeavored to help the situation, and most of the time, she did because of the extent of her involvement. Regardless, she would never take no for an answer. (laughing)

Richardson: [00:30:45] (feedback) Do you think she was confident about her abilities for most of her life? Do you think she ever had doubt about that aspect?

Jackson: [00:30:56] No, I think because—the fact remains is I think she always felt confident and I think one of the expressions, I already have said, is her confidence had to be a part of her

success. In other words, when I earlier said that she believed in prayer and she believed in God, if it was right, the cause was right, that she would win, and she would go into the situation with the utmost confidence. I think this is where the confidence came from, again, from her Christian background. She believed with God she could win. And now she didn't feel that if her motives were ulterior, still with God, she would win. But if her cause was right and just, and she believed that it was right and just, she was confident that there was no other prospect but that God would win. And, a lot of times, when it didn't turn out exactly as she thought it would, she always said, "well, God had a reason." But she never would say, oh, he just let me down, she would say, "God had a reason why he didn't want—" So she was always ultimately confident in, regardless of what—when I say ultimately, I mean, regardless of what the—when they say the deck is stacked against you. And then you're ultimately confident that regardless, you know, you're going to win because you've got (laughing) the right person on your side who's going to decide for everything. I think this is her confidence, is as a result, of her relationship with God, and the relationship that she had, and she believed that she could win if she was right. If her mind was right and the cause was right, there would be no doubt about it, she believed that she would win regardless of what the circumstance was.

Richardson: [00:33:01] How about her early relationship or her early contact with former Governor McKeldin? Could you tell us something about that?

Jackson: [00:33:11] Yes, now, I first began the association with and knowing or knowing the relationship between Governor McKeldin and Dr. Jackson when the—back in the early fifties. This was before the Supreme Court had a ruling on recreational facilities. At that time, they would separate beaches for colored and white, it was, Fort Smallwood, Sandy Point State Park, they were separate. Of course, at that time, I was working with the NAACP, and my job was to take persons down to the beaches and get them reviews, and set up the case. And, of course, my early meeting with Governor McKeldin was when I accompanied him to Dr. Jackson, Mrs. Mitchell, down to Sandy Point State Park and Fort Smallwood. And to see the, the setups, the beaches, because at that time, you know, separate but equal. And, of course, naturally upon survey of the beaches—we walked around you could readily see the difference. There was no such thing as separate but equal. The white beaches were far superior in structure and landwise. So this was the governor's reason for going on this trip and so, at that time, I recognized that he looked upon Dr. Jackson as being a dynamic force, interested in trying to accomplish justice, not trying to get something that was not do, or get an additional situation which was not called for, but just what—seeking justice and helping mankind. I think he recognized this in her, and to that point, they became steadfast friends because he knew that when she came to him, she was coming in a just cause.

Jackson: [00:36:10] And what she was doing, she often, I remember, Dr. Jackson—how much he revered and respected Dr. Jackson's, because many times she would get the government to come to certain churches. She didn't succeed in getting the ____ (??). There's always more for you, Dr. Jackson, I'll tell ya. So I used to say, Miss Lillie—I think that—I recognize, then at that particular time that—of course, I recognize how outstanding she was prior to that. I could understand the governor's interest in whatever Dr. Jackson was pursuing because he recognized in her an exceptional person that wasn't concerned about herself as an individual

but concerned about, of course, her people. And when you find people who are like this, when they find out that you're not interested from your standpoint, of your own self-admiration and self-esteem, but you're interested in helping the cause, your dedicating, your sacrifice. And people are willing to—I think that's why she was so successful with the Baltimore Branch NAACP and memberships and getting people to work because she works so unselfishly, and they saw this. And of course, I just, from various meetings he used to speak for—when Dr. Jackson would have several meetings, Governor McKeldin would speak. They had a very _____(??), and she would think nothing of calling the governor, and when they would tell her that the governor's not in on this and this, if you tell the governor, Miss Lillie Jackson's call, had made the difference.

Jackson: [00:38:16] But it wasn't because so much of her importance, but as an individual. But I think that the fact remains that you recognize that she was out here doing unselfishly and sacrificing, and her cause was just. He would—he was a—she and he, I think, similar also—had similar thoughts in the mind that he was—he was a great Christian too, she was a Christian, of course, they both knew Christ, in their own way. And I think there, that's an open door any time when you're both committed to one cause, in a sense. I think this is really where I knew of the relationship. My pleasure was shaking the governor's hand many times, cause I was young. She and he she and he they just had a good relationship. I also remember a lot of times you could try to get away from Dr. Lillie, but she could talk. She'd be holding on to his hand, you know but they had a very, very good relationship, and it was a warm hearted. It just wasn't a relationship between a administrative in government and a leader in the community, it was, I think it was, just a warm relationship between the two. And she had a feeling—knew that the governor would do what would be right, and he knew that Dr. Jackson, when she came, she was coming for something that she believed and was right. I think that is the extent of the relationship, basically.

Richardson: [00:40:24] To the best of your knowledge, did she ever think that he may have—could have done more for the civil rights movement at a particular time, especially in the early years, and was neither pressured from the white establishment or from wherever and resisted some of her—

Jackson: [00:40:41] No, I think that—I think that he felt that—and I think that's one of the reasons why he worked closely with her because I think he felt that under the circumstances, I think, she was doing exceptionally well to accomplish what she was accomplishing because there were many strikes against the movement at that time, and it is hard to get it done. If Ms. Jackson could accomplish what she did do, I think she—he felt that she had really exceeded. Exceeded, in a sense, because of the way circumstances were and he could only do so much. But when he found that she had opened the avenue runway, then he could work because it would be legally he'd have a threshold to move in with. Those with days—in those days, things were still in the beginning stages, and you had to tread lightly. And yet, Mrs. Jackson, she didn't tread lightly, she just kept moving. So I think that—I don't think that he think—that he thought that she could accomplish—could have accomplished more. I think that he thought that she was doing exceedingly well because of the existing circumstances because of the—because of the barriers that you had to overcome. He was willing to help her to the best of his ability under the circumstances, to move ahead. He could move in here and if he couldn't possibly do it, he just let her know, you know, that he would hold it in abeyance. And at the next meeting or the next

time, maybe they could move into that area. But this was a sense, I guess, of working together, and I think they understood one another.

Richardson: [00:43:09] Did you notice any change in your mother's personality or attitudes during this time, during the times when she came in contact with McKeldin or with other elected officials, judges, the like?

Jackson: [00:43:25] When you say a change from—

Richardson: [00:43:27] Her earlier advocacy when, maybe in the thirties, there wasn't as much political con—she may have not had as much political contact as she may have had in the late forties and fifties. And from your own knowledge or from your own experience, do you feel there is any change? Did she change from, you know, how she was working in the thirties and forties to the late forties and fifties? Did she have to (talking at the same time) ___(??) different strategy or different attitude?

Jackson: [00:43:54] Well, I think that she felt, yeah, I think that she felt uh—

Richardson: [00:44:00] Was she more political? Do you think?

Jackson: [00:44:03] I think she became more involved in the political scene because, in those days, in the earlier days, our representatives in government were few in the legislature and as the fight opened up certain areas, then she became more involved politically because she wanted to see more of our race represented. And represented to a point that they would be the persons qualified for a particular position, rather than just being represented in a minority race being represented, but a person that was qualified. And when I say that, I think person sometimes we tend to want to put your__ (??) person as a—we have position opens up, and we just want to get anybody in there, so we put in somebody that—so long as they're Negro. A lot of times, we put in the wrong person. I think she was merely—she was interested merely in trying to get a qualified person, not just a Negro, but a qualified equal, in office. So that he would—when I say qualified, I think qualified not only from the academic sense and character wise, but the person that would truly represent the people, and not be in for some of the interest. And that's where I think the main, she was concerned somebody would come in and then sell out, you know, sell a little ways down the road. That's what I mean by just putting—just because Negro, but certain type of person knew was interested in the welfare of the Negro community and could be a true representative.

Richardson: [00:46:11] I know her family and civil rights took most of her time, but it did she have many interests outside of these two areas, outside of her, and of course, the church too, I realize those are the areas that probably consumed much of her time, but did she have, to your knowledge, interests or (talking at the same time) or is this just—

Jackson: [00:46:32] I think, basically, it was she was interested in civil rights. She was interested in her church life. On Sunday, she used to like to go to not only her own church but several churches to visit. And then she was interested in her family. I think the main—one of the main things, she wanted to make sure that all her children received an education so that they

were able to go out and meet life and be qualified to meet whatever situation came. And I think that these are the three things I think she was interested in: the civil rights movement, the church, and her family. She never was too busy, you know, to be with her family at the times it was necessary. So in between all of these other things that she was involved in, I think she wanted to make sure her family was—everything was taken care of. I think that—I think those three things I—there was nothing really outside of the—. When I say family life, that embraces a lot of times, I remember as a child because we used to get in the living room, you know, and get at the piano. Either my mother would play, or one of my sisters would play, and we'd get around and sing; maybe after dinner, we'd all join—adjourned to the living room, where we would sit around the piano and play and sing, it was family. So these are the types of things that—and interested in their education ____(?). So I would say—when I say the civil rights movement, I mean the interests in the welfare of the—of her people, and I label this under civil rights. So I would say those three things: the civil rights movement cause that embraces so much, and the church, and her family. It's hard to say in which order, but I will say this—(laughing)

Richardson: [00:48:55] Do you think she ever saw herself as a woman pioneer, as as even though the women's movement wasn't in vogue into the late, you know, till the six—to the late sixties, early seventies, did she ever think of herself as a ____ (??) of social ____ (??). But I mean, as as being a leader of women too, in addition to being a leader for human rights, for women's rights too. She didn't make a difference—(talking at the same time) she didn't differentiate between—?

Jackson: [00:49:24] No, I don't think—I do remember her saying, ever so often, that "because you are a woman doesn't necessarily mean that you cannot participate in areas where, usually, a man is supposedly in as the monopoly in this field," and she used to say, "God gave everybody, you know, a mind to think, and a mind to learn, and the ability to do. And therefore, we must follow our own callings and feelings regardless of what race we are, what gender we are, male or female. When there was a job to be done, it should be done regardless." So I don't think that she, more or less, looked upon herself as a leader of women. I think she just looked upon the fact that—that's why I said that she looked upon the idea that she was called to do a job and regardless of whether she felt this, I think that, she was called to do a job regardless whether she was a woman or man, she felt the compulsion to do.

Richardson: [00:51:00] Was she better working, or maybe even both better working one on one individually or with groups? Did she prefer—she more comfortable in a group situation or individual situation?

Jackson: [00:51:12] I think she was more comfortable in a group situation because she felt that the more people that she could contact or the more people that would be available to work or would be willing to work, we could accomplish that much more, you know, because these people represented various areas of the community. And the more people that you have interested the more that you could get accomplished, I think these women feel—

Richardson: [00:51:44] What was her reaction, again the best of your knowledge, to the more militant Blacks of the early sixties—CORE, SNCC, and some of the other groups that were, sort

of, maybe even, you know, becoming the cutting edge of the civil rights movement in the early sixties and sort of leaving the NAACP behind, to a certain extent. What was her reaction to, sort of, a militant like—

Jackson: [00:52:06] Well, I think that she felt that every organization had its particular value in the situation. But she did not want the—these areas to be confused—these various other organizations, to be confused with the work of the NAACP. In other words, just like, for example, the NAACP had their area of work, their Urban League, they proceed differently in than your neighborhood organization. In other words, she believed that—she didn't discount the value of their position. Like or—like the other in the situ—but she felt that they had a definite way of proceeding and that it isn't—it shouldn't conflict with the work of the NAACP. Of course, the NAACP had a concept, and they followed that particular concept, and they could not deviate because one deviation then brings about a confusing effect. So CORE would act in cooperation with other organizations in trying to accomplish certain things. But not—CORE would not be representing the NAACP because the NAACP has its own ideas, and its own procedure, its constitution, and our—its principles, and ethics. So therefore, CORE might be working in a boycott but be working in cooperation with, not representing, the NAACP. So therefore, they had a right to voice how they felt, as long as they weren't linked officially with the NAACP in that capacity. I think this is what she felt. She did not want the confusion, and I think that this was, basically, the standard of the organization at the time. In other words, when CORE spoke for CORE, CORE spoke for CORE; i didn't speak for the NAACP. But it might be working in cooperation or conjunction with the NAACP or in a league in a given situation. But they have their own methods, we have ours. So the militants, we didn't agree or disagree, but that was their way of method, as long as there was no confusion, our way was to go into the courts, you know, with the lawyer, demand the rights which according to the law, but not to bring about violence or anything that.

Richardson: [00:55:17] If you mean, specifically, like, what was the reaction to, like, sit-ins at lunch counters, which are not violent acts by any (talking at the same time)—or really militant acts.

Jackson: [00:55:25] She agreed with that one hundred percent because one of the several places downtown we had a ___(??) times moving to it.

Richardson: [00:55:36] Just a couple examples.

Jackson: [00:55:36] Okay, I think, like, that example is downtown when her grandson was one of the principal persons in setting up sit-ins in the shops. And she was agreed wholeheartedly to that, but she, more or less, I think, was in alignment with Martin Luther King's spirit. Don't return—even though they might create violence, don't return it, if necessary, be arrested. But she was in line with the sit-ins and the demonstrations as long as there wasn't violence involved. That is to create violence or to start up violence, you know. So I think that she was in line with the sit-ins and demonstrations wholeheartedly.

Richardson: [00:56:33] What was your reaction to the anti-Vietnamese War protests of the mid and late sixties? Did she—? (unintelligible)

Jackson: [00:56:45] No, I don't think that, you see, this is hard for me to say too, I—basically because, see, during the sixties, I was in California, and I know that she was still going strong, but as to her position, I've never heard her voice, even when I came back. Of course, when I did—when I returned because, as you know, she was well up in years, and she had retired. But she was president of the Baltimore Branch for twenty-three years. But I don't—I never did hear of her—any voicing, so I couldn't say exactly or—

Richardson: [00:57:38] Your instances, probably, especially in California too, of the more militant civil rights group being allied with anti-war groups for a common—for ending the war and also for achieving civil rights, I just wondered if she ever entered into any—(talking at the same time)

Jackson: [00:57:53] Well, I know that she believed—I know that she definitely believed in peace, and she didn't believe in violence, and I know she didn't think that war was necessary. But now, as to anti, you know, I don't know that position, but I know she believed in peace and she believed that God—God would bring about his own way of dealing with the situation and for us to antagonize or incite, you know, God would make the retribution necessary, just believe this. But I know she believed in peace she didn't—but she believed that she could do what she could do, but the events of mankind, whatever preceded, was something. But she could stand on her own and believe things could be settled peacefully instead of through violence.

Richardson: [00:58:59] Just one last question, was she optimistic towards the end of her life? Was she optimistic about the future of civil rights and race relations in the United States? Do you think, basically—

Jackson: [00:59:08] I don't think she was optimistic. I think that she had a feeling that it will come, and she had a feeling that whenever the groundwork—if the groundwork was laid and that it was sufficiently—the fundamentals were sufficiently carried out, basically, according to the way things were set up, that there could be nothing else but success. Again, in other words, she agreed—she believed, like, for civil rights and civil rights when it was passed into effect. She believed that the groundwork had been laid for that, without that groundwork, she didn't believe that—and this is one other thing, she didn't believe that courts automatically render the decision in your favor or that the president or officials in varying capacities would automatically give you this because it because it was right or it was just she believed there was groundwork that proceeded, in other words. And some of the groundwork lay was bringing pressure to bear upon interested parties or persons who were in a capacity to render decision one way or the other. But unless that pressure was put on them to say you might—they know that your rights are due, you know. But if you don't say—if you're not up there forcefully, and in groups, and with petitions, etcetera, and put the pressure on them because they have pressures from the other end, so, but when the pressure is placed on them, they have to give way. So this is what I believe that she wasn't optimistic about the end. I think if optimism was a part of it, I think that the—it was that if you didn't lay sufficient groundwork, then your end results—

end of interview