

**An Interview With**

**MR. CHARLES MOORE**

**June 20, 1977**

**Interviewed by**

**Mary M. Haynes**

**Mississippi**

**Department of Archives and History**

**of the**

**Washington County Library System**

**Oral History Project:  
Greenville and Vicinity**

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MARY M. HAYNES: This interview is being conducted by Mary M. Haynes with Mr. Charles Moore on June 30, 1977, at his home at 1036 Irene Street, here in Greenville. This interview is for the Oral History Project of the Washington County Library System of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Charles, if it is satisfactory with you, I would like to be less formal, and simply address you from here on as "Charles".

MOORE: Fine.

HAYNES: The first thing we need to get through in our interview is some biographical information. We need to know where you were born, dates, who your parents were, and that kind of information.

MOORE: I was born July 20, 1926, here in Greenville, and my father's name is Will Moore, who presently resides at 437 East Alexander. My mother's name was Lillian Moore, who passed away in 1958. That's about it.

HAYNES: Can you tell us something about your schooling, since you were born here in Greenville?

MOORE: I attended the Public Schools here in Greenville, graduated from Coleman High School in 1947. After that, I attended a year at Coleman Vocational School, where I took auto mechanics.

HAYNES: I know that you were in World War II.  
What about your Armed Forces tenure?

MOORE: I was drafted in World War II, and served during my tenure in the U. S. Marine Corps, being discharged in August, 1946. I spent approximately twenty months with the Marine Corps, serving overseas in Guam, a Marianna's Island in the South Pacific. I went overseas October of 1945, after the war was over with, and returned the next August, 1946. I was discharged about the first of September. Of course, I came home then and spent the rest of my time in Greenville.

HAYNES: One of the most essential reasons for this interview has to do with your involvement in the Civil Rights activities of the 60's and 70's. I would like to ask you, first, what prompted you to become involved in the Civil Rights.

MOORE: Well, I guess the main thing that prompted me was my thorough disgust with the situation that existed in Greenville and the South, and I had to make up my mind, if I were going to live here, that something had to be done to change it, and, having made that decision, it was only natural that I, myself, had to get involved in it. I could not sit still and let someone else do it for me.

HAYNES: All right, I would like to ask: did your experiences in the Armed Forces have anything to do with helping you to become more involved?

MOORE: Well, you might say, the Marine Corps taught everybody that was part of it to stand up and be a man, and the manner in which blacks were treated, even after the War, although we were supposedly returning heroes, we were still denied our human rights, Constitutional rights, as Black Americans, and that's one thing the Marine Corps taught me, and that was to stand up and be a man, and not to knuckle under to any oppression or what-have-you. So, I guess, in that respect, it helped me to grow up; so I guess you could say that it had a bearing on my decision to become involved.

HAYNES: How did you first become involved in Civil Rights activities? Or, maybe, can you remember your first involvement?

MOORE: Well, ever since I began, I became involved in various activities, which could be classified, I guess, as Community Services, rather than Civil Rights. I like to think that my first involvement in Civil Rights was an organization that had to do with trying to get an improvement in the recreational facilities here in Greenville for blacks. We formed an organization called the Greenville Recreational Committee sometime in 1958, with Dr. Noble R. Frisby as Chairman, and other people who were involved were Dr. Page, Dr. Yeldell, Dr. C. B. Clark, and a number of other individuals that don't come readily to mind; but our stated goal was to improve the facilities of the recreational situation here in

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Greenville for Black Youth. At that time, the Recreation - the Greenville Park Commission, shall we say, spent about ninety per cent of their budget on white youth and about ten per cent on black youth; and during the brief period that Committee existed, I think we were successful in getting some things done. So I like to think that that was really the start of my involvement in what could be classified as "Civil Rights".

Now, later on, of course, there was - along about '62 and '63 there came the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee into Mississippi, and they had an office set up here in Greenville, and, as a citizen, I became involved in the activities of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, which we always referred to as SNIC. We were involved in such things as protesting - the specific nature of which I can't recall right now. Anything that had to do with civil rights, we were involved in it. Later on, of course, after SNIC went out of existence, there came into being what was called the Council of Federated Organizations - we called it COFO. This was the one that was really in existence during the heyday of the Civil Rights Movement here in Greenville, along about '63 or '64, the long, hot summer of '64, and we instituted such things as boycotts in downtown Greenville; we formed an organization called Herbert Lee Community Center. Herbert Lee spearheaded the effort for integration of the

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public schools here in Greenville.

HAYNES: Let me interrupt you just long enough to ask about the person for whom the Center was named. Just who was Herbert Lee?

MOORE: Herbert Lee was a Civil Rights Activist out of Amite County, who was very active in voter registration during the late '50's, and he was killed by a member of the Mississippi State Legislature, named E. H. Hurst, if I recall correctly. Lee was one of the early heroes of the Civil Rights Movement. E. H. Hurst was never tried, and, of course, was never brought to justice. They called it "Justifiable Homocide", but, of course, we all knew that it was murder because he was involved in registering his people to vote. And we named the Center for this hero of the early Civil Rights Movement.

HAYNES: So you went from community service to Civil Rights, first with recreation and then with Herbert Lee, and after working with Herbert Lee you became directly involved in trying to help better school conditions. Is that right?

MOORE: Well, yes. Herbert Lee spearheaded the drive to integrate the school system here in Greenville. When Greenville public schools decided on a "Freedom-of-Choice" Plan, this was all we had to work with, so we worked within that context, and Herbert Lee led the drive to seek out children and parents who were willing for their children to attend all formerly all-white schools, so that we could have a representative group the first September immediately following the decision

to have Freedom of Choice.

HAYNES: What about your kids, Mr. Moore? I know there are five.

MOORE: Yes, my children were among the first to integrate the Greenville Public Schools. My daughters Iris and Janis were among the very first to register at E. E. Bass in the seventh grade. This was a decision that they made, young though they were. I did not make it for them; they made it for themselves. I am very proud of that.

HAYNES: Now, Gregory and Charles?

MOORE: Gregory and Charles came at a later time. They both attended Greenville High School - and, of course, Stanley. All of my children attended the integrated school system.

We were successful that very first year to the extent of getting 125, if I recall correctly, black students enrolled in what had previously been all-white schools - the elementary, junior high, and high schools. This was no small effort, I can assure you, because it took a lot of arm-twisting. You know, people were afraid. They were afraid of what would happen to their children; afraid of what would happen to themselves; afraid of being fired from their jobs. They were afraid for their children being stoned or attacked at the schools, because this was what was happening all over the South, and Greenville was not immune to this; some of this did happen in Greenville,

too, but we monitored the situation after having gotten the schools integrated to some extent.

Herbert Lee also monitored the situation, and we kept a task force ready and available if at any time there was any trouble in the school system. We did anything we could to make the year go as smoothly as possible, and, I may add, unfortunately, without any real help from any authorities in the school system, because they were still fighting. They were going along with it because this decision had been made, but they certainly weren't doing anything to help.

HAYNES: To help the situation.

MOORE: Not at all, so the burden lay with us to keep things going and to keep them as orderly as possible, because many children were kicked out of school during that first year for little or nothing - things that, under ordinary circumstances, they would not have been put out of school. Of course, we had to argue each case and try to get them back in school. It was simply because the administration was still fighting integration.

HAYNES: A few moments ago, you referred to the Summer of '64 as "The Long, Hot Summer of '64". Is there a particular reason for that reference?

MOORE: Well, this is what it is called. All indications leading up to the Summer of 1964 were that it was going to be what everyone considered a "Long, Hot Summer". This was a term that had been used by the Press all over the

country, because it was also the Spring of that year that SNIC was recruiting students from the Northern Colleges to come down here to the Southern States to help with the Voter-Registration Drive. And, of course, there were those, Senators Eastland and Stennis, making public proclamations against this and firing up the white populace, so that it was almost a foregone conclusion that there would be violence that summer, and it was generally considered it would be a long, hot summer, because we were determined to go forth with the Civil Rights movement. We were not going to be turned back. And there were whites just as determined that it would never happen. And, of course, you may recall that this was also the Summer that Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman were murdered over at Philadelphia, Mississippi.

HAYNES: Was there any violence in Greenville?

MOORE: We did not have any killings in Greenville, but, yes, there was violence. There were instances in which individuals were beaten by the Police, by individual whites; there were arrests made that should not have been made, but I will say in all due respect, violence was held to a minimum here in Greenville. The City Fathers apparently decreed that there would be no violence, and, for the most part, it was held to a minimum, but there was some.

HAYNES: From time to time, I have heard individuals credit the then Chief of Police, Burnley, with having something to do with holding down the violence. And, of course, you were

in a position to know whether or not this is so.

MOORE: Yes, in all due respects, he was instrumental in keeping violence down to a minimum. He was the Chief Law Enforcement Officer in this area, and he was following orders that had been handed down not only by the City Council, because City Council had their boss. We had some influential people in Greenville who -- and at that time they had what they called the "Friday Evening Tea Club". All the big shots used to meet across the lake, and they'd make decisions that affected everything in Greenville, and the City Council went along with what these "Rich White Fathers" wanted done. And they made the decision that violence would be held down to a minimum, at least, as much as possible. Chief Burnley was following his orders. Of course, he is Mayor now. He is singing a different tune now, but I know of some things that happened during those years that were hardly a credit to his being Chief of Police; some of the things that he had black policemen do against their own people that certainly would not be a credit to the Force. Of course, they all say in the official line that Greenville was better than other places, and when they said it so much, quite frankly, a lot of people believed that, and this made it even more difficult for us to get a real strong Civil Rights Movement going.

HAYNES: All right. While you and your groups were working and trying to better Civil Rights, did you have any occasion to come in contact with national figures, either their

coming here, or your going places to deal with them?

MOORE: Oh, yes.

HAYNES: Will you tell us about some of those?

MOORE: Oh, I've had the pleasure of meeting Roy Wilkins. I did not have the pleasure of meeting Dr. King personally. I met Stokley Carmichael and Julian Bond and a number of others. John Lewis, who is presently the Director of Voter Education Project out of Atlanta, Georgia, I met on more than one occasion. I met Vernon Jordan, who is the National Urban League Director now, and any number of others who were either here in Greenville and other places in Mississippi, and, on occasion, when I was out of the state.

HAYNES: So you did do some traveling?

MOORE: Yes, that's -- you must also realize that part of the Civil Rights Movement developed the Head Start Program.

HAYNES: Yes. I want to get to the Head Start Program just a little later, because that's another --

MOORE: Most of my traveling out of the state had to do with this.

HAYNES: Yes. Were these national figures helpful in any way as far as the Civil Rights Movement was concerned?

MOORE: They provided a symbol, you know, for all of us to look up to, and some people to look up to, but the work had to be done by "grass roots" people here in Greenville, those

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of us who lived here, those of us who were going to have to live with whatever situation developed. We had to get out and do the "dirty" work; go from house to house, talk to people, get them involved, try to get people registered to vote, try to get some children registered in school. We had to follow this up with additional visits, especially with the children, because they were having a hard time that first year in school. The teachers were hostile, the students were hostile. I, myself, had to pull my two daughters off the bus they were riding to school, because they were getting in a fight every day. We just had to sacrifice and get them to school by other means.

These were just some of the things that were happening. It was a constant thing. Something happened almost every day, and it kept us busy. Even voter registration, where you would get people registered to vote, and then when it came time for the election, we had to go back and take them by the hand down there to get them to vote, because, although the official stance here in Greenville and Washington County was a more or less lenient one, as compared with some other areas of the state. There was that fear that existed in people's minds that they would lose their job, or that they would be barred at the polls if they attempted to vote. It took years of conditioning to get this - to eliminate this fear in black people's minds - and I'm not even sure now that it is all gone.

HAYNES: I know that in an effort of this magnitude,

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financing certainly is a problem. Is it possible for you to give us some idea of how the movement was financed, without revealing information that, perhaps, would be considered crucial?

MOORE: Believe it or not, there was not as much financing involved as a lot of people thought. Most of it just came from blood, sweat and tears. Of course, those of us who were involved received no pay. What we did, we did out of concern for the community, and there just wasn't any money involved as far as most of us. There was some financing. We received finances from out-of-state sources before SNIC and COFO came into being, which was instrumental in raising funds for some of these kids that were down here. Some of them stayed down here all year. They were instrumental in raising funds in their own communities, their churches, from various organizations that their parents were associated with back in their own home state; and the finances that we got came a little at a time, five dollars here, ten dollars there, and sometimes as much as Fifty Dollars, but no large amounts of money that I ever knew of ever came from any Civil Rights people that I was ever connected with. Most of it was just sweat.

HAYNES: I know that in 1965, Federal Registrars were sent to Mississippi. Were any of those Registrars sent to Greenville.

MOORE: Oh, yes. I can't remember how many and I

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can't remember the specific time, but there have been Federal Registrars here in Greenville.

HAYNES: In doing Civil Rights work, you worked along with some people that, perhaps, you still remain close to because of the work that was begun then. Can you tell us some of those?

MOORE: Just names?

HAYNES: Yes, just names.

MOORE: There were a lot of people involved in the Civil Rights Movement. The ones that I was more closely associated with were the ones, of course, that were with the Herbert Lee Community Center, and to name a few of those: Dr. Matthew Page, who served as Chairman for a long time, and I was Vice-Chairman; there were people like Bernadine Young.

HAYNES: What was her job?

MOORE: Well, she was a very active member, one of the members of the Board of Directors; and Betty Grayson, also a member of the Board of Directors; Sam McGee, a member of the Board of Directors; and Lizzie Howard, Carl Jordan, Jimmy Thornton, and others too numerous to mention.

HAYNES: Let me ask you a question that comes to mind. Now, you said, from the beginning, you began with community involvement, and you mentioned names like - I remember you mentioned Dr. Clark and Dr. Frisby. Did the same, more or less, the same group of people continue with Civil Rights involvement as had begun this earlier community involvement?

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MOORE: Well, some of them did. Some fell by the wayside, because I think there are things we can't forget, and we get more militant. In the area of Civil Rights this was apparently not to the liking of some, so they fell by the wayside. But we thought of shifting gears, and those of us who were going into Civil Rights, we just went ahead, and those that fell by the wayside, we just let them fall. We picked up other people - people like Thelma Barnes, who was involved with Herbert Lee for a period there.

As things progressed, of course, there developed a difference in philosophy between some of us who were involved with Herbert Lee, and there were others who were leaning in the direction of Delta Ministry, and, inevitably, there came a split within the ranks. Those who felt that their philosophy was espoused by Delta Ministry went with the program being developed by Delta Ministry, which, incidentally, came into Mississippi at the end of the "Long, Hot Summer of '64", along about September or October, 1964. For a while there, we all worked together.

Herbert Lee really served as an umbrella for various programs that were being developed in the community, and the grand design was for Herbert Lee to be the parent organization for all the various programs. Inevitably, we split apart, and some of us stayed with Herbert Lee and others went with Delta Ministry. But, even though we divided ourselves, and I

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think this was counter-productive for the Civil Rights Movement, we did manage to work together, united, when there was a common goal.

HAYNES: During this period, did you personally experience any particular pressures?

MOORE: Oh, yes, there is no question about that. There was an effort made to fire me from my job. I won't name any names, because I don't think it is really that important, but there was an effort made concerning some officials within the Post Office Department and some officials within the city government to have me fired from the Post Office. Fortunately, the Post Office didn't work that way, and I'm still working for them.

HAYNES: Do you sometimes get the feeling that right will out, regardless?

MOORE: Sometimes. Sometimes I wonder. Then, on the other hand, perhaps I expect too much. I have not been satisfied with the progress that has been made here in Greenville. I am not satisfied right now with the way things are in Greenville, but a lot of people seem to be happy the way things are, so maybe I expect too much. Sometimes right will out. Sometimes it doesn't work that way. I've seen some things that have happened that have scarred people who will carry scars for the rest of their lives because of something that happened within the Civil Rights Movement.

HAYNES: Do you realize any special rewards from

having become involved in Civil Rights? I am referring just to Civil Rights, because I want to get into your involvement with the Head Start Program later.

MOORE: Well, the rewards with any community service or activity of an intrinsic nature is the feeling that you've done the best you could, and you see things begin to develop and have a sense of well-being that you've done a job well and you've seen the fruits of your labor. Other than that, no. As far as any financial goals, or something like that, I'm afraid that is a myth a lot of people believe, but just never happened in the Civil Rights Movement. There never was that much money involved.

HAYNES: Can you think of some things that you might have done differently if you had the chance to do them over again?

MOORE: Well, I don't know if I would be successful, but I think if there is anything I'd like to do over again, it would probably be to go back and try to keep the Civil Rights Movement from splitting apart, because I think that this hurt our progress. We could have progressed much faster, and by this time we would have achieved much more if we had stayed together, but the difference in philosophy caused us to split.

I think that we have come to the point now that we can talk together and work together although we might not agree with everything each might do. But during those times, there was a power struggle - a struggle for control of the masses - because whichever way the people went, this was where the power

lay, and this, of course, was going to get the attention of the city fathers, the news media, the national news media, or what-have-you. All of these angles were brought into play to try to influence the power structure of Greenville and Washington County into making some changes. There were many times, of course, that on sheer publicity alone, we were able to accomplish some things.

HAYNES: This is true. Now, I know that your civic work in Greenville has been of a three-fold nature. First, you were dealing basically with civic responsibility in trying to better recreational facilities. You became next involved in Civil Rights, and then, later, you became involved in the Head Start Programs. Will you tell us something now of your initial involvement and what led to the Head Start Programs?

MOORE: Well, yes. In fact, we still consider the Head Start Program a part of the Civil Rights Movement. It grew out of the Civil Rights struggle. The decision, of course, was made in Washington to form the Head Start Program, but it was a result of the country-wide pressure of the Civil Rights Movement that helped to bring these things about. It was a part of the "Great Society", the anti-poverty program as envisioned by President Johnson. The Herbert Lee Community Center was the first sponsoring organization for a Head Start Program here in Greenville, under the Child Development Group of Mississippi, which is called CDGM.

During the summer of 1965, there was a summer program, just a summer program, but it was the Greenville component of CDGM

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operation, sponsored by and under the direction of Herbert Lee Community Center. In fact, it was after this initial Head Start Program that really split the government within the organization.

HAYNES: What you are really telling us is that Herbert Lee has been a viable part of the Greenville Community for quite some time.

MOORE: Indeed so, yes, and it still exists, of course.

HAYNES: That's good. What was the name of the first Head Start Program that you worked with?

MOORE: The first was a multi-county operation, funded through Mary Holmes Junior College to CDGM - Child Development Group of Mississippi. This was a summer program. It had to have a sponsoring organization here in Greenville, and Herbert Lee became that sponsoring organization. At the end of the summer, there were those of us who felt that what we needed in Washington County was a local base - locally controlled Head Start Program - rather than being part of a multi-county organization. So this is one of the things that helped precipitate the split within Herbert Lee. The majority of Herbert Lee pulled away from the CDGM, Head Start Program, and drew up our own proposal and submitted it for funding to OEO, and we were funded for a summer program for 1966. There were many things, of course, that happened between September, 1965, and June, 1966, when we began operations, but there's hardly any point in going into those things.

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HAYNES: Who were some of the people directly involved with you in working with the initial Head Start Programs?

MOORE: Are you speaking of the local one which became the Mid-Delta Educational Association?

HAYNES: Yes.

MOORE: Well, there were so many people, you know. If I sit here and attempt to name them, I would leave out a lot of people. Suffice it to say Herbert Lee was the sponsoring organization. We did the surveys. We got people who were involved in the community to come in and work with us street-by-street and block-by-block, getting names of children who were eligible for Head Start Programs, with some background information as far as their parents were concerned, the income of the family, and all this sort of thing. This was one of the first things we had to do.

Another one of the first things was to get a charter for the organization, realizing, of course, during that time it was out of the question for Herbert Lee to get a charter from the State of Mississippi, because it was a Civil Rights Organization, and there was no way that Heber Ladner was going to grant a charter to Herbert Lee Community Center. We decided to go for another, and thus came into being the Mid-Delta Educational Association. There were some whites who were involved with us. From the very beginning, it was an integrated situation. However, the bulk of the work lay with the blacks, the

people who were involved with the Herbert Lee. We were the ones who had to do all the work. The whites lent us their name, and, of course, eventually we formed a Board of Directors, and they participated to the extent of becoming involved on the Board of Directors, but, as far as the day-to-day work of developing a program, this was our responsibility. I guess it's only fair to mention some of the whites who were involved with us at that time, because they took a step that they were criticized in their own community, I am sure, and I'm sure it wasn't an easy one for them to do. But some of the people who were involved are still prominent here in the City of Greenville. Jimmy Robertson was one, and his wife, Jan. Later on, Billy Percy, who is a member of the Greenville School Board now, served on the Board of Directors; Father Sanders, who was the Priest at the Episcopal Church; Geneva Rasmussen was very actively involved at that time; Hodding Carter and The Delta Democrat-Times always gave us excellent support in our effort in the newspaper. In other words, they kind of stayed in the background, but they did lend their support. Some of them started and fell by the wayside. Some of them started, I am afraid, with ulterior motives, because there was always that struggle to maintain control of our organization; there were those who attempted to take control from the black community and place it in the hands of a few whites who were involved in it; and, some of them, after deciding that they were not going to be able to do this, just fell by the wayside. But I'd rather not name names.

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HAYNES: Did you have trouble at the beginning getting parents to send their children to the Head Start Programs?

MOORE: Oh, no. From the very beginning, the Black Community embraced the Head Start concept. You must realize that this was something that only white middle class children had had heretofore, a pre-school education. They still do not have a pre-school program even in public schools now - at least, not the year-round. They have a pre-school summer program to kind of get children ready for the first grade. But, up until that time, a pre-school program was not heard of for black children. So it was no problem whatsoever to sell the idea to the Black Community.

HAYNES: Now, when your group first began these Head Start Centers, did you have many? Were there just one or two? How did you begin your initial operation?

MOORE: Well, once we knew how much we were going to be funded for and the approximate number of children that were going to be involved, then we set about the business of trying to find centers. We were not able to develop the centers overnight. We started with some that were quite inferior, in all truthfulness. It was only through later efforts that we were able to get the Centers to come up to the specifications outlined for child-care. There were some instances where we just had to take a house and renovate it for use of a Head Start Center. The better buildings were all just about always denied to us, with the exception of the center down there in Hollandale,

a Community Center, and they decided to rent it to us. It was ideal for a Head Start Center.

HAYNES: Now, what you're saying to me is that even though we have been through this era of Civil Rights activity, and things in Greenville were supposed to be just a little bit better, when the time came where you did have money, where you were in a position to try to make better citizens of the children, you were still denied places --

MOORE: Well, it was made difficult for us, yes. We did not get the cooperation of people who owned property that we could use. You must also realize, you know, this was 1965, one year after the "Long, Hot Summer". It was still tense. Head Start was a "dirty name" to most white people, and still a dirty name to some, I'm afraid, in some areas, so it was not - although we had money - our first grant was for approximately \$420,000.00. There were still those who fought the program, did not want their business or want to see the program succeed; and, incidentally, the whites had an opportunity to get Head Start before we did, and they turned thumbs down on it, because the Greenville school system was offered Head Start and they turned it down. Dr. Thompson went to a meeting in Cleveland, Mississippi, at which people from OEO met with School Superintendents from all over the state, and just virtually dropped Head Start into their laps, and they said "No", because it was an integrated situation. They were still fighting that battle. And, of course, we were glad that they did, because it gave us

an opportunity to move in that direction. But they had the first shot at it. But, after we had money, there were still problems, many problems, in fact, so many I would not attempt to tell them all. The many times we used to stay up until one and two o'clock at night, meeting, trying to iron out the various problems that existed in the operation of the program; and, even after we became more stabilized, there was always that problem of funding year after year, because the Governor of the State of Mississippi would never sign our grant. And there was always a political maneuver that had to be instituted to over-ride his veto. He would veto the program. OEO could over-ride his veto, but before they could act, they would have to have some indication from the community that they were still interested in this program and still wanted it; and, of course, this meant that we had to "get the troops" out again, you know, and go out into the community and gather signatures for petitions, and some time send people to Atlanta and Washington to feel out cases, and it was just a struggle, year after year. It has smoothed down now, but it wasn't always that way.

HAYNES: Were your centers just here in Greenville, or did you take in a larger area?

MOORE: From the very beginning, our program was county-wide. We had centers in Greenville, Leland, Hollandale, Arcola, and one on the Arcola-Wayside Road, which served the southern area of Washington County, including Glen Allan. The first summer, we had a Center in Glen Allan, but it was very

inadequate, but we just couldn't find an adequate place in Glen Allan, so we just moved the Center down to a building on the Arcola-Wayside Road and transferred the children.

HAYNES: Can you think of any special rewards, and I use the word "rewards", but I'm not speaking necessarily in monetary terms, but is there anything about the kind of work that you have done itself that makes it a very special kind of thing?

MOORE: Ah, very. Very much so. It is something that I will never forget. It is something that will always be a part of me, and the rewards are the fruits of our labors before us now. Of course, there are many people who will never give us credit for some of the things that happened here, but we know it, and any right-thinking person knows that some of the things that have come to pass right here in Greenville would never have happened without the pressure of the Civil Rights Movement. In Head Start, specifically, I look at people who came into the program -- there were rewards other than the children. I remember one very good instance. There was a lady who had a child in Hollandale who was very sick, stayed sickly all the time, and apparently all that child needed was a well-balanced diet, because this child came into the program - she enrolled this child in the program. She had taken the child to doctors and what-have-you, and the child just stayed sick all the time. And, within months after this child had enrolled in the Head Start Program,

the child was healthy and robust, and this Mama was singing the praises of Head Start from one end of the town to the other; that there was nothing better than Head Start, because she had seen her child come to life. Things like that you just don't forget.

HAYNES: You don't forget. You have mentioned children. Of course, when you say "Head Start", we think in terms of the children and programs for the children. Can you not also relate examples or instances where adults, those who work, or perhaps some of the parents have been directly benefitted by these programs?

MOORE: Oh, yes, no doubt about it. Our philosophy was "the only way we can really help this child is to improve his environment." So our goal was not just to bring this child to the Center six hours a day, give him a well-balanced diet, give him some educational courses, not to be confused with educational-type courses offered in public schools, because, as you know, pre-schoolers are entirely different. The main thing we do for the child is to try to get him ready - him or her - ready to go to school to fit into the environment, and, of course, to improve his total environment, we had to work with the parent, we had to work with the community; we had to try to do things like get streets paved in various places; we formed "block" clubs and received a lot of publicity and the ire of our good Senator Stennis. He didn't like that at all because he

considered this a threat to his own power.

We formed block clubs, and there are still block clubs that exist here in Greenville, Leland, and Hollandale. They were started by the Mid-Delta Educational Association. Although they are not associated with the Head Start Program now, they are still functioning. They are community organizations, and I know of no instance here in Greenville in which a block went to the City Fathers and asked for something that they didn't get it, whether it be a street light, whether it be recreational equipment for the park close to that area, or whether it was for better garbage pick-up, or what-have-you, and there was not one single instance in which these Block Clubs were denied anything they asked for. This was probably one of the best things that we did. Unfortunately, a lot of people still didn't see the benefit of it.

HAYNES: So, you say, then, that the formation of Head Start Programs not only helped to make for better communities with the organization of Block Clubs and things of that nature.

MOORE: And many others. Block Clubs is just one instance. There are many other things that we have - parent meetings. We had meetings with the parents. We had a Social Service. Our members would participate in this. We had study group meetings at which we would advise them of their civil rights, their right to vote, their right to register, how to vote, and, of course, later how to use voting machines. Incidentally, one time, getting a machine from Washington County and setting it up as a model. We showed people actually how to operate this machine.

These are the sorts of things. Whatever need existed, we tried to service that need. In other words, people who were not aware of what their rights were as far as welfare was concerned, as far as food stamps were concerned - things of this nature. Whatever the needs of that family were, we tried to service that. We were not always successful. Sometimes the need was greater than that which we had to offer, but we did what we could.

Of course, another aspect of the program was people who were hired to work with the program. From the beginning, we concentrated our effort on trying to get people who were less educated, some who had little or no formal education, and place them in positions we thought they could handle. We didn't try to take an uneducated person and make that individual a teacher. But we could take a person with a seventh or eighth grade education and make them a teacher's aide and put them to work with a person who had more education, and they could thereby learn something themselves. And I think this is one aspect of the program, though it took a long time to develop, that I believe was very successful. Even now, there are people who started out with seventh or eighth grade educations who are now certified to teach pre-school children, which means that they have two years of college, because this is what it takes in the State of Mississippi to become certified to teach pre-school children.

People who progressed - at first they got their GED test, got their high school equivalents, and we developed programs within the Head Start program to get them enrolled in

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colleges, and there were special courses offered for all of our teachers - eight-week courses, I believe it was. One group of ours went in the beginning to Tuskegee Institute. This was an eight-week Head Start Program, a kind of new concept program, of course, that they had to cram in eight weeks, which would ordinarily take a year of normal school. And I think it was fantastic the way people absorbed it and were able to bring it back and put it into practice.

We had a sort of comraderie, I think, in that very first program, that we'll never see again. Everybody was putting his shoulder to the wheel, and really trying to make the program a success. Now, as I said, we had this program that was developed to upgrade assistant teachers to the place where they could become teachers; to upgrade teachers where they could be Center Directors, or maybe directors of departments, or what-have-you. Always keeping them in school. As I said, some have progressed all the way from an eighth grade education to two or three years of college. I would suspect, although I haven't been associated with it for the past few years, that some of those people have their degrees now.

HAYNES: Some of those people who started out with you?

MOORE: Started out with an eighth-grade education.

HAYNES: And have received their college degrees now?

MOORE: Yes. Of course, some have left the program and gone to other fields, naturally, which is good, too, because this

also was one of our intentions almost from the very beginning. We intended to be an agency where we could develop people to the point where they could go out into the community and get other jobs. This would serve the community even better.

HAYNES: And give you the space to constantly keep training?

MOORE: Training new people, right.

HAYNES: All right, I asked you earlier about Centers in places other than Greenville, and you said that you dealt with the entire county. Now, I know that in Leland there is a Center that is named for you and one other individual. Will you tell us something about that Center and the people who perhaps worked there at that time or were instrumental in getting this?

MOORE: Well, this Center was named for Dr. Matthew Page and myself. It came at a time, really, after Dr. Page and I had resigned from the Board of Directors, and the people who were still involved with the program decided that our services to the program were of such a nature that it deserved some honor, and so they decided to name the Center after Dr. Page and myself. Mrs. Rejohnna Brown was director of the program at that time. She is presently a Professor, I believe, at Jackson State University. She is Dr. Brown now. I think she was probably more instrumental than anyone else in getting the Center named after Dr. Page and myself.

HAYNES: I kept asking you about rewards. That was one

of the things I expected you to mention, the kind of thing that is lasting.

MOORE: Right. This is true, also, speaking of rewards. When I resigned from the Delta Educational Association as a Director, I didn't resign from the organization. I am still a member of the organization, although I was not in a lead position, but the organization honored me and Dr. Page with a banquet and we received gifts and awards of that nature. It was a memorable affair. This was also something that is lasting. You never forget these sorts of things, and I have some material things as a result of that banquet.

HAYNES: Good. Now, you said that you did resign from the Mid-Delta Educational Association?

MOORE: Right.

HAYNES: You are still involved with Herbert Lee?

MOORE: Yes, I am still President of Herbert Lee.

HAYNES: What is the nature of Herbert Lee's services now?

MOORE: Well, our service is basically helping the needy. We limit ourselves mostly to helping the needy people who are less fortunate and need financial assistance or guidance or whatever other assistance we may be able to lend, taking into consideration our limited number of members now. We have dwindled in membership and we don't have the people to do the things we used to do, so we do what we can, and it mostly deals with needy families who sometimes need their rent paid or need lights or gas turned on, and things like that. This is the main thing we do.

HAYNES: The essence of what you are telling me is that you are still doing the same kind of services, and that is a service to the community.

MOORE: That's true, but on a more limited base.

HAYNES: Can you tell us a little more about your travels in connection with the kind of work you were doing?

MOORE: As a member of the Board of Directors of Mid-Delta Educational Association, I was also Chairman of the Personnel Committee. All of the people hired for the Program had to be funneled through my Committee, and, in this respect, I attended many functions out of the State. I made several trips to Atlanta to attend Head Start conferences. I made one trip to Washington to attend a Head Start Conference. I made many a trip within the State, to Jackson, and other areas.

To keep up-grading the program, Dr. Page and I were probably more involved than the average Board of Directors would be in a program of that nature. There are many times I would say I was as tired as some of the people who were being paid to work!

HAYNES: Thank you, Mr. Moore. This terminates our interview. I would like to express the appreciation of the Washington County Library and Mississippi Department of Archives and History for your information concerning your involvement during the Fifties and Sixties, and the kind of work you have done for the people of Washington County.

MOORE: I thank you very much. Let me add this one

thing, since you were placing emphasis on awards. I was selected to be in "Personalities of the South", a book that was published in 1971, I believe it was, and I was selected to be in that, and that is one other recognition that I received.

HAYNES: Thank you again.

(End of Interview)

(Transcribed by Alice Comings Nagel)

FINAL  
May 24, 1978  
Alice C. Nagel

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