

Excerpt from Oral History Interview Mother Rosa Broadous

Mother Rosa Broadous was interviewed by Emory Holmes II in 2002 as part of the Northeast Valley Oral History Project. Broadous was born in 1918 in Gould, Arkansas. She founded Calvary Baptist Church in Pacoima with her husband Reverend Hillery T. Broadous, and served as the church's missions director. In this clip she talks about the racism she encountered in Arkansas in the 1920s that impacted her education.

Transcript:

EH: Ok, can you tell me about the racial climate? Did you have any experience...did you understand that you were excluded from certain....?

MB: Oh, yes. I can remember one incident, when we were walking home from school and I wasn't looking where I was going and I almost walked into a white person and got a real nasty shove...

EH: Hmmm

MB: ...simply because I was black. I was on the right side of the street. They should have been on the other side but you don't move for me [laugh].

EH: How old were you then?

MB: And, the...uh...We had an elementary through the eighth grade. That was the school for us. Uh, the Rosenwald Foundation had built a lot of schools...

EH: Quite a lot of schools

MB: ...and there was not a Rosenwald in the part of town where I was. It was one in the west side of town and we seemed to feel that they had better equipment, even though it was for black kids only. And there was an elementary school for white kids that we had to pass every day, going to-and-fro. There was a high school for white kids which we...I never saw the inside of it. Uh, the teachers were good.

EH: Were your teachers black or white?

MB: Black.

EH: Your teachers were black.

MB: Yes. That's why I know more than most of my kids [laughs].

EH: Well, what do you mean by that?

MB: I used to tell my children, "You mean to tell me..." –whatever grade they were– "and you don't know that?" But, I had good teachers and they were caring teachers. And not only for the intellectual side but they wanted us to be all-around...

EH: Well black people had only been like, 60 years out of slavery. I mean a very short amount of time out of slavery. Where did they get the knowledge? Where do you believe they got that knowledge to be able to teach?

MB: Well, I think most of them, that I can recall, had gone to some religious school.

EH: Ok.

MB: And that's what happened when I finished the 8th grade at this school. The AME Zion Church had a small school right there in the same community and they went to the 12th grade.

EH: Ok.

MB: So, for the 9th grade, that was where I went. And, of course, somebody burned the school.

EH: Hmmm. How did that happen? Was it an accident or was it a....?

MB: No, it was not an accident and all the thing I could think about was that was the first time that I had been able go to a library because they had a pretty nice library there. They had built a library, well, I don't think they built one, but they had taken part of the City Hall, uh, for a library and I was so elated, then discovered we were not allowed to use it.

EH: What year was this?

MB: This had to be, I had to be... about... what... 1920-something...

EH: Ok.

MB: ...1930.

EH: How old do you think you were?

MB: And, uh, one of the intellectual persons that we knew had gone to use the library...

EH: Hmmm

MB: ...this was an adult, male, and they'd beaten him up.

EH: Hmmm

MB: So, the next year, uh, that's when my mother and father sent me to Durmot, Arkansas, to the Baptist school that was over th...that was there, and that's where I finished high school.

EH: Ok, and how old were you when you graduated?

MB: Eighteen.

EH: And what was your ambition?

MB: Hmmm?

EH: What was your dream? What did you want to become?

MB: What was...?

EH: What was your dream? What did you want to become?

MB: Oooh. I wanted to be a nurse.

EH: Why? Why?

MB: [Laughs] I don't know. I think...probably, because of the uniform. [Laugh]

EH: [Laughs]