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Inez Davis Oral History Interview for WSNCNW - MMYTT DC Oral History Project

Narrator: Inez Davis

Narrator’s relationship to the topic:

Ms. Inez Davis is a devoted member, leader, and past president of the Washington Section, National Council of Negro Women, Inc. (NCNW). She has an extensive history of participation in numerous activities and programs, as her interest in NCNW began at an early age. She remains very active to the present.

Interviewer: Denise Rolark-Barnes

Date: May 27, 2020

Interview Summary:

Ms. Inez Davis reflects on her life and involvement as a member of the Washington Section and as past president. She holds a wealth of knowledge concerning the organization and the section programs’ impact in the community. Ms. Inez Davis discusses some of the challenges and some changes needed to ensure the future of the organization and section.

Narrator Bio:

Ms. Inez Davis is a third generation native Washingtonian from a large family. She was educated in DC and graduated from Strayer University with an associate degree in Business Administration with extended education at UCLA. She is a Legacy Life Member and has served two-terms as president of the Washington Section beginning in 1993 to 1997. Her final term as president began in 2006 to 2008 at the urging of Dr. Dorothy I. Height, Past President on NCNW. Ms. Inez Davis is an entrepreneur, a committed advocate for NCNW and a respected leader.

DC neighborhood and streets that are mentioned in this interview: 16th and East Capitol, Southeast DC, Kingman’s area (Kingman Park), Fourth and Eye Street Southeast, 5th and E Street, Southeast, Southwest Washington, 14th Street, U Street, Northwest, Capitol Hill, Kenilworth, Northeast DC, Pennsylvania Avenue.

Proper Names: Giddings Elementary, Randall Junior High School, Cardozo High School, Strayer University, Strayer University, UCLA (University of California Los Angeles), Internal Revenue Service, Department of Human Resources, Mental Health Division, Southeast Settlement House, Washingtonian, Maryland, African Americans, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Lehman’s Tire Shop, Providence Hospital, Mount Jezreel Baptist Church, BTU (Baptist Training Union), Red Circle Girls, Sunday School, Lincoln Theater, Republic Theater, Dunbar (High School), Cardozo (High School), Martha Washington (High School), O. Roy Chalk, Massachusetts, Camp Kirby, Ethel James Williams, Mrs. Dorothy Shaed Proctor, Philadelphia, Zora Martin, Anacostia Museum, Alma Cooper Hawkins, Chocolate City, Mr. Jenkins, Ms. Theresa Wilson, Professional Secretaries Association, Boston, Mary McLeod Bethune, Roosevelt (President Franklin Delano Roosevelt), Bethune Cookman (University), Headquarters (NCNW, Inc.), Safeway (Store), Howard University, Jennie M. Walburg, Dr. Height (Dr. Dorothy I. Height), Navy Yard, Sears and Roebuck Building, AKAs (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. members), Deltas (Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. members), Sigmas (Sigma Gamma Rho, Inc. members), Pink Project (Alpha Kappa Alpha), Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, Annual Mid-Summer Soiree, Women in Community Service, Dorothy Alexander, Ms. Cleo Brown, Operation Sisters United, Glenna Emanuel, Brown Box Collection, Black Family Reunion, Irene Morris, (Congresswoman) Eleanor Holmes Norton, Howard University Nursing School, March on Washington, National Centers for African American Women, (President) Bill Clinton, Hillary (Clinton), Life members, Legacy Life members, Davis Travel Connection, Trump, St. Michaels, New York, Spelling Bee.

Notes: None

Inez Davis Interview Time-Coded Index:
01:55 Inez Davis introduced herself and discussed her childhood, education, and work history.
05:14 Davis discussed her neighborhood, activities, interests and early influences.
08:25 Davis discussed her parents and her religious upbringing.
11:20 Davis recalls her life as a teen and young adult.
15:00 Davis discusses her early work experiences.
17:47 Davis discussed being influenced by neighborhood and school teacher involvement.
21:23 Davis talks about her early interests in business administration.
23:00 Davis explored the knowledge shared by others that led to her development into adulthood.
25:51 Davis acknowledges very little segregation experience and the integration of Girl Scouts. She shrugged off derogatory encounters.
Davis recalls women at the Southeast Settlement House who were a part of NCNW. Davis talks about becoming a member and the meetings. Davis recalled the purchase and opening of the new NCNW headquarters building. Davis reflects upon work with various sororities and Dr. Dorothy Height. Davis talks about her presidency, gaining members, fellowship and some impactful programs. Davis discusses more impactful section programs, including the Black Family Reunion. Davis explained her reasons for serving as president. Davis discusses her terms of office. Davis talked about the fundraisers and programs’ appeal to new members. Davis explored the loss of membership and programs. Davis talks about the legislative involvement of the section and her second term of office as president. Davis explored some efforts to address the demands of the time. Davis recalls participating in conventions and seminars with international focus, national and local legislators. Davis discussed the section officers, meetings, and communication. Davis reflects on her experiences and support of NCNW headquarters. Davis continues active involvement in the section. Davis compares past and current programs. Davis reflects on the future of NCNW and its communication with sections. Davis reviews the current section membership and some needs for attracting new members. She focused on team effort. Davis thinks about the name of the organization and its purpose. Davis gave advice to young women to team up with the organization.