

# **Ethnic Oral History Project, 1977-1978**

## **Fresno Historical Society**

### **Addie J. Robinson**

Addie J. Robinson was a black senior citizen interviewed on August 10, 1977 in Fresno, California. Robinson was born on April 11, 1887 in South Carolina. Robinson's father first came to Madera, California because he had cousins in the area that wanted him to see the blooming land. Robinson's mother passed away while Robinson was attending school in South Carolina. Robinson came to California in 1919 because her father said there were good schools and they would make lots of money. Robinson says that black people went to the white church until enough black people came to form the Second Baptist Church. Robinson recalls that she would work on her father's land just like her brothers did in order to earn money. Robinson also discusses how she and her children got by after he husband passed away. Robinson does not remember the Ku Klux Klan being strong in Fresno when she came in 1919.

Robinson says she had been voting ever since women were allowed to vote, and that she is still a Republican just like her father. Robinson talks about how she was a member of the War Mothers and how she was able to entertain people with missionary work. Robinson discusses Dr. Henry Wallace and the community's reaction to him being put in and dying in prison. Robinson says that most black people she knew in Fresno worked in agriculture. Robinson recalls that there was not much segregation in Fresno while she lived there. After Pearl Harbor, there were more jobs available to black people in Fresno because most people were going to fight the war. Robinson remembers being a member of the NAACP and how the group would stand up for black people's rights and "work in unity." Robinson talks about her husband and how he built a colored church in Madera when he was alive. Robinson recalls that some people in Fresno were followers of Marcus Garvey. Robinson says that to get her family by in the depression, she would do all her own baking, sewing, and laundry in order to save money. Robinson talks about how the black community had a positive reaction to the civil rights movement in the 1960's. She recalls that people were upset, and still upset, over the death of Martin Luther King Jr. Robinson says that she contributes to the growth of Fresno by donating to its various organizations.

Interviewer: Vivian J. Jones  
Transcript: 18 pages  
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hospital, I haven't been able to keep up with the television on it.

JONES: What would you say is your most important or valuable contribution towards the growth and development of Fresno?

ROBINSON: I give to everything in Fresno. I give to the Children's Hospital. I give to the Christmas Seals. Then each year I pay for the War Mothers dues. Then I pay to my church. I pay to everything that comes, I don't care what it is. But my church is the main thing that I take care of. Besides from that, anything that will uplift my race, that's what I'm for. Anything!

JONES: Do you have any other surviving relatives living here in Fresno?

ROBINSON: Yes, I have.

JONES: Would you care to name them?

ROBINSON: I have U.S. Rogers, Mr. and Mrs. U.S. Rogers. I have Mrs. Mamie Rogers, who is a widow. Then I have Mrs. Kathleen Lett, who is my baby girl. Mr. and Mrs. Kathleen, and Jim Lett, that's my daughter and her husband and son. Then I have Mr. and Mrs. James Robinson, and he has Desiree who is his oldest daughter, Stanley and Kevin; those are his sons.

JONES: Mrs. Robinson, I would like to thank you for your time, and consideration and your cooperation in this valuable project. Thank you very much.

"BY MY SIGNATURE, I MAKE THIS TRANSCRIPT AVAILABLE TO RESEARCHERS IN THE FRESNO CITY AND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES."

Addie J. Robinson  
MRS. ADDIE J. ROBINSON, NARRATOR

Dec 4-77  
(DATE)

Vivian J. Jones  
VIVIAN J. JONES, INTERVIEWER

Dec. 6, 1977  
(DATE)

FRESNO CITY AND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INTERVIEW WITH ADDIE J. ROBINSON

AUGUST 10, 1977

Today is August 10, 1977. I, Vivian J. Jones, am interviewing Mrs. Addie J. Robinson, a black senior citizen of Fresno, California.

JONES: Mrs. Robinson, what is your full maiden name?

ROBINSON: Addie Jane Rogers.

JONES: When and where were you born?

ROBINSON: In South Carolina.

JONES: What date?

ROBINSON: The 11<sup>th</sup> of April, in 1887.

JONES: What were your parents' names?

ROBINSON: York Rogers was my father's name. Rachel Rogers was my mother.

JONES: When did they come to California?

ROBINSON: My father came to California, when I was about five years old. He had some cousins who lived here, and he came here to buy a home in Madera, California. Because, they came out here before he did, they wanted him to come out here because everything was blooming so. More money existed then. He stayed out here about two to three years, till she (mother) got so deathly sick. When he came back there was a new doctor came into Glenhime, South Carolina, that was the little town where we lived. Then he told him he would take the case, and he thought he could put her on foot. Well, he put her on foot, and after she got so she could go for awhile. Let's see when he came out here there was nine children born to that family, and after they went back there were two born. That was James Calbert Rogers, and Mary Ellen Rogers. Those were the two born. Mother did very well for awhile, then she ran into hard troubles, asthma and kidney troubles; she had complicated troubles. She went into the hospital and stayed for awhile, she got better then came back, and then she passed away. Well, dad always wanted to bring her back here. After she got better, between this time I was going to Columbia, South Carolina

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Divinity College School. She wrote and told me that next year we would be in California. After she passed, my dad told us that he would like for us to come out here. My oldest brother married Amelia. Her father died in North Carolina. She came back there, she and her sister and her sister's children. They visited with me there and they persuaded the rest of us to come out here where we could make, oh, lots of money. We were farmers at that time there; they call them ranchers here.

JONES: Was that here in Fresno?

ROBINSON: No! That was in North Carolina. We moved to North Carolina, and bought farms up there. Then the government came along taking the homes, and we moved out here to California. Dad always wanted us to come because he said that out here they had good schools and everything. Now they had schools in South Carolina, but the kind of schools they had were for white people. Now the white people could go to school starting in, maybe September, at least October, and they go until sometime in the spring. The colored only had just three months of schooling. That they paid for. We'd start in October and November and go through December. Well, they gave me extra time to go to school. The trustees would hire teachers. Then I could go to school where they hired teachers. And all of us who were able to go. But the brother and sister, this one out here and the sister that passed, was sick with the measles, and they didn't go. So, I walked for about five miles every day, and went to school there.

JONES: Did you finish school? How far did you go?

ROBINSON: I went as high as the tenth grade. We had a good teacher from Sumter, South Carolina. She was a right young lady and she taught me as high as I could go in school there. Then I'd assist her in teaching the schools after that. They had one school house about as big as two rooms, and she had taught a hundred children at the time.

JONES: What year did you come here?

ROBINSON: I came here in 1919.

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JONES: Did you come here to visit your father? Was he still living?

ROBINSON: No, we moved here to California to stay, and I stayed here until 1976 till I went back. I didn't go back home, I went to Washington D. C., that was after my husband died and my father. The children all got together and the grandchildren. I was on welfare, and I had to work for myself. So, I went to them and they told me yes, I could go. My brother back there graduated from the school back in Columbia, Benedict College. Then he got a job in Washington D. C., where he stayed in the mint, until he retired. That's who I wanted to go back there and see, and my sister was back there. There were four of us that went back there, Rose, Mary, Sisalina, and I. We caught a plane, first time we ever rode a plane and the last time so far. We went back there, and we stayed three weeks. The reason we came here was because dad said we had worked so hard on the farm, he wanted us to come here where we could get nine months of schooling right straight through. Now, that's in South Carolina, where they just give three months of schooling. But, when we moved to North Carolina, of course, you had a little better schools there. You could go through and you could get schools and you could go to other schools there. But you see, I was one of the older ones. I came home and took care of my mother. After I made a year and a half there, she got sick, and I came home in December. I had my grades run from, 75 was the lowest grade I had on my card. I had a lovely card. This teacher would just get books that I could use in the school, then I could help her teach the people who were behind. Because they didn't pay nothing for school in those days.

JONES: When you came to Fresno, how many black families were there?

ROBINSON: Honey, I couldn't tell you. You could get that more from the Bigbys. But, dad's friends that were here in Fresno then were the Bear Family, the Bigby Family, Brother and Sister Hargrave, the Hannibal Family, and, oh, there were several of them. That's how Second Baptist started; they went to the white church until there was enough blacks here to start their own church. Then they



built this church on F street, The Second Baptist Church. They had had two or three, oh there were several families here. The Bargan Family, they were here. Oh, there were several colored families here when I got here.

JONES: Did you know Reverend Edward Lindsey?

ROBINSON: Yes, I knew him. When he retired, I gave a surprise party for him and his wife. They both were sick at the same time, and I saw Averial's mother, Lizzie, and I asked her if they would feel bad if I would get together a shower to give those people because they were old and to help them out. She was tickled to death. So, I got together the members I had notified and we got together and went into the house that night, and sang songs, and dumped all the food we had. So, the Lindsey Family, was here. Oh, there were several families. But, I mean Fresno itself wasn't nothing fit to settle then. But they had like E street, and F street, and Chinatown, and all that was going on. But there was so many places, I know I went to work for them 'em. My sister-in-law, she gave me a little job, and I went cross there. My husband never did want me to work, but that was a little money. 'Cause they weren't paying me but twenty-five cents an hour then.

JONES: What type of work were you doing?

ROBINSON: Anything I could do, anything they start I'd be there (laughing)! I didn't have no one kind of work. I didn't do it when I was at home. Everything the men did. I worked my daddy's soil. I was the only girl to live, they lost their first two girls. I worried them so, everything I did they were so glad that I was there (laughing)! They had lots of boys. He let me do anything I'd try. I learned to plow, I could chop, I can plant cotton, I can set trees, I can do anything anybody else can do. I can start right now and run a farm, if somebody do it. I haven't the strength, but I could tell them how to do it. And I can run a farm, anything! I haven't got no special job.

JONES: Did you always live here on the Westside?

ROBINSON: Well, yes. I haven't been nowhere but on this side, and don't want to live nowhere else!

JONES: You don't?

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ROBINSON: No! I don't want to live on the Eastside! I worked on the Eastside. My home when that sun goes down it brings me right back here where I came from.

JONES: Where did you work on the Eastside?

ROBINSON: Honey, every place! I started day work after my husband passed. I couldn't take a steady job 'cause I had to take care of the children. I started day work, I got to work right here in my own home. I ran a home laundry. They got a record of that. Then I did day work for different people, just as they called, that's where I'd go. Finally I got a steady job just going half a day three times a week over at 1047 Fulton street. That's right across from Turpin's Furniture Store. I worked there till finally the doctor told me I had arthritis and I couldn't go no further. I was a diabetic and I had to stop. Mostly what I did over there, I took care of the stairs and the hallways. Then different ones saw my work and they'd call me and ask if could do their kitchens for them. That's how I made my living and took care of my children, and raised them up. Clara was the first born here. After her father passed, she started working babysitting and going to school. She and I together brought up those children up the way they act today. And they didn't give me but ten dollars a month for each child. That's all I got for each child and the state gave that. The economy they didn't give nothing. Then Alice got her a job, and she worked for a little here and there. Then she got married. After that Clara and I just took over.

JONES: Did you go to school here in Fresno?

ROBINSON: No, I was married.

JONES: You were married when you came here?

ROBINSON: Oh, yes!

JONES: When you came to Fresno was your father still living then?

ROBINSON: Yes, he was living but he wasn't living here. He went back home and stayed there. We sent for him and he came back after he was married for the second time. Him and his wife came out here and they stayed till he died.

JONES: When you came here in 1919, was the Ku Klux Klan very strong here in Fresno?

ROBINSON: Wasn't any of them here that I know of.

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JONES: Do you remember Mayor Z. S. Leymel?

ROBINSON: I don't remember who the mayor was when I came.

JONES: Were you interested in politics and if you were how did you become interested in politics?

ROBINSON: Oh, because my dad was a Republican man and I was voting ever since it came out that women could vote. I was right there.

JONES: So, are you a Republican also?

ROBINSON: Yes, still a Republican.

JONES: Do you know if any elected officials caused any trouble for the black people here in Fresno?

ROBINSON: Well, not that I know of. As you see, I had this diabetic condition for fifteen years and I used to meet with the women, and the last meeting I went to was at the home of Miss Hazel Macken on E street. Mrs. Cooley was living then. I stopped to listen to them talk. When they got through talking there was three white ladies and one man. They were trying to get the Republican people together. After they got through talking he brought up something concerning the colored people. I can't remember just what it was. I got up and told them I wanted to know why is it they called the colored people and elsewhere. I didn't tell them what I knew about the South or nothing. I just wanted to see how they would take it here. I said, "Why is it everything they do here, they got white people in there and the colored haven't got a chance to do what they know. But you let them cook. You go out and tell them they're the best cooks, and best this. You eat off of their hand, they make all of your food and everything like that. Then you turn around and shun them, colored people. Segregate them. So, I want to know what you think about that?" So they got up and made a talk on it. Then a lady came to me after they got through and said, "Mrs. Robinson, I thought you said you couldn't talk." I said, "I didn't say I couldn't talk. I was listening to you all talking and I wanted to see where you are all at." But, anyway, I just like to give them the rake over in anything I do. But when the War Mothers started, I was a War Mother all my life, since they started War Mothers here. A charter member and still am. I got a chance to visit and go up to Stockton and stay



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there a week. I meet people there I never meet before. I got a chance there to say what I wanted to say. So, I'm just wrapped up in everything. Church work especially. I never leave off my church work for nobody. I've been teaching Sunday School.

JONES: What church is this?

ROBINSON: Second Baptist Church, same church, I've never changed.

I've been a member for 56 years. Never changed! I've taught school there. And when I don't, Sister McFarland does. But I'm going to give it up, it's not that I want to give it up, but I think I've taught long enough. But if the Lord doesn't tell me to go on, I think I'll stop. Because sometimes my eyes worry me some. I got to go see about that now. First one thing and now another. I haven't been able to attend or else I'd be there at all these meetings. Until they started all this mess that you can't go out at night unless somebody is right with you. I wouldn't risk even going to the corner by myself. I don't even open my door. The people in the streets now they're dangerous. Just like the bible says they're doing. You just have to look out for yourself.

JONES: I understand. Mrs. Robinson, do you remember any songs or stories that were handed down from your family about slavery?

ROBINSON: I have some books with all those songs in them. I went to music school in South Carolina with Mrs. Wallace at Benedict College.

JONES: What did you do for recreation here in Fresno?

ROBINSON: Anything come to hand. We had missionary work, and also the War Mothers. We entertained people in the War Mothers, and all our missionary work. We have circles in our church and each circle gives entertainment years ago. We still do it now. We have programs and things like that. I used to have a program when I was head of the German Mission, when we were on F street.

JONES: You used to live on F street?

ROBINSON: Yes, that's where I moved from when I moved here.

JONES: Where on F street did you live? Do you remember the address?

ROBINSON: 1846 F street.

JONES: Why did you sell your property on F street?

ROBINSON: I didn't have the property on F street. I rented from, do you know Mother Ducaf? She's a Holiness lady that runs the church on E street. Well, I rented from her for twenty-two years. Right there on F street. When my husband passed, I didn't have a thing left except my insurance that I kept up. I put him away, put him away decent, and had a little money left after that. But not enough to take care of none of us. Because he stayed sick so long. He had pyorrhea, and it went all through him, and they just couldn't do nothing about it, the people he worked for. He was a minister too. The people that he worked for told the doctors to get any kind of doctors to do anything they could to save him. They did what they could, but they couldn't save him.

JONES: What was your husband's name?

ROBINSON: Loyal Fonser Robinson.

JONES: When was he born?

ROBINSON: I can't remember.

JONES: Do you remember Dr. Henry C. Wallace?

ROBINSON: Yes, I remember him well. I used to go over and help his wife. I'd take music over there so she could study her music. I remember the whole family well because, their family was friends of ours. He was a wonderful doctor. He would do anything he could to save anybody. As far as medicine goes, he was just wonderful.

JONES: What did the community think of him?

ROBINSON: They thought the same. I don't know of anybody that knew anything about him or said anything hard since I've been here. Then I used to attend everything, I didn't let nothing pass. I wasn't afraid to go nowhere and I always had company to go with me. I had friends living then that would take me where ever I wanted to go. He attended my husband while he was sick. He attended him till he passed away.

JONES: Do you remember when Dr. Wallace was put in prison? Do you know why?

ROBINSON: I don't know, no I don't remember the year.

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JONES: It was April 30, 1947.

ROBINSON: Yes, that was the year after my son came from the army.

JONES: Do you remember what the community's reaction was after Dr. Wallace died in Prison?

ROBINSON: Well, some of them were upset about it because there are so few that talk about it. They didn't know why nor what because they were expecting him home. I went down there and helped prepare for this homecoming. I had gone to work that morning, and when I got to work, I called the bus, and it was coming across the subway. I heard on the radio, an announcer was saying that he had passed. When I got home, they had been calling for me to come over the house. That he had passed. I never did find out what was what about him. So, I really don't know.

JONES: Do you remember basically what the occupations of the black community were when you came here?

ROBINSON: Well, some of them were hod carriers, and built buildings, and stuff like that. But most of them that I knew were ranchers. Then when the **Mattei Building** was being put up, a lot of them worked there. Some people from Texas even came out and worked over there. Well, most of these new buildings that's where most of the colored men got their work from. Because they had a chance to go to school and learn a little about it. Fresno then had just began to build up, and everyone had a chance to do whatever they wanted to do. They had garbage men, and they even had colored mail carriers on this side, but I don't know what they had on the other side. They had white insurance men then, but they come in after.

JONES: Was there much segregation here at the time?

ROBINSON: No, no there wasn't. I worked for some rich white people, I wasn't working in just one place. I never did have a steady job, because I had to leave to take care of my children. Like I said, I taught at the church, and church work and take care of my children. But anywhere I went I was treated like they didn't know me from their own child or daughter or anything like that.

JONES: Mrs. Robinson, do you remember the community's reaction to the attack on Peral Harbor?

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ROBINSON: Yes, I do.

JONES: Would you care to elaborate on that?

ROBINSON: They were willing to go because such men as my son, who was just a young man in school, and others who had an opportunity to go to school and learn what their duties were here and what they should have. After they left and went to school, they had an age for women that they couldn't work after some forty years old. They tried to put that through, but it didn't go. You had to keep your age down here to get a job for colored people. They didn't know if you were fifty or what you were. They'd cut you off when you got to fifty and, say, give the work to the younger people. The boys learned a lot when they went over there, and so did my son. Being one of them and suffering with his friends. They got a chance to make something out of themselves. He left here and went to Mississippi, all down in there and learned a trade. He got converted in Mississippi, came back here and was baptized. Got his diploma from the school. Had a birthday on the fifteenth of January, and left about six or eight o'clock the next morning to go overseas. He went over there, and stayed about three years.

JONES: During that period of time, were there more jobs available to the black people here in Fresno?

ROBINSON: Yes, there were more jobs available. The women worked on the train and everything else, which they hadn't done. I know of several of them right here now, several went up to Oakland and around in there. Worked on the pier and everywhere around there. There were more jobs then, and there were. Anyways, most people tried to get people to work for them, and the colored people had a better chance. Beginning then and from then right on they had a better chance for a good job. It wasn't just washing and ironing, and sweeping floors or something like that. But it cut out a lot of segregation. I know then when they went overseas and came back.

JONES: Do you know if the local government took an interest in the colored people here in Fresno before the NAACP got involved?

ROBINSON: Well, I can't say much about that. I was a member of the

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NAACP till after my husband passed. As I say I had to do work to keep my house together and my children. I did not attend regular, but I would read after them. I know that any place you go, and they know you are going to stand up for your rights, and you get together as a band of people and work in unity, you can demand what you want, whether it's right or wrong, you can demand what you want to a certain degree.

JONES: Do you know Mr. William A. Bigby Jr.?

ROBINSON: I know him just like I know my son, James.

JONES: What was his role in the community during the '30's, '40's, and '50's?

ROBINSON: Well, I say everything. I have clippings and everything of him, in my scrap books. He's been a wonderful man in every way. In church work, in any kind of work you could think of he was "Johnny on the spot".

JONES: Did most of the people in the community feel that way about Mr. Bigby?

ROBINSON: Well, honey, I couldn't tell you about other people's minds, but most the people that I know did. I don't know what the others thought. I know me and my family did, and quite a few of the others. Because my daughter is an Eastern Star, and he always admired her because she was so nice to me after her father passed. She was the second oldest, her older sister got married and moved out. After she was gone, that girl stood by me through thick and thin. Anytime she made a little money, until I had to tell her to keep what she had. I made enough to pay a bill or something like that. She was "Johnny on the spot". And that's one reason why. He knew all about our family anyway because he remembered my dad. All of them used to be together, and the Berry Family, they all used to be together. His mother and auntie were the cause of me going to church, and starting church work. After my daughter, Pearl, was born, they came over to see me, after they came back from the convention. They asked me if I would teach Sunday School. They had heard me make a talk in missionary, and they wanted me to teach. But I told them I couldn't because I had to take care of the baby.



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My baby sister was out here then, but she wasn't out she was working for Columbia School. But she lived out in the country somewhere. She was over that day and she said, "No, you don't have to do that." Then some mother said, "I'll come over and me and my baby sister we'll take care of the baby, 'cause we want you to teach our children." Well, I didn't have no way to get out; so I told them, "yes," I do what I could. I started teaching them, and didn't stop until I got this diabetic condition, and couldn't do anything, and came over here. Then some of the elderly and some of the young people said, "Why don't you come back and teach Sunday School?" Well, I'm not able, so I'll just have go twice a month and teach missionary work. So, I just took that as my project.

JONES: How many churches were there in Fresno when you moved here?

ROBINSON: There wasn't but two, three colored churches when I moved here that I knew of.

JONES: Do you remember where they were located?

ROBINSON: One was located on G street, which is part of Lemoore now.

Part of Lemoore moved from G street to E and built a new church there. Part of those members were Baptist people and, because they built a new church they went over on E street and joined that church because it was new. Several people that I know here, families went over there. Then they had the AME, which was on the corner of F and Tuolumne. They were the only colored churches that I knew of in Fresno when I came here. Of course, that was a long time ago; since then, there's been just uddoles of churches moved here.

JONES: What type of work did your husband do here in Fresno?

ROBINSON: He worked at a garage; he sold cars, he washed cars for the Waterman Brothers. He worked with them until he passed. But he was a minister also. He built the colored church in Madera.

JONES: What was the name of that church?

ROBINSON: I don't know what the name is now. The church was started in a little house in Madera. The people were named Toast, and they started from prayer meetings, and from that to Sunday School; then they'd have sevice. Well, my husband was the one that pastored that church. Started that way when my son, James, was a baby.

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I had to vacate and we'd catch the train and go down to Madera and give socials to start our church in Madera. So, they built that. They worked in the house there till they got money to build a church. He pastored there till they had the money to build a church. They weren't able to pay enough for the family. We moved to Madera and stayed seven months, and then we moved back here to Fresno. That's when he got the job with the Waterman Brothers. He sold cars and then he'd preach and pastor at the Second Baptist, when they got rid of the pastor there. He preached there till they got another Pastor. After that he'd just go to different churches and preach there when he'd get called. Then he got sick and then he started to go down, and couldn't preach. He was preaching before he came to California.

JONES: Was the Waterman business owned by a black or white owner, and do you remember where it was located?

ROBINSON: It was located on L street.

JONES: Were there very many black salesmen here in Fresno during that time? Was your husband the only one here at the time?

ROBINSON: Oh, no there was more beside him. It just started out, well, you see, they would ask him if he would take a car out to sell. He'd go out to Pinedale and take a car to sell, and all out in there, and out this way and make a sale like that.

JONES: What year was this?

ROBINSON: About 1928.

JONES: Do you know who Marcus Garvey was?

ROBINSON: Yes.

JONES: Did he have many followers here in Fresno?

ROBINSON: Well, I don't know how many he had. I know he was here, but I don't know how many he had. Some of our people went off with him, and followed him. Some of them followed him all the way to New York. But I know of these people, but I can't keep them all in my mind. That takes my mind more than anything else, the schooling and the welfare of my race. That what stays on my mind and be on my mind. I got some letters here now from Sacramento. They want me to answer and ask some questions.

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JONES: Do you remember the Prohibition period? It was from 1919 to 1933? Do you remember where people purchased alcohol from?

ROBINSON: No, I don't.

JONES: Do you remember Daddy Grace and Father Divine?

ROBINSON: Yes.

JONES: Were they popular here in Fresno?

ROBINSON: Yes, they were popular with those they could fool to go with them. But other than that (laughing)! No, no I know he wasn't popular with me, 'cause I know he wasn't no Lord.

JONES: Was medical help readily available to black people when you came to Fresno?

ROBINSON: When I came here, honey, we had a doctor, we hired him and paid him and that's as much undertaking as I did. I didn't know on this welfare to see that my children got a decent living. Because they said, "This man and family," they told the welfare department, "are decent and up to date people, and we want them taken care of." That put me to read to see what this was. Well, when they asked me I said, "No!" I thought the welfare was some charity place where they give away clothes or something. From there, we went on. I read and found out what this place was and sure enough I was taking the people to this place too. One day I went up there to get something and they told me that they couldn't give my daughter anything because she was sixteen when her father died, and they didn't give to sixteen. They didn't go as high as eighteen. So, she had to get a job and go to work. So, I went up there to see about work. They wanted to get mad and not give me any help because she hadn't found a job. She put in for a job everywhere she went. Ledbetter was the head man then, and he asked me, "Mrs. Robinson, you haven't found no job?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, have you gone and knocked on doors to see if you could get a job?" I said, "Do what?" He said, "Knock on doors to see if you could get a job." I said, "No, we didn't have to do that, we were farmers. In the South they called them farmers, you

call them ranchers here. In the South we had everything we needed, and didn't have to knock on nobody's door, but our own neighbors. We labored and we made cotton, and made corn and made every thing we needed. I suspect now you're wearing clothes made from the cotton we picked." I slapped him right in the mouth, just like that. Because he was so segregated till he couldn't stay in his britches. But, honey, he didn't fool me. I told him, "Now we came out here, the reason we are out here is 'cause my father wanted us to come out here where his cousins were in Madera. He wanted his family to have the best. That's exactly why I'm here." I said, "I never did want to come here, but I'm here and since I'm treated like somebody," I said, "I'm going to stay. If I don't get nothing here, I'm not worried about it." I said, "you can give or whatever." I said, "we never had to knock on no doors, just on our own doors. 'Cause we raised our own food, we didn't have to fool with nobody else." I told him so, and that chopped him off. Reverend Hubbard then was our Pastor. He said he was tired of seeing me running and doing, and trying to get by. He said, "I'll be glad when you get a job and you won't have to be going this way and that way every day." He'd come over and offer to help with what he could do. I said, "Well, Reverend Hubbard, I'll make it anyway." After I told him what Miss Mini said, that we could find a job somewhere, he put on his coat and got into his car, and he went over there. He said, "Tomorrow morning, you go over to the office." They had moved from the Patterson Building to some little place. When I went in there she asked me . . . I dressed like a monkey. I told her, that Reverend Hubbard said you wanted to see me, I just came to see what you wanted. She said, "I'm glad that you needed help, and we just wanted to help you." Now, she had never talked in that tone of voice the whole time till I got up there and got so loud in the Mattei Building till I could draw the people from around there, 'cause I don't hold my mouth when you treat me wrong! As soon as Ledbetter got through he said, "Mrs. Robinson, here's a check. Well, if that's not enough you come back and get some more. I hope your daughter finds a job." Well, he had just turned!

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One of the same men who had gone up there to get something for his family, a colored man, he told me he had caught him in the collar, (laughing) said he'd like to push him out the window (laughing)! I said, "Go ahead, I won't tell nobody." I said, "if you want a witness I'll go there and tell them." And we never did have no more trouble with Ledbetter. They had segregation, but they covered it up, they tried to hide it, and that was in 1931, 'cause that was before my husband passed. It was in '32 that he passed and they come telling me about knocking on doors to see if I could find a job. Like if I was running around like a dog or something like that. I said, "No!" Well, we always had our own meat, corn and everything else. We had chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys, and everything. We didn't have to go without anything. We didn't get our money till the end of fall. But we made enough to carry us, and had our own food and canned fruit and stuff. We didn't have to be beholden to anybody. We'd give to other people too; we weren't selfish with it either. If I had to do it again, I'd do it. Don't just think I'm going to lay around and wallow about it, or look some other place to get it. 'Cause if I don't get what I want when I need it, I'll just go sit on the steps of the courthouse and sit there till they come and get me.

JONES: How did your family survive during the depression?

ROBINSON: Well, we just verily go along. I was taught how to do with a little, or if I had a lot, which I have had a plenty, to do with that. But I knew how to save. I did my own baking of bread, and cakes or anything of that kind. I did my own sewing, and sewed for the children. Cloth was cheaper then than it is today. It cost five times as much for one yard of cloth as it did in those days. I'd go and get material and make clothes for my children, and cover up my husband too. Then if I had extra laundry, I'd take it in too, and do for other people too. I didn't have the public laundry then, I'd given it up. So, I just did extra work, and kept my house going and kept everything up to date. That's the way I made my living through that. I took those \$24.50. Out of that, I'd saved enough money to put in the bank to start to buy a home. But after he got sick, we



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had to use that up. We had a car, a good car, and we had to sell that. So that left me just flat, with nothing else. Then I went out and I picked grapes, and I cut peaches and things like that. I made my living like that. Then after he passed, I worked while school was on inside, then I'd give up the job and go out and pick cotton and whatnot. I got through like that.

JONES: Were there any black publications in Fresno, and if there was did you have anything to do with the paper at that time?

ROBINSON: Oh yes, I did. I went to the Bee. They called and told me my son had been made Private First Class oversea. I was so happy about it. I said I'd come over and get the paper. They told me to come over; I went over there. When I went to the Bee, nobody could find it. They said it was on the desk but they couldn't find it. They said to come back, but they never did find that paper. I went to a colored man here who ran a paper shop on F street, on the right-hand side of F street. He was the one who published my son and his work. But I can't remember his name.

JONES: Do you remember the community's reactions to the civil rights movement in the '60's?

ROBINSON: Well, everybody was very proud of that. Everybody catered to that they were going to be somewhere where they could be respected and have their rights. That's why I got to them. I've always had it. But, I had some help to help me fight for my own rights. That's why today whatever my rights are, I'll stand up for it regardless. If they don't want to come my way, I'll let them know they aren't fooling me. They just saying something I hear in one ear and goes out the other.

JONES: What was this community's reaction to the death of Martin Luther King?

ROBINSON: Well, everybody was hurt about that and still hurt about it. Even now, I have his picture up there on the piano. Every time we get a hearing or a clipping or anything concerning that. Well, we are very much interested in knowing what's going on and how. Like I hear now a lot about they think they found the man that did it. Recently, since I've been going to the rest home and the