



Interview with **Mary Jane Jackson**

Date: October 19, 1988

Interviewer: Dale S. Rosen

Camera Rolls: 1015

Sound Rolls: 107

Team: A

Interview gathered as part of *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s*. Produced by Blackside, Inc. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

Preferred Citation

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Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in ***bold italics*** was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize II*.

[camera roll #1015]

[sound roll #107]

[slate]

00:00:15:00

Interviewer:

Mrs. Jackson, I want you to tell me about registering to vote in Lowndes County.

00:00:22:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Registering?

00:00:23:00

Interviewer:

Yes, ma'am.

00:00:24:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Then lemme tell you, because it's a mess. It was, really. It was worse than mess. In Lowndes County didn't want you to vote. No.

00:00:37:00

Interviewer:

Why not?

00:00:38:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Why not?

00:00:39:00

Interviewer:

Yes, ma'am.

00:00:40:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Because they pay you [unintelligible], they knowed. No, they didn't want you to vote, but we voted anyhow— right there in Hayneville, where it started, and my husband say some o' the folks wantin' ta go home. He said, you run, no I ain't been runnin' an' they, 10 years. Said, I ain' gonna leave none of my folks, and we didn't leave in Hayneville. That's the first place I went to vote.

00:01:18:00

Interviewer:

What happened when you went down to vote? How were you treated?

00:01:24:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Treated?

00:01:25:00

Interviewer:

Yes, ma'am.

00:01:26:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Treated like dog. Talked, talked to ya like you wasn't human. I wake, and my husband had boosted me up. He said, I'm gonna vote and you gonna vote before I leave here and vote for us both. Plenty folks was scared to vote. I wasn't scared, but I didn't vote unless he told me. He dead now, but lotta folks lef' and wouldn't vote.

00:02:07:00

Interviewer:

Why were you not afraid to vote?

00:02:11:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

I wasn't scared o' no White folks. I wasn't scared of 'em, but my husband told me to stay and vote, and I stayed home and vote. Always would do what he say.

00:02:27:00

Interviewer:

Now, they told me that you went to mass— to big meetin's, and that one time you had your gun in your purse.

00:02:36:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

I did. I carried it everywhere I went.

00:02:38:00

Interviewer:

Tell me what happened at that meetin'.

00:02:41:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

What you— What, now? What meetin'?

00:02:43:00

Interviewer:

The one that you said that you'd take your gun out.

00:02:46:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

You talkin' about in Lowndesboro?

00:02:47:00

Interviewer:

Yes, ma'am.

00:02:48:00

Mary Jane Jackson: What happened in Lowndesboro—

00:02:51:00

Interviewer:

What happened?

00:02:53:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Nothin'. [laughs]

00:03:00:00

Interviewer:

You wanna tell me about it?

00:03:04:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

What you wanna know about it?

00:03:07:00

Interviewer:

When you went to the meetin' and you had your gun in your purse, what did you say?

00:03:18:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

What did I say? You don't wanna hear what I said.

00:03:24:00

Interviewer:

OK. Let's stop for a minute.

[cut]

[slate]

00:03:37:00

Interviewer:

OK, Miss Jackson. What happened that day?

00:03:40:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

That night.

00:03:41:00

Interviewer:

That night.

00:03:42:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Didn't nothin' happen to us, but other folks was— Different varieties, I heard they got beat up, but we didn't because every one of us had us a gun, and I had mine in my lap. Me, John Jackson was together. He said to make one fire, said, Let's make two, and I was ready with it, but we didn't hafta shoot. But I carried my husband's gun— I've got it right now.

00:04:21:00

Interviewer:

So what did you say?

00:04:22:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Huh?

00:04:22:00

Interviewer:

What did you say when you had your gun in your lap?

00:04:32:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

[Laughs] You didn't hear it.

00:04:35:00

Interviewer:

You gonna tell me?

00:04:36:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Huh?

00:04:37:00

Interviewer:

You gonna tell me?

[pause]

Interviewer:

Lemme ask you this: when you and John would go out to where you were born, you'd tell people about registerin' to vote. Can you tell me about that?

00:04:53:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

They didn't wanna vote. Uh-uh. They were scared to vote. I never have been scared to go. I never have. Neither have John Jackson. Me and him got together. I said, Nah. Well, I said, You want to go, I'll go witcha, and I went with him. I went with him. He said, You ain't scared? I said, Scared of what? I ain't scared of nothin'. And I voted. Yeah, me and John Jackson were together.

00:05:34:00

Interviewer:

What was it like for you to vote?

00:05:36:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Huh?

00:05:37:00

Interviewer:

What was it like for you to vote?

00:05:39:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Who?

00:05:40:00

Interviewer:

Your first time voting.

00:05:42:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

To what was I like?

00:05:43:00

Interviewer:

What was it like for you to vote? How did you feel?

00:05:47:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

[Laughs] I felt all right! I felt all right. And I was [Laughs] I felt all right.

00:06:05:00

Interviewer:

Did you feel like you had done something important?

00:06:10:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

I knowed I had.

00:06:13:00

Interviewer:

What did you do?

00:06:15:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

What did I do?

00:06:16:00

Interviewer:

Yes, ma'am.

00:06:23:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

[laughs] Well, I won't tell a whole lotta—I won't tell what I said. I said some nasty things. Some of 'em heard it, some of 'em wouldn't hear it.

00:06:42:00

Interviewer:

OK, then. Hold off just a minute.

[slate]

Interviewer:

OK, now you tellin' me about Stokely and Bob Mants and what happened.

00:06:54:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Botha dem was my bes' friend. Stokely and Bob Mants. Stokely left me here, and I wished for him back a many time. Many time, but when he left he said, I won't be back. But Bob Mants—he is here. He comes 'round. I talks with him.

00:07:23:00

Interviewer:

What did Stokely and Bob Mants do to help you in Lowndes County?

00:07:29:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

What did they do? They made me a brave woman. That's what they done. Made me a brave woman. I was already brave with [unintelligible], but they made me wiser.

00:07:44:00

Interviewer:

How did they do that?

00:07:46:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

By talkin'. They telled me what to say. [unintelligible] Yes, and—

00:07:55:00

Interviewer:

What did they tell you?

00:07:58:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Tell me, don't dodge. Tol' me, don't dodge. [Laughs]

00:08:09:00

Interviewer:

I didn't hear you.

00:08:14:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

You done heard it. [laughs]

00:08:17:00

Interviewer:

Thank you. OK.

00:08:17:00

Crew member:

Mark it [unintelligible]

[cut]

[slate]

00:08:26:00

Interviewer:

Miss Jackson. Do you remember the Black Panther and the Black Panther Party?

00:08:31:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Black Panther?

00:08:32:00

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm. You'd vote the Black Panther and then go home? Do you remember that? The Black Panther.

00:08:41:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Black Panther— Wha' 'bout 'im?

00:08:43:00

Interviewer:

In Lowndes County. Do you remember, Vote the Black Panther and then go home?

00:08:50:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Did I go home?

00:08:52:00

Interviewer:

Do you remember, Vote the Black Panther and go home?

00:08:55:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Uh-uh.

00:08:56:00

Interviewer:

You don't?

00:08:56:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

No.

00:08:57:00

Interviewer:

You remember the Independent Party that you were all formed in Lowndes County? The party.

00:09:02:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Party—

00:09:03:00

Interviewer:

Yes, ma'am.

00:09:05:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Where 'bout in Lowndes County?

00:09:07:00

Interviewer:

The Black Panther Party in Lowndes County.

00:09:13:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Do I remember? [laughs]

00:09:14:00

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm.

00:09:15:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

I remember everything was done in Lowndes County, just about. What part of Lowndes County?

00:09:22:00

Interviewer:

The Black Panther Party. No? Do you remember the State Troopers coming to the mass meeting?

00:09:31:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Yeah.

00:09:32:00

Interviewer:

What happened?

00:09:33:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

Nothin'.

00:09:34:00

Interviewer:

Why not?

00:09:36:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

They's scared. They was— They didn't have— Didn't happen to us 't'all, but they were there.

00:09:49:00

Interviewer:

OK, thank you.

00:09:52:00

Mary Jane Jackson:

[Laughs]

00:09:53:00

Interviewer:

That's it.

[cut]

[end of interview]

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